

# Charity calls for cuts to roads policing to end

Dramatic cuts to roads policing teams which have seen officer numbers slashed by more than ten percent could lead to drivers thinking they can 'get away' with life-threatening crimes, according to road safety charity Brake.

Figures released by the charity last month follow warnings from Alan Jones, the Federation's lead on roads policing issues, that the 20 percent cuts to police budgets are having a severe impact on roads policing units.

The findings, obtained by Freedom of Information requests to forces show numbers of roads policing officers have been reduced by 11.6 percent in the five years from 2007 to 2011.

Mr Jones said that the 'cost of cutting back far outweighs the benefits in protecting a key frontline service'. There were 7,525 dedicated traffic police in England and Wales in 1999 but this number fell to 6,511 in 2005.

And Julie Townsend, Brake's deputy chief executive, said: "It is crucial the government acts now to put a stop to these dramatic cuts in life-saving roads policing, by making this a national policing priority. This is crucial in safeguarding the public and preventing needless casualties that lead to terrible suffering, and it also makes economic sense.

"Road crashes constitute a huge social and economic burden, because of the awful implications for those bereaved and injured, and the strain on health and emergency services. Investing in roads policing, and stepping up critical checks like breath-testing, helps stop crashes before they happen, meaning less families suffering and reduced costs to the taxpayer."

Alan Jones says police cuts are having a 'severe impact' on roads policing



# Lone officers would increase visibility on the roads

Police leaders in roads policing should consider single-crewing officers to get more out of less resources.

Stuart Donald, assistant chief constable of Humberside Police, spoke to delegates at the Federation and ACPO National Roads Policing Conference last month and advocated single-crewing as a means to increase 'visibility' and 'confidence'.

The senior officer, who has commanded his own force's traffic unit, said: "I really see community support officers and police officers patrolling on their own. We need to get more out of the existing resources."

He added that research suggests officers are much more likely to engage with the public when they are not talking to their colleagues, although he acknowledged it was a contentious issue and proper risk assessments would still need to be done.

Mr Donald, a member of ACPO's Roads Policing Business Area, said where he was based in Grimsby they had made regular use of Special Constables to patrol as well as community wardens. He added: "Is it policing on the cheap? Well of course it is cheaper, but if it's done well it's maybe part of the new challenge or part of whatever the big society is."

He also called for roads policing officers to be 're-empowered' and to give them their discretion back to help increase time on the streets and reduce the amount paperwork.

Mr Donald said: "I do think we can re-position roads policing officers and get them recognised as the professionals they so clearly are."

Humberside ACC Stuart Donald backs more single crewing

