



## View from the sidelines

# The sick response to Moat should prompt us to ask, why this reaction?

Admiration and sympathy are not sentiments that I would have expected to be engendered by Raoul Moat, who shot and killed a man, shot and wounded his ex-girlfriend, and blinded one of our colleagues, PC David Rathband. However, it seems that this is how many feel, judging by some of the comments posted on newspaper websites, Facebook and YouTube.

I was pleased to see during Prime Minister's Questions recently that David Cameron criticised the sympathy and admiration that has been expressed by some towards the killer.

Chris Heaton-Harris, the Conservative MP for Daventry, had asked Mr Cameron to contact Facebook and request the 'RIP Raoul Moat' page which has attracted more than 40,000 members to be taken down. He described it as carrying a "whole host of anti-police statements".

Mr Cameron said: "It is absolutely clear that Raoul Moat was a callous murderer, full stop, end of story. I cannot understand any wave, however small, of public sympathy for this man. There should be public sympathy for his victims and the havoc he wreaked in that community. There should be no sympathy for him."

I would have been surprised if Jack Straw or anyone

from the previous government had made such an unequivocal statement and demonstrated good leadership in this way. I am impressed that Mr Cameron has done so – it needed saying.

I am also appalled that YouTube have allowed an outrageously offensive 'Raoul Moat Tribute Rap', posted by some sick idiots from Birmingham, to remain on its site. YouTube is quick to take down videos that infringe copyright but have not removed this video, which offends public decency.

One issue that I believe needs to be tackled immediately is the incomprehensible reaction of some to Moat's death and what is quite clearly a hatred of the police. Keeping this in perspective I do appreciate that in comparison to the vast majority of supportive citizens the numbers of 'antis' is small. Nevertheless, it is really disturbing that so many have reacted in such a way and it is imperative that all of us use this as a wake-up call and establish why.

Despite the optimism of public confidence surveys commissioned and published by many police forces, I still suspect that even our traditional supporters have lost some respect and that there is a belief that for too many years we have been pointed in the wrong direction by various governments.

I am reluctant to use the phrase 'Back to Basics' however, in 1829 Sir Richard Mayne the first Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police wrote: "The primary object of an efficient police is the prevention of crime: the next that of detection and punishment of offenders if crime is committed. To these ends all the efforts of police must be directed. The protection of life and property, the preservation of public tranquillity, and the absence of crime will alone prove whether those efforts have been successful and whether the objects for which the police were appointed have been attained."

As complex as policing has become, Mayne's statement is still highly relevant today. If allowed to get on with this, with sufficient fully warranted officers and the proper level of scrutiny and accountability, we cannot go too far wrong.

David Cameron said there should be no sympathy for Raoul Moat



Photography: Anderson Photography

Facebook has removed one page, but others have taken its place

The screenshot shows a Facebook profile for 'R.I.P Raoul Moat!'. The profile picture is a portrait of a man with short blonde hair. Below the profile picture, there is a post from 'Wesley Gurnell' with the text: "a large black ball in morning. I looked up, smiled and said". The post has 54 seconds ago, Comment, Like, and Flag options.