

Question and answer

Meredydd Hughes, chief constable of South Yorkshire Police, took up his post as the ACPO lead on roads policing at the end of last month and is due to speak at the Federation's Roads Policing conference this month in Derby. He speaks to Sarah Aspinall on his vision for the future.

Where do you see the role of traffic officer going over the next five years?

My role is to make sure that roads policing is firmly back on the policing agenda, that there is a clear reduction in fatalities and a refocusing on the reduction of crime.

I'm more keen than ever that there should be fully dedicated road policing officers. I have always believed in a force-wide road policing unit and given the problems we face on the roads, together with the greater technology deployed, we will need more specialist officers in the future, not less.

Why is there a need for greater clarity on the role of the roads policing officer?

Because in an era of budget cuts and a focus on basic command unit performance indicators, all too often the road policing officer becomes little more than a fast



chief constable Meredydd Hughes

response car to an incident. We've got to redefine the role in such a way that everyone can understand the value to main-stream policing.

How do Highways Agency traffic officers (HATOs) fit in the future of roads policing?

In shorthand I see HATOs as the PCSOs of the strategic road policing network. They are not there to replace cops in the detection of crime or the investigation of collisions, but can free up officers time by looking after the cameras and the highways and the drivers using them.

What message would you like to give to Roads Policing officers across the country?

This re-emphasis on roads policing doesn't mean going back to the inaccurate vision of the good old days when traffic officers sat beside the roadside playing with their speed guns to get a quota of tickets for their sergeants. Those days are gone - roads policing is about expertise in accident investigation and specialised crime fighting.

What would you like to change or improve in relation to the image of roads policing?

I would really like to broaden the debate in the media who are obsessively focussed on speed cameras. We need to get enforcement into the minds of the public - road policing is much wider than speed cameras.

What do you hope the Federation's Roads Policing conference will achieve?

I hope it will give the opportunity for Federation members both to hear the breadth of vision that has been developed by ACPO and be reassured that this subject is moving firmly back up the list of policing priorities. I hope that everyone will learn something new about where road policing is going.

Meredydd Hughes is due to speak at the Federation's Roads Policing conference on November 17 at Yew Lodge Hotel, Kegworth, Derby. The conference will include speakers and debates including a look at the future of roads policing and current technology available. Anyone who would like to attend should call Charlotte on: 0208 3351090 for more information.