

# Conference call

The Superintendents' Association Conference takes place in Cheshire next month. We asked Association President Derek Barnett about the challenges facing the service

## What issues are likely to be discussed at your conference next month?

We share the same concerns as our colleagues in the Federation about the uncertain future of pay, conditions and pensions, and the likely impact upon police officer and police staff numbers.

I strongly believe that in these difficult times it is more important than ever that the police service finds one voice to articulate a coherent vision that will shape the future of policing. I urge ACPO, the Federation along with my own Association to commit ourselves to working more closely together.

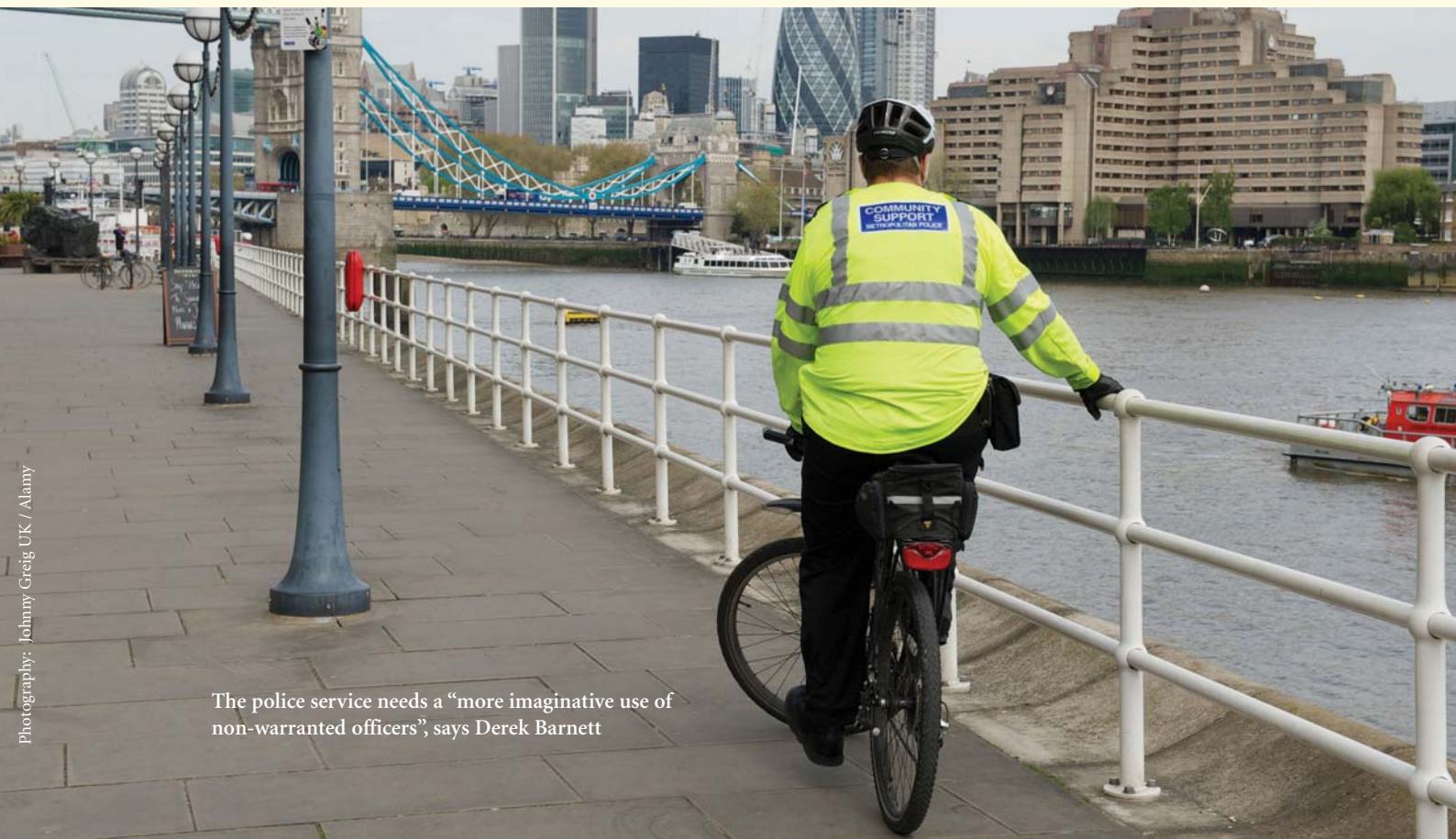
## Funding cuts have dominated the headlines recently, is the answer to cut police officer numbers?

