

Federation members polled on strike action

Up to 136,000 officers will be asked if they wish to lobby for a change in the law that will allow them the right to strike.

The historic poll, which was announced by Jan Berry, chairman of the Police Federation at a special meeting in February, will take place from March 24 to May 2, to give officers the opportunity to vote.

Members of the federated ranks will be asked the following two questions:

- Do you consider the decision of the independent Police Arbitration Tribunal should be binding on the Government?
- In the absence of binding arbitration on the Government, do you wish the Police Federation of England and Wales to start to lobby for a change in legislation to allow police officers full industrial rights?

Officers can either take part in a paper ballot or file their response online. The results of poll will be announced at the annual Police Federation of England and Wales conference in Bournemouth in May.

The police were banned from going on strike in 1919, when the Police Act was first established. This is the first time the strike ban has been challenged. If the majority of officers vote to lobby for industrial rights, the Federation will move to overturn the law.

The poll follows the London march attended by 25,000 police officers protesting about the Government's refusal to honour the pay award recommended by the independent Police Arbitration Board.

What do you think? Do police officers now need the right to strike?
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Victory claimed over back-dated allowances

The Home Secretary has backed down over allowances which will now be backdated, in what is seen as a small victory for the Police Federation.

The Federation says that the presence of 25,000 off-duty police officers marching through London 'forced the hand' of the Home Secretary.

Jacqui Smith has now decided to back-date full increases in the dog handler's allowance, the London Weighting and the Competence Related Threshold Payments (CRTP).

Following the announcement, Jan Berry, Chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales, said: "This is a small but significant victory in our continuing fight for fair pay for police, and shows that the anger and strength of feeling of betrayal we feel has been recognised by the Government."

Last month the Federation won the right to a judicial review of the pay ruling. It will now launch a High Court challenge to the government's refusal to honour in full the decision of the independent Police Arbitration Tribunal.

The judge said he had "no hesitation" in the ruling as there was an arguable case to apply for judicial review.

Jan Berry added: "The fact that our application for a judicial review has been successful adds weight to what we have been saying all along – that the Home Secretary betrayed police officers by failing to honour the decision of the independent Police Arbitration Tribunal."

Officer ballot: The last police strike was in 1919



Photography: Hulton Archive/Stringer

Pay day: Allowances for dog handlers will be back-dated



Photography: Arclight / Alamy