

## **POLICE FEDERATION, BOURNEMOUTH, 13 MAY 2009**

**Rt Hon Jacqui Smith MP, Home Secretary**

### **1. Introduction**

Good morning. As that video shows us all, being a police officer carries with it a heavy responsibility.

And some of your colleagues have paid the highest price of all. We should never lose sight of their contribution, and never forget the hole they leave in the lives of their families, and in the life of their station.

I saw that enduring sense of loss in Bradford last week, at the unveiling of the memorial for Sharon Beshenivsky.

I saw it a few weeks earlier at the reception I hosted for the winners of the Queen's Gallantry Award, including DC Stephen Oake and PC Richard Gray.

And today I would like to pay my own respects to the officers on the video who have lost their lives on duty:

- Constable Christopher Roberts
- Constable Ian Terry
- Detective Sergeant David Heptinstall
- Constable Kevin Sparks
- Constable Glen Howe
- Detective Constable Ian Morton
- Constable James Drew
- Constable George Small
- and Constable Gary Toms.

We can never fully repay the debt that we owe to officers killed or injured in the line of duty.

But we can acknowledge the debt we owe – each and every day – to all police officers. You start every shift in the full knowledge that you can be called on to use your judgement in the most delicate and sensitive of situations.

## **2. Proud of professional policing**

There are times when I think some people would do well to pause for thought and remember the challenges you face on a daily basis – before they rush to judgement.

Michael Winner made an excellent point the other week when, in the wake of the G20 protests in London, he lamented the current vogue for “police bashing”.

We all saw the pictures on the television. But what we didn't see was all the hard work that went in, behind the scenes, to mounting such a large-scale and intensive police operation.

No doubt some of you were there. And when I visited Gold Command on that day, it was clear to me that the overwhelming sense was of your commitment to protecting the public – as well as, of course, to facilitating and protecting people's right to demonstrate.

But let's be clear about this. Even under pressure, it's vital that the professional standards you prize so highly are upheld. Badge numbers should be visible. Where there has been wrongdoing or cause for complaint, we should let the processes we have in place take their proper course.

But to all of your colleagues who did such an excellent job on the day, let me add my thanks.

I know that people look at our right to protest in this country with envy. We should be proud of it, not talk it down.

### **3. Bournemouth, one year on**

Paul, it's been quite a year since I last stood here in Bournemouth.

You've taken over the leadership of the Fed – you had some big shoes to fill, but you've done it with authority and calm.

In the past year, we've also published the Policing Green Paper – injecting new drive into the cause of common sense policing.

We've seen forces deliver the first full year of Neighbourhood Policing – 3600 local teams, right across England and Wales. As the Prime Minister said yesterday, this is a unique achievement, that everyone in policing should be proud of.

As of the start of this year, forces everywhere are now signed up to the Policing Pledge.

And, of course, thanks to Ian Rennie's tireless endeavours – not to mention the odd cup of tea round my house – we've nailed down a three-year pay deal.

A fair deal – both for you, and for the public.

A fair deal that I'm committed to, and that this government will stand by, and honour in full.

We've given police authorities the money they need to keep officer numbers at today's record levels. There is no financial excuse – no 'get out' clause – for cutting police officer numbers.

Paul, I heard what you said yesterday about the need for more police in a recession.

We all want to see more cops on the beat – at all times, not just when times are tough. And since the last recession ended in the early Nineties, of course, record investment has lifted your numbers from a low of 127,000 to more than 140,000 today.

Backed by this investment, and thanks to you – despite the recession – crime continues to fall. Down by nearly 40% since 1997, with domestic burglaries more than halved.

Thanks to you, people are now less likely to be a victim of crime than at any point in the last 25 years.

But let nobody think that any of this has happened by accident. It's because of the political choices that we've made, over several years.

At a time when politicians are coming in for plenty of scrutiny, let's not forget to scrutinise those choices.

Investment, not cuts. Backing you and your leaders when the going gets tough – not blundering in to undermine your operational independence.

Of course, there are still challenges to meet. At a time when people may be feeling less secure in their own lives, it's more important than ever that we help them feel secure in their homes and safe on their streets.

We do that not by cutting funding for frontline policing in future years, but by giving you the job security and professional freedom you need.

We do that by ensuring there is no inevitability about rising crime in a recession.

#### **4. My commitment to common sense policing**

Common sense policing is the key to making so much of this happen. And that's what I put at the heart of the Green Paper last July.

You said you wanted to cut targets and slash bureaucracy. I agreed.

That's why we've scrapped every top-down target, except for one – to improve public confidence.

