

Striking the Balance

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About Reform Scotland

Reform Scotland is an independent, non-party think tank that aims to set out a better way to deliver increased economic prosperity and more effective public services based on the traditional Scottish principles of limited government, diversity and personal responsibility.

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Contents

i.	Executive summary	1
1.	Introduction	4
2.	Background	5
2.1	Scotland's police forces	6
2.2	Other police agencies	11
2.3	'A consultation on the future of policing in Scotland'	13
3.	Police structures overseas	18
3.1	Belgium	18
3.2	Netherlands	19
3.3	Spain	19
3.4	France	19
3.5	Switzerland	20
3.6	Norway	21
4.	Policy Recommendations – local and accountable policing	22
5.	Conclusion	26
6.	References	27

i. Executive Summary

Objective

The Scottish Government is currently considering merging Scotland's eight police forces to create a single Scottish police force. Reform Scotland recognises that the current structure needs to change but believes such change needs to move in the opposite direction with more locally accountable policing, rather than a centralised service. The purpose of this report is to build upon the recommendations of Reform Scotland's 2008 report, 'power to protect' exploring in more detail how local and national policing can be better delivered in Scotland.

Findings

- While recorded crime in Scotland is at a 32-year low, there is a sizeable minority of the public which does not have full confidence in the policing on offer in their local communities.
- Scotland's eight police forces vary greatly in terms of size, geography and police numbers.
- There are also considerable differences in crime and detection rates as well as the type of crimes faced between the eight forces. For example, while Fife Constabulary had the second lowest rate for non-sexual crimes of violence in 2009/10, it had the highest rate for crimes of indecency, and Grampian Police had the third highest rate for crimes of dishonesty but the lowest rate for fire-raising and vandalism.
- There are a number of countries round the world which have far more locally accountable policing than Scotland, as well as multi-tier policing. For example, Spain has 1,800 municipal police forces and Belgium has 196 local forces.

Policy Recommendations

Building on previous reports, 'Striking the Balance' sets out a series of recommendations aimed at delivering locally accountable policing in Scotland:

- **Matching up police forces to local authority areas:** The current police force boundaries are largely a hangover from the days of regional government in Scotland and do not reflect current tiers of government. As a result, Reform Scotland would recommend that the boundaries are redrawn so that police force areas match local authority areas. Already in Scotland there are two areas where this is the case in Fife and Dumfries & Galloway. It would, therefore, be easy to pilot these policies in one or both of these areas. The existing divisional structure within the other six forces would also aid a fairly straightforward change, as illustrated on page 23. While some may argue that 32 police forces seems too many, that is more a question of the number of councils in Scotland. The key feature is that this recommendation would provide local accountability. This structure would not politicise the police anymore than a single police force – rather than one chief constable being accountable to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice we would have 32 chief constables accountable to councillors. As well as addressing the current accountability gap and ensuring that the service was more local, this model provides the opportunity for more effective policing at a local level. It would make the whole process more transparent with councils choosing to spend more, or less, on policing as their area requires as well setting new by-laws for their police forces to enforce.
- **Local leadership and accountability:** Linking up local authorities and policing would also lead to a clearer sense of who was in charge of policing; while the local chief constable would have operational responsibility, a local politician would have political responsibility, just as is the case for education, housing and a number of other local services. For example, currently there is no identifiable person in charge of policing in Glasgow, rather there is Chief Constable Stephen House who is responsible for the whole of Strathclyde and three chief superintendents who cover different parts of Glasgow. Under Reform Scotland's model there would be no doubt who was in charge.

