

WELSH MATTERS

News and views from the Police Federation's Welsh Affairs Sub-Committee



'NEW MEMORIAL WOULD BE FITTING TRIBUTE TO WELSH OFFICERS'

THE POLICE Federation's Welsh lead says a new National Welsh Police Memorial will be a fitting tribute to the fallen officers and staff in Wales.

Nicky Ryan is backing an appeal by the Police Roll of Honour Trust to help fund the memorial, which will honour the heroic officers and staff who have given their lives to protect the people and communities of Wales.

More than 80 officers have died in the line of duty in Wales, but it's the only country in the UK without a dedicated national police memorial.

Nicky said: "Our members put their lives on the line every day and sadly some have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

"A National Welsh Police Memorial would be a fitting and lasting tribute to those members of our police service who have died while protecting the people and communities of Wales.

"A memorial would give a focal point for family and friends to reflect on the loss of their loved ones, and it would give colleagues and the public a place to show their respects.

"Now we need help in ensuring it becomes a reality and that we have a dedicated memorial where we can all remember their sacrifice in public service."

Students from the University of Wales Trinity St David's (UWTSD) Swansea School of Architecture won a competition to design the memorial.

It will be located in Alexandra Gardens in Cardiff, close to the National Welsh War Memorial and National Welsh Falklands War Memorial.

John Giblin, vice-chair of the Police Roll of Honour Trust, said: "It's intended the memorial will be funded by public and workforce fundraising and donations.

"Donations have already been received from the police family and are being held by the trust.

"We're a small charity managed by volunteers, who are serving officers, retired officers and the relatives of fallen officers.

"The trust is rich in experience but poor on funding, so we make every penny count."

To donate to the memorial, visit www.justgiving.com/campaign/welshpolicememorial.

POLICING ISSUES RAISED AT PLAID CYMRU CONFERENCE

THE ISSUES affecting police officers across Wales were discussed with Welsh politicians during the Plaid Cymru conference at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff.

The Federation's Welsh lead Nicky Ryan attended the conference, held at the end of March, with Calum Macleod, a Welsh regional representative on the Police Federation of England and Wales National Board and head of criminal claims, and had arranged a meeting with leading politicians.

"We were able to brief the politicians on a number of areas including the Federation's current campaign for better pay and a fairer pay review process and its Time Limits campaign which calls for an end to long-drawn-out police conduct investigations," says Nicky.

"But we were also able to put the spotlight on issues that are very specific to Wales due to the way in which devolution has an impact on officers. For example, the Police Covenant, which will soon enshrine police officer wellbeing in law in England, will not necessarily apply to officers in Wales and therefore there is an opportunity for the Senedd to act now and ensure that the officers serving its communities are also subject to the provisions of the covenant – or perhaps the Senedd could go even further.

"We felt those we spoke to were sympathetic to the issues raised and that they had an appetite to understand policing and support officers where they can."

Nicky and Calum met with Liz Saville-Roberts (leader of Plaid at Westminster and MP for Dwyfor Merionnydd), Rhys Ab Owen (Plaid representative for social justice and the constitution), Ioan Bellin from Rhys' office at the Senedd and Hywel Williams (MP for Arfon).

MP'S POLICING FAMILY HELPS HIM UNDERSTANDING ISSUES OFFICERS FACE

POLICE FEDERATION Welsh lead Nicky Ryan discussed some of the key issues facing members during a meeting with the Plaid Cymru MP for Ceredigion, Ben Lake.

It's the latest in Nicky's ongoing meetings with politicians in Wales. She was joined by the chair of Dyfed Powys Police Federation, Gareth Jones.

Nicky said: "Mr Lake grew up in the area and has been taken for a number ride-alongs with local units. He comes from a policing family with his dad and grandad both having policed the area – indeed, his dad is in a group photo on the wall in Lampeter Police Station

"So, all added up, he really understands the policing landscape, and the issues facing the service and officers."

One of the key areas for discussion was the low starting salary of Welsh police officers.

Nicky said: "Our recent pay and morale survey found 79 per cent of officers in Wales were dissatisfied with their overall remuneration, 44 per cent worried about their finances every day and 94 per cent don't feel fairly paid for the stresses of the job.

"It's no surprise when you compare the starting salary of £21,402 that Welsh officers receive with a 40-hour week on the £9.50 minimum wage, which equates to £19,760 a year.

"We raised this with Mr Lake, and he is fully aware that pay is a real issue for police officers across Wales.

"We also discussed the Government's Operation Uplift recruit drive, which is putting additional pressure on young officers who have to balance policing with their university work, though it was acknowledged that students in Dyfed Powys Police are given protected learning time to help."



Police Federation Welsh lead Nicky Ryan.

Nicky and Gareth also discussed the Federation's Time Limits campaign, which aims to ensure that any police disciplinary investigations are concluded within 12 months from the moment an allegation is made.

Nicky said: "While acknowledging the need for officers to be accountable for their actions, Mr Lake understood the impact that being under investigation for a long period of time can have on officers' mental wellbeing and family life."