That's why we've torn up your timesheets – freeing up more than a quarter of a million hours per year.

That's why we've axed the foot-long stop and account form – saving well over half a million hours.

That's why we made the choice to invest in 30,000 handheld computers – saving you and your colleagues up to half an hour on every shift.

And that's why we're making sure that every force will benefit from the Staffordshire police pilot, which showed how forces can cut 80% of form-filling for 80% of crimes.

I know that some of you will not have felt the full force of these changes on the ground. So where your force is being slow to implement the changes, you're right to ask why not, and when they will.

And you won't be alone. Last year I appointed Jan Berry to help us cut the bureaucracy coming out of Whitehall. Now that her independent review is nearly complete, Jan has agreed to take on a new task – to cut red tape at force level as well.

But before she does that, I know that Jan will have something to say about the charging process as well.

I know how frustrating you can find this – particularly when time is needlessly wasted in some cases waiting for a decision from the CPS.

We can't have a situation where you're not getting the support you need. You should be out there policing – not standing by a fax machine waiting for someone to get back to you.

It may be that you don't always get clear enough information to make consistent calls on charging. I want to revise the guidance so that you don't have to err on the side of caution.

And I want the system streamlined so that you get the best possible service and a quicker turnaround, even with the serious cases that require a CPS decision.

I want more time freed up for you to focus on the things that matter.

But it's not just more time you need. It's more freedom, too. To use your judgement and discretion as a matter of course.

You know your job better than anyone. You know the processes that get in the way, and stop you from serving the public.

And that's why the single confidence target is so important.

Building public confidence in policing isn't a gimmick. It's a bread and butter issue for us all, because it's only possible for you to get the best results if you've got the confidence of your local community.

It's not about better marketing or presentation – although communicating with the public is as important now as it's always been.

It's about helping you to catch more criminals and bring them to justice. If people trust you to act on their concerns then they are more likely to report crimes and more likely to help prosecute those criminals in court.

In many ways, the Policing Pledge is the public face of the single confidence target – a clear deal on what people can expect and clear standards that all forces have agreed to meet.

The Pledge isn't just about Neighbourhood Policing. It involves everybody – from response teams and CID to custody sergeants and family liaison officers – working hard to meet the public's expectations.

And let me say this – the Pledge is about PCSOs as well, and the great job that they do alongside you. I know there are many in this hall who agree, and who value the distinct role PCSOs perform – not as a replacement for constables, but as your ally in building confidence in communities.

## **5. Giving you the tools for the job**

A single target and real in-roads into red tape, with more to come...restoring discretion to frontline officers...a Pledge that sets out what people can expect from a modern, responsive police force...and a new drive to build public trust and confidence in policing.

That sounds like common sense to me.

And when you make a common sense case to me, I will make common cause with you.

Paul, you called for greater use of Tasers to protect officers and the public.

I'm proud that we're one of the only countries in the world where officers don't routinely have to carry weapons – and that's all the more reason to make sure you have the tools you need to stay safe.

So we've now provided funding for 10,000 Tasers across the country.

And, for me, it's right that the officers who have given so much to protect the public get support from us when they need it.

So after the strong case you've made for officers injured in the line of duty, I'm pleased to announce nearly £2.5 million in Home Office funding for the police rehabilitation centres in Goring and Harrogate.

## **6. Meeting our promises on pensions and benefits**

This time last year, I told you that I wanted to help the partners of fellow officers killed in the line of duty, if they were experiencing hardship as a result of losing their pension on remarriage.

And so we're funding the Police Dependants' Trust to provide financial help to widows and widowers – starting this July – with those who qualify receiving assistance of up to £20,000 each.

Last year, I also announced new commutation factors for calculating retirement lump sums.

As you know, the Home Office will not appeal the results of the judicial review on this. It's no secret that this has involved finding a very substantial sum of money – but we've done it, and I expect most payments to be paid this month.

## **7. Conclusion**

Over the past decade, you've done a tremendous job in getting crime down. I've seen that for myself many times over, in so many different ways.

And when I visited officers in Manchester last week, where gun crime has been cut by 93%, it brought home to me the – literally vital – importance of your work.

We have, without question, the best police service in the world. I know the public think that too – and that’s why your role is so central to the changes we are making together.

I’ll always back police officers as you do your job. As you do your duty – and daily go beyond the call of duty – to uphold the law and uphold the reputation of British policing.

All of you came into policing to make a difference – to protect the public and build people’s confidence in the fight against crime. To keep our communities and our country safe.

That’s why I entered politics too. And I will always do what I can to help you to make that difference – delivering for the public that we should all be proud to serve.

Thank you.