- **Devolving power down through divisions:** The success of New York City's policing strategy also depended on responsibilities being devolved down to precincts, which is why Reform Scotland would argue that powers should be devolved down through Scotland's divisions. Just as there are different crime problems facing the different police forces in Scotland, there are different crime problems facing different areas within forces. As a result, it is important that enough freedom is given to area commanders to try out different policing methods. This also enables innovative and new policing practices to be tried out. As with all public services, increasing diversity can raise standards for all. Imposing a one-size-fits-all structure from the centre will stifle that innovation.
- **Stronger role for the SCDEA:** Reform Scotland believes, and in doing so would agree with the Scottish government's consultation, that there are areas where there is scope for more shared services and greater joint working. As a result, we would argue in favour of strengthening the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency. In addition to focusing on serious crime and co-ordinating threats across national and force borders, we would envisage this national force, which would be directly accountable to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, offering support, training, specialist services and resources to local forces if required. As a result, rather than the SCDEA being part of the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA), as at present, we would recommend the functions of the SPSA become part of the SCDEA.

In our report 'Democratic Power', Reform Scotland argued that the majority of quangos should be abolished with their functions either taken on by fully independent bodies or brought back in to government. As the SPSA, which the SCDEA is currently part of, is a quango, we would propose that the new, strengthened SCDEA, is brought back into government as an executive agency to improve transparency and accountability. An executive agency is a constituent part of the Scottish Government with a stronger focus on operational management and direct delivery of public services.

1. Introduction

In 2008, Reform Scotland published 'Power to Protect', which outlined recommendations to improve the Scottish criminal justice system. The following recommendations specifically dealt with policing¹:

- Make police forces in Scotland more directly and democratically accountable to the local communities they serve, which would enable local communities to adopt different approaches to tackling crime based on the specific needs and problems of their area.
- Ensure clear lines of accountability by matching police forces up to local authority areas with an individual councillor within the ruling council group given the responsibility for policing in each council area, although operational matters would still be left to the Chief Constable.
- Devolve management responsibility within police forces to ensure that operational decisions are taken as close as possible to the people they effect.
- Publish localised crime statistics on a regular basis to ensure transparency and that the police are accountable to local people for the effectiveness of policing.

The purpose of this paper is to expand upon these recommendations, looking in more detail at what this would mean for Scotland and how it fits in with current proposals for reducing the number of police forces in Scotland from eight to one.

¹ Reform Scotland, "Power To Protect", October 2008

2. Background

Recorded crime in Scotland has been falling in recent years and in 2009/10 reached a 32-year-low² with a 29 per cent fall over the decade³. While these statistics are to be welcomed, there are still significant crime problems across Scotland. If offences, which include minor assault, breach of the peace and motor vehicle offences, are included in the statistics the decline over the decade is reduced to 3.7 per cent. It is also worth noting that detection rates – the level of crime reported to the police that is then solved, is 49 per cent⁴. Although this is up from 43 per cent in 1999/2000 it is still relatively low. In addition, it is important to remember that official statistics only include crime which is actually reported to the police. The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2009/10 suggested that only 40 per cent of comparable crime was reported to the police, and this had fallen from 58 per cent in 1999/2000⁵. The same survey also suggested that a significant minority, 31 per cent, felt that local police were not dealing with the things that mattered to the community.

The following table taken from the survey also suggests that victims of crime had a poorer opinion of the police than non-victims. Individuals were asked “How confident are you in your local police force's ability to ...” and were given the options: 'Very confident', 'Fairly confident', 'Not very confident', 'Not at all confident'

Table 1: Per cent of respondents either 'very' or 'fairly confident' in various aspects of their local police force's ability, 2009/10⁵

	Prevent Crime	Respond quickly to appropriate calls & info from the public	Deal with incidents as they occur	Investigate incidents after they occur	Solve Crime	Catch Criminals
Everyone	48%	58%	61%	68%	60%	57%
Crime Victims	41%	55%	56%	61%	53%	50%
Not Crime Victims	50%	59%	62%	69%	62%	59%

While policing is only one aspect of the criminal justice system in Scotland, it is the main point of contact for the majority of the public and, therefore, it is vital that the public have confidence in their ability to prevent and detect crime.

2 Scottish Government press release, “Crime falls to 32 year low”, 7 September 2010

3 Scottish Government, “Recorded Crime in Scotland 2009/10”, 2010; Scottish Government, “Recorded Crime in Scotland 2008/09”, 2009.