The issues of policing being devolved and a single force to cover Wales were also discussed.

Last month, Dr Richard Lewis, the Chief Constable of Dyfed Powys Police, called for the four forces in Wales to be merged into one.

His counterpart at South Wales Police, Jeremy Vaughan, then told a one-off session on policing in Wales of the Welsh Affairs Committee at Westminster chaired by Mr Lake that policing would need to be devolved to make it work.



Chair of Dyfed Powys Police Federation, Gareth Jones.

Nicky said: "Mr Lake was interested to hear the discussions around devolution of policing and the one force model, as well local issues around resourcing.

"We also discussed the demands placed on the service by the police service supporting health boards around mental health matters," Nicky said, "Mr Lake has witnessed this for himself on his most recent ride-along with officers."

Another area of discussion included the transient nature of the population of Ceredigion and other areas in Wales due to them being popular holiday and tourist spots and the effect this has on funding for the Force.

"It was a really positive meeting and we're really grateful to Mr Lake for his time," said Nicky, "In total we were with him for almost two and a half hours, which was amazing.

"And he indicated that he'd be happy to support policing in Wales in any way he can at Westminster, which we're really grateful for."

CONFERENCE HELPS IMPROVE LINKS WITH POLITICIANS

THE FEDERATION'S Welsh lead was able to connect with a number of Members of the Senedd and met the three Labour Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in Wales when she attended the Welsh Labour Party conference in Llandudno in mid-March.

Nicky was joined at the conference by Zac Mader, a South Wales officer and member of the Police Federation of England and Wales National Board and the

Federation Welsh Affairs Select Committee (WASC).

"We had a very productive couple of days at the conference," says Nicky who chairs WASC, "We listened to the speeches by Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and the First Minister Mark Drakeford and also made the best of our time in North Wales by meeting the Welsh PCCs – Jeff Cuthbert for Gwent, Andrew Dunbobbin for North Wales and Alun Michael for South Wales.

"Our aim was to build on our relations with politicians, discuss the challenges in policing and share the views of members with decision-makers."

Nicky and Zac also made contact with a number of Senedd members including Sarah Murphy (MS for Bridgend), Huw Irranca-Davies (chair of the Legislation Committee) and Joyce Watson (MS for Mid and West Wales) and will be arranging follow-up meetings to raise issues of concern.

CHIEFS PRAISE OFFICERS

POLICE CHIEFS have praised the dedication and sacrifices of officers during the pandemic.

Giving evidence at the House of Commons in Westminster, the chief constables of the four Welsh forces spelled out the challenges facing policing in the country.

Speaking at a one-off session of the Welsh Affairs Committee on policing, they said that officers have stepped up to those challenges over the past two years of Covid-19.

Jeremy Vaughan, Chief Constable of South Wales Police, said: "The last couple of years have been extremely challenging in policing, with a global health pandemic.

"On March 24 2020, the rest of the population went home but policing came to work with no real idea about what PPE should be worn and no real idea about the impact of the virus.

"We all, in Wales, had police officers who were living away from home, staying in student accommodation, because they were worried about taking things to vulnerable people at home.

"Not once did any of us, I'm sure, get a grumble from people about the mission of policing."

Amanda Blakeman, Deputy Chief Constable of Gwent Police, said: "We've managed the relationship between us and the public in the pandemic.

"We've managed that because of the skill of our officers on the street daily, doing the job that we ask them to do.

"It was very difficult on occasion for officers working not necessarily always with all of the facts in front of them, trying to gather those and trying to make some difficult decisions."

Dr Richard Lewis, Chief Constable of Dyfed Powys Police, said officers were helped by the public's support and that relationships with communities were maintained throughout the pandemic.

"It's important to note our thanks for the support the public showed for the new regulations, laws that we were interpreting on the hoof," he said, "The vast majority of our communities complied entirely and continue to.

"That made policing the pandemic a much easier task than if we had faced a lot

more difficulties in our communities during those difficult months, indeed years.

"Our staff members, of course, are also members of the public. They suffered the same losses as a general member of the public."

Carl Foulkes, North Wales Police's Chief Constable, added: "I genuinely think we got the balance pretty right, not just in North Wales but across Wales.

"The four Es approach very much started with engagement, moving on through encouragement and only using enforcement at the very last. That was right."

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Dr Lewis was asked about his comments this week that the four police forces in Wales be combined into one. He stressed to the committee it was his personal view but that it had worked successfully in Scotland.

"We have seen savings of, I think, in excess of £2 billion, on a much larger model than we have here in Wales," he said. "There are efficiencies that can be reinvested into policing in Wales, including into police staff members."

Chief Constable Vaughan said any move to combine the four forces would have to come after policing in Wales was devolved.

He said such a move would be more efficient but it wasn't clear the service

would be better as a result.

Deputy Chief Constable Blakeman added: "My personal view is that bigger is not always better. We are here to deliver a service locally. We are locally accountable public servants."

Chief Constable Foulkes said North Wales police had a good working relationship with forces in the north west of England.