I don't believe it is as simple as saying 'no reduction in police numbers'. Police officer numbers are at a record high and so too police staff, including 16,000 PCSOs.

We have to acknowledge that the service has to be more open to a better and more imaginative use of non-warranted officers, reducing the internal bureaucracy, minimising risk-averse processes and utilising the expertise and cost effectiveness of the private sector where it can deliver value for money.

## What other impact on policing is the new government likely to have?

We are seeing a new approach to the wider criminal justice system, including questioning the value of prison, cutting the number of courts, and reducing social provision. This is likely to increase tensions in society and it is important the police service is sufficiently resilient, trained and equipped to deal not only with crime and routine policing, but also with the wider protection of the public peace and maintenance of order in our cities and towns.



The police service needs a "more imaginative use of non-warranted officers", says Derek Barnett

### **Has Neighbourhood Policing become a luxury the police service can no longer afford?**

In a word: no. We have made tremendous advances in delivering Neighbourhood Policing in terms of building public confidence and increasing people's sense of security. Part of that success has been due to the introduction of PCSOs and I do not subscribe to the view that we have to do away with PCSOs to maintain police officer numbers.

However, what does worry me is that we don't always recognise the importance of response policing and the basic professional investigation of crime. As important as Neighbourhood Policing is, we cannot ignore the fact that we are a 24/7 emergency service. Response policing and CID must remain resilient, as recent events in Cumbria and Northumbria have shown.

**“There are those outside of policing and sadly some within, who do not recognise the added value of the operational and leadership role of superintendents, and the chief inspectors who support them.”**

### **Will the cuts mean a reduction in the number of superintendents?**

Over the last 30 years constables, sergeants and inspectors have all seen their numbers rise. Around 16,000 PCSOs have been recruited and police staff numbers have also increased, with ACPO ranks remaining fairly stable. However, the number of superintendents, chief superintendents and, equally important, chief inspectors has reduced considerably. In terms of productivity this has been a success story that has gone unrecognised.

Unfortunately there are those outside of policing, and sadly some within, who do not recognise the added value of the operational and leadership role of superintendents, and the chief inspectors who support them, and see them simply as additional managerial costs. This is damaging to the service and I will continue to highlight the shortcomings and inconsistencies in this approach.

### **What do you think will be the outcome of the recent pay review announced by the government?**

The simple answer is that the full terms of reference and direction of the review are still emerging and it would not be helpful to comment at this stage. However, police authorities and chief constables must recognise that the current national pay agreements, terms of conditions and police regulations are legally binding and freely entered into by all parties on the staff and official side. They cannot simply be dismantled arbitrarily at a local



Superintendents' Association President Derek Barnett

level in pursuit of short-term savings and at the expense of individual members of staff.

### **You have been described as being passionate about policing and someone who takes an optimistic view of life. What do you hope to achieve as President of the Superintendents' Association?**

I am tremendously proud of our police service, the protection it provides our society and the values it brings to our public life.

During my service, public, political and media scrutiny of the police have grown, as have demands for greater accountability. The police service is expected to be more business like and more managerial in its pursuit of value for money, resulting in it being more closely monitored.

This has led us to withdraw from doing some of the things that give us legitimacy and public support. It has made us more risk averse and at times we have lost our professional confidence to be able to shape the future of policing.

I want to be a strong advocate for the service and its amazingly dedicated, committed and talented officers and staff, in particular those who daily face difficult and dangerous situations on behalf of the public. With such dedicated public servants I am optimistic about the future of policing and will do all I can to ensure their efforts are valued and recognised by government, the media and the public.

The Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales Conference takes place at Carden Park Hotel, Nr Chester, Cheshire on 14-16 September