4 Scottish Government, “Recorded Crime in Scotland 2009/10”, 2010

5 Scottish Government, “2009/10 Scottish crime and justice survey”, 2010

6 Scottish Government, “2009/10 Scottish crime and justice survey”, 2010.

2.1 Scotland's Police Forces

There are currently eight police forces in Scotland. The boundaries of the existing forces are somewhat arbitrary as they are a hangover from the old regional tier of local government in Scotland. As with many regional bodies the geographical area, populations and size of the forces vary widely, as illustrated in the figures below.

Figure 1: Percentage of Scotland's population covered by each police force⁷

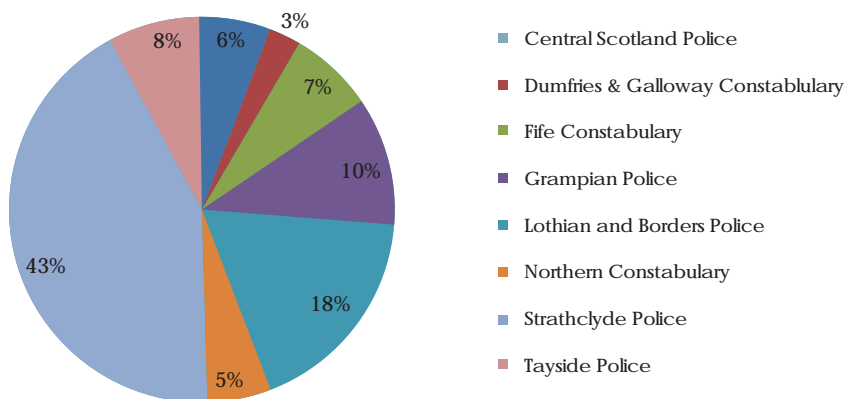
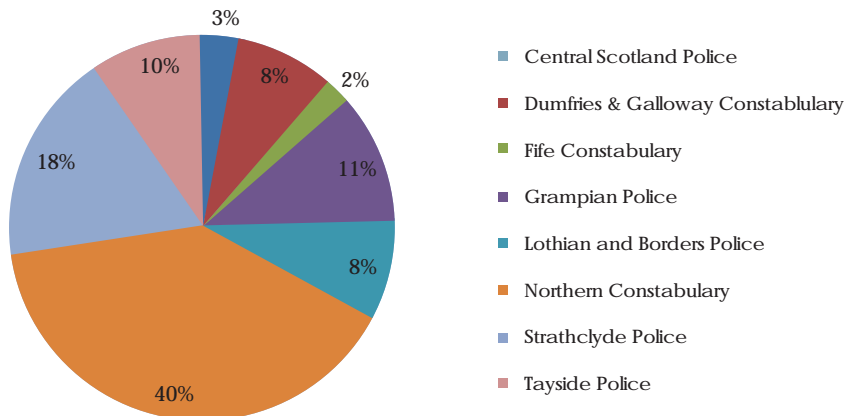


Figure 2: Percentage of Scotland's geography covered by each police force⁸



⁷ Scottish Government, "A consultation on the future of policing in Scotland", February 2011