"Wales operates quite well left to right, but it struggles up to down sometimes, and we see that with our crime," he said. "The threat of serious organised crime, for me, comes left to right: it comes from Merseyside, from Manchester.

"All my working partnerships are with the north west, with the North West ROCU, with my dog section, which I combine, and my firearms unit, which I combine with forces."

Dr Lewis, the former Chief Constable of Cleveland Police, also discussed the differences in funding for forces in England and Wales.

"A recent example might be the additional funding announced by the Home Office in response to Dame Carol Black's review into the drug strategy," he said.

"As the Chief Constable of Cleveland Police, I didn't have to ask the additional question of whether this applied to Wales and whether the funding would be easy to establish.

"I could apply and bid for funding because I knew it would apply to me as the chief constable of an English force. I've returned to Wales and am getting used to having to ask that additional question.

"The Home Office is better at that now than when I was last working in Wales, but it remains a challenge in us finding the thread of money that has been allocated perhaps to the devolved administration for things such as health, and whether we can access some of that funding.

"That is an additional challenge faced in Wales."

He added: "What I will say, having recently returned, is that I have yet to work in another area or see another region of policing that has such collaborative arrangements and good working partnerships, between all four of the Welsh forces, as we have here in Wales.

'POLICING ROSE TO THE CHALLENGES'

NICKY RYAN, THE POLICE Federation's Welsh lead, has welcomed the chief officers' praise for the way in which officers responded to the pandemic.

"Police officers really did rise to the challenge and coped with what were incredibly difficult times, putting their health and wellbeing on the line to remain on the frontline," says Nicky.

"I am pleased that the chief constables have acknowledged this."

But Nicky is less convinced about the possibility of one force for Wales.

"The Police Federation has a neutral stance around devolution and the one force model. But, from that neutral stance, we also say follow the evidence of the Silk and Thomas Commission and if that evidence concludes a better service can be provided to the public, it should be given consideration," she says.

NEWS IN BRIEF

POLICING SHOULD BE DEVOLVED TO WALES, SAYS SENEDD

Members of the Welsh Parliament have passed a motion by 38 votes to 14 that policing in Wales should be devolved in line with other 999 services.

The Federation maintains a neutral stance, believing this is a matter for governments to resolve, nevertheless a briefing paper provided to Senedd members by Welsh lead Nicky Ryan was quoted by both sides in the debate in early March.

Nicky Ryan, who leads the Police Federation of England and Wales' Welsh Affairs Sub-Committee, said: "When the Commission led by Sir Paul Silk delved into the devolution question more than a decade ago, the Federation provided oral and written advice that was commended by commissioners as being 'evidence led'.

"Our conclusion then was that 'policing could be devolved', but that the decision about whether should be is for governments. Following the Thomas Commission a few years later the starting point has become 'Why shouldn't policing be devolved?' but our neutral stance remains as we believe it is for the decision-makers, policy directors and those elected to public office to consider, debate and come to a conclusion."

GOVERNMENT URGED TO ACT ON LOW MORALE

The Police Federation's Welsh lead says officers are increasingly feeling "undervalued, underpaid and overstretched" following the publication of a new report into pay and morale.

Nicky Ryan urged police chiefs and the Government to do more to support officers after the Federation's pay and morale survey found 59 per cent of officers in Wales had low personal morale. This compared with 44 per cent in the 2020 survey.

In addition, 87 per cent reported low or very low force morale, up from 68 per cent in the previous survey.

"This survey paints a worrying picture

of low morale and should give real concern to police chiefs and the Government," Nicky said.

"Officers are increasingly feeling undervalued by decision-makers, underpaid for the hazards they face, and overstretched with ever-increasing workloads.

"During the last decade, our members have had their pay cut in real terms, seen swingeing cuts to the service and been put under significant pressure dealing with their ever-expanding day job while policing the constantly changing Covid rules."

SUPPORT FOR FEDERATION

Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Dafydd Llywelyn has expressed his support for exploring opportunities for the Police Federation to have a stronger voice at quarterly meetings of the four Welsh Chief Constables and PCCs.

Mr Llywelyn was an invited guest to the latest meeting of the Federation's Welsh Affairs Sub-Committee (WASC) and gave a wide-ranging input, outlining his role, his priorities and his work liaising with both the Welsh Government and Westminster.

He likened the political situation to "straddling two horses to get the best deal" recognising that while policing and justice was not devolved to Welsh Government so many aspects of their work were under the direction of Members of the Senedd and therefore stating it was essential to work with both governments.

"Over the last 10 years, we have seen a maturing of relations between policing and the Welsh Government and that's a good thing," he said, adding that this relationship had seen the Senedd agreeing to cover half of the funding for PCSOs in Wales.

"We are trying to ensure police officers and the wider police family are not overlooked by the Welsh Government."

Mr Llywelyn is the current chair of the Policing in Wales Group made up of the four Welsh Chief Constables and PCCs. The group members meet quarterly and he revealed he had voted for the Police Federation and other staff associations to be invited to attend but others had opposed the move.

"I can't see why they wouldn't want the Police Federation in the room," he explained, "It is important for us to have this dialogue."

