

# View from the chair

As delegates arrive for the Police Federation annual conference, Paul Mckeever, chairman of the Federation says it is time to ensure the criminal justice system is fit for purpose.



Paul Mckeever, Chairman

As 2,000 delegates make their way to Bournemouth for the Police Federation of England and Wales annual conference it's an opportune time for me to reflect on my first year in office as Chairman and to look forward to new challenges we face.

A lot has happened in the past year since I became Chairman but by far the greatest achievement was being part of the Staff Side of the Police Negotiating Board that secured the three-year pay deal. The agreement grows increasingly more attractive day by day as the recession bites and further deepens. Yet despite this, in the last few weeks we had the very welcome assurance from the current government that they will not renege on the agreement.

In the last few months we have also witnessed the extended rollout of Taser; a move we are grateful to the Home Secretary for. However, there is still a need to ensure that those police authorities that are blocking the wider rollout for fear of damaging the public perception of the British Bobby are brought into line and made to realise that this is about the protection of the public as well as police officers.

At conference I have the opportunity to make an address to the Home Secretary in front of the delegates.

There are two core themes to my speech this year and, whilst appreciating they cover a wide range of specifics, I

will attempt to give you a flavour of what I will say. The main themes are for the government to protect, value and appreciate police officers and to do what is necessary to make the criminal justice system fit for purpose.

One question I shall put directly to Jacqui Smith is how many times does the government want us to arrest criminals before they are dealt with effectively in the criminal justice system?

With a seventy per cent reoffending rate amongst career criminals we see the same persistent offenders time and time again and spend an inordinate amount of time and money bringing them to justice. When will they be properly dealt with?

Rather than addressing the real problem of ineffective sanctions, ineffective education programmes and ineffective rehabilitation the focus is on the police to detect the same people and bring them before the courts again and again.

And because politicians of all political colours publicly trumpet the police as the sole solution to the problem, as a police service we will never be left alone. The change comes thick and fast, whether it's reform by the current government or planned reforms by possible future government's. Added to this is the continual examination of our processes and structure by a range of political think tanks all vying for credible status amongst their political masters.

We accept change is inevitable and no-one is suggesting we should stand still. But when will politicians finally realise that there is a very real and urgent need to have an independent review of the entire criminal justice system.

No more gimmicks, no more sound bites. Let's have an open and honest debate about what the public wants and expects of its police service, court service, prison service and probation service.

Only then can any government move forward with a mandate to make the changes desperately needed to ensure our criminal justice system is effective and fit for purpose.

Anyone wishing to watch conference, can do so via the Police Federation website [www.polfed.org](http://www.polfed.org)