⁸ *Ibid*

Figure 3: Distribution of police officers at September 2010⁹

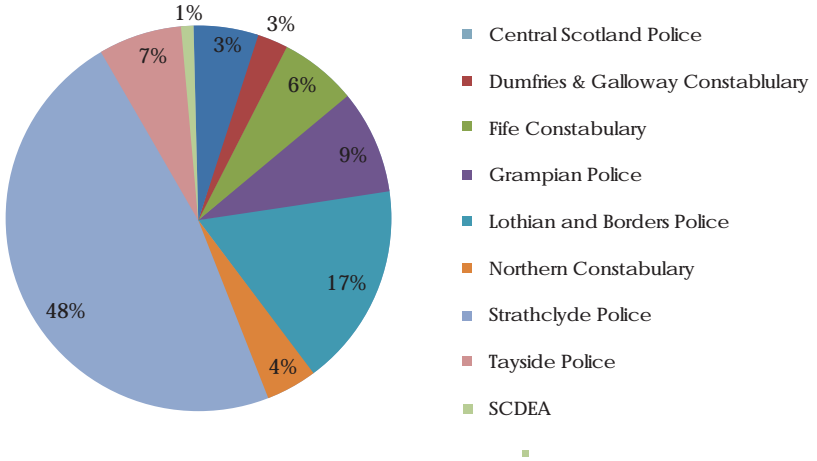
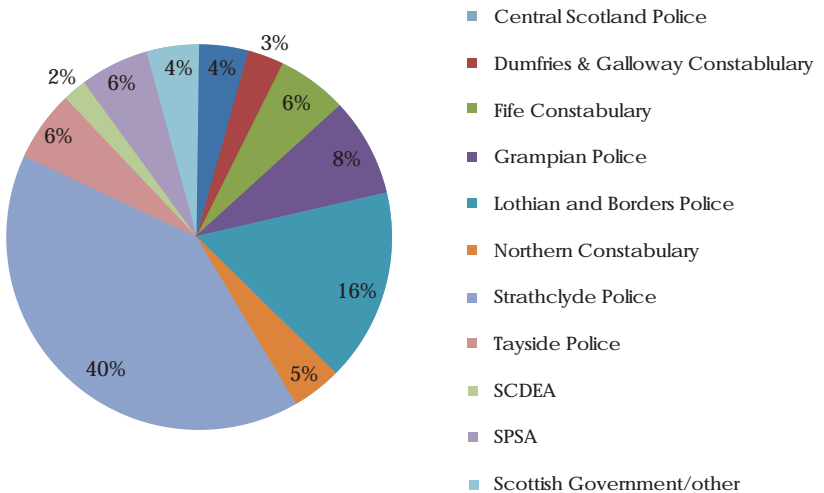


Figure 4: Distribution of gross revenue expenditure 2010/11¹⁰



⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Scottish Policing Board papers, "Sustainable Policing Project. Phase two report: Options for reform", March 2011

Table 2: Scottish police forces

	Population ¹¹	Area sq miles	Number of officers ¹²	Number of people per police officer	sq miles per police officer	Gross revenue expenditure £'000s ¹³ 2010/11	Crimes per 10,000 people ¹⁴ (2009/10)	Crime detection rate ¹⁵ 2009/10
Central Scotland Police	291,760	1,020	846	345	121	62,232	562	60
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	148,510	2,469	508	292	486	38,390	464	71
Fife Constabulary	363,460	531	1,082	336	49	80,525	581	55
Grampian Police	544,980	3,373	1,546	353	218	118,372	567	48
Lothian & Borders Police	939,020	2,500	2,990	314	84	222,853	692	43
Northern Constabulary	288,840	12,000	792	365	1,515	63,229	490	62
Strathclyde Police	2,217,880	5,371	8,382	265	64	561,939	725	47
Tayside Police	399,550	2,896	1,225	326	236	89,380	570	58
SCDEA			205			24,079		

What is interesting to note from Table 2 is that there is no over-riding pattern. Strathclyde, which serves the largest population, second largest geographical area and has the largest number of police officers per capita had the second lowest detection rate and the highest crime rate in 2009/10, while Dumfries & Galloway serves the smallest population and had the lowest crime rate and best clear up-rate. However, Northern Constabulary had the second lowest crime rate and second highest clear-up rate in 2009/10, but the lowest number of police officers per capita.

However, these different results also reflect the different nature of the areas covered. Tables 3 to 6, ranking the forces with regard to different categories of crimes, also indicate the different problems affecting the different areas. For example, while Fife Constabulary had the second lowest rate for non-sexual crimes of violence, it had the highest rate for crimes of indecency, and Grampian Police had the third highest rate for crimes of dishonesty, but the lowest rate for fire-raising and vandalism. The different nature of crimes in these different areas illustrate that different methods need to be adopted to combat the different problems.

¹¹ S Scottish Government, "A consultation on the future of policing in Scotland", February 2011

¹² Scottish Government, "A consultation on the future of policing in Scotland", February 2011

¹³ Scottish Policing Board papers, "Sustainable Policing Project, Phase two report: Options for reform", March 2011. £82,988,000 was also spent on the Scottish Police Services Authority and £60,000,000 on Scottish Government/ other.

¹⁴ Scottish Government, Recorded Crime in Scotland 2009/10, 2010

¹⁵ Scottish Government, Recorded Crime in Scotland 2009/10, 2010

Table 3: Non-sexual crimes of violence per 100,000, 2009/10.

Police Force	Non sexual crimes of violence per 100,000 people
Strathclyde Police	31
Lothian & Borders Police	19
Northern Constabulary	16
Grampian Police	14
Tayside Police	14
Central Scotland Police	11
Fife Constabulary	10
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	8

Table 4: Crimes of indecency per 100,000, 2009/10.

Police Force	Crimes of indecency per 100,000 people
Fife Constabulary	17
Grampian Police	17
Central Scotland Police	13
Lothian & Borders Police	13
Northern Constabulary	11
Strathclyde Police	11
Tayside Police	11
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	5

Table 5: Crimes of dishonesty per 100,000, 2009/10.

Police Force	Crimes of dishonesty per 100,000 people
Lothian & Borders Police	360
Strathclyde Police	304
Grampian Police	294
Tayside Police	282
Fife Constabulary	261
Central Scotland Police	249
Northern Constabulary	187
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	176

Table 6: Fire raising, vandalism etc per 100,000, 2009/10.

Police Force	Fire Raising, vandalism, etc per 100,000 people
Strathclyde Police	200
Lothian & Borders Police	189
Fife Constabulary	179
Central Scotland Police	163
Northern Constabulary	153
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	150
Tayside Police	143
Grampian Police	140

Two forces, Dumfries & Galloway and Fife, are governed by unitary police boards made up of councillors from only one council as they each cover only one local authority area. The remaining six forces, Central, Grampian, Lothian & Borders, Northern and Strathclyde each cover many local authority areas. As a result, their respective police boards are comprised of councillors from each of the local authorities the force covers. The Police Board is presided over by one of the councillors.

The Police (Scotland) Act 1967 provides for the 'tripartite' sharing of legal responsibility for policing by Chief Constables, Scottish Ministers and Police Boards. Generally, Scottish Ministers have policy responsibility for law and order; Police Boards are responsible for determining the budgets available to the police force, determining officer numbers and appointing senior officers; whilst Chief Constables are responsible for operational matters including police deployment. This separation of powers in the Scottish structure is designed to ensure that operational matters do not become politicised.

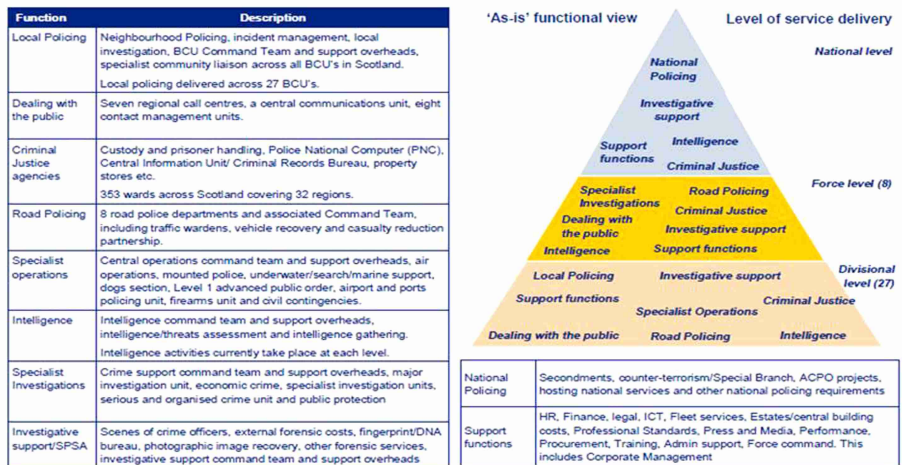
Police forces are funded partly by grants paid directly by Scottish Ministers and partly by local authorities through their revenue support grant, non-domestic rate income, and the council tax. The following extract from the Scottish Parliament's Information Centre subject map on the police¹⁶ explains the funding relationship:

"The Scottish Ministers determine a total for Police Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) each year. This is an estimate of the money required by the Scottish police forces to cover running costs for that year (eg police salaries). In determining GAE the Ministers set the amount of money which the Scottish Government is prepared to make available to each police authority. However, it is the relevant police authority which sets the budget for a police force and this may be set at, above or below the level of GAE determined by Ministers. Assuming the budget for a police force is set at or below the level set for GAE, the Government provides 51% of the money required – covered by the 'Police Grant'. The remaining 49% is provided by the local authority (from revenue support grant, non-domestic rate income and the council tax). Where spending is greater than the GAE level, the local authority must cover all of the costs incurred over and above the GAE limit."

¹⁶ McCallum, F. Ross, G & Oag, D, "SPICe subject map - The Scottish Criminal Justice System: The police", Scottish Parliament, April 2007

Figure 5 below, taken from Scottish Policing Board papers “Sustainable Policing Project: Interim Report”, illustrates the range of functions carried out by the different levels of police in Scotland

Figure 5: Functional view of police forces in Scotland¹⁷



2.2 Other Police Bodies

In addition to the eight separate police forces, Scotland is also served by a number of other national bodies.

Scottish Police Services Authority: The Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) was established as a non-departmental public body in 2007 and is independent of the police. The organisation is governed by a tri-partite board appointed by Ministers and consists of police board convenors, Chief Constables and lay members. The SPSA is responsible for forensic services, including crime scene analysis and fingerprint services; for all training and education services for the Scottish Police Service, the majority of which take place at the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan; developing, maintaining and managing integrated information services across the service; and corporate services, which is a centrally managed shared service approach covering finance, compliance, facilities and estates, human resources, planning and performance, procurement, and corporate communication. The SPSA also maintains the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency.

¹⁷ Scottish Policing Board papers, “Sustainable Policing Project: Interim Report”, November 2010

Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency: The Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA) was formed in 2000 to prevent and detect serious and organized crime as it affects Scotland at a national and international level. It is maintained by the SPSA and accountable to Scottish Ministers, though able to operate at arm's length. There are a number of specialist services delivered by the SCDEA including the Scottish Witness Liaison Unit, the Scottish Money Laundering Unit, the Technical Surveillance Group and the Scottish Coordination Unit. The SCDEA is made up of police staff as well as officers seconded from Scottish forces. There is a collaborative agreement, signed by the Chief Constables, which exists for the national operation of the SCDEA.

Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland: The Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland (PCCS) is a non-departmental public body not connected to the police. The organisation's main role is to review the way in which police forces deal with complaints. Individuals have to first make their complaint to the relevant police organisation. This gives the police organisation concerned a chance to resolve it. The PCCS can then only review a complaint after it has been investigated fully by the police organisation concerned. If the commissioner disagrees with the way the complaint was handled by the relevant police organisation, he can recommend that it reconsiders the complaint and can supervise this himself, or ask another person to supervise it. He can also recommend that a police organisation makes changes to policies and procedures.

Scottish Policing Board: On 24 June 2009, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice announced that the Scottish Government would convene a new Scottish Policing Board. Its purpose is to be a forum for collective discussion and agreement of action on key strategic issues for policing in Scotland. The board brings together the police, the Scottish Government and Police Board Conveners along with Cosla.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS): HMICS is independent of the police and is responsible for inspecting the eight Scottish police forces and police services.

Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland: The Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) works in partnership with central and local government to set strategic objectives for policing in Scotland. Its membership includes all chief police officers, the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency, the Scottish Police College and the Assistant Chief Constable of the British Transport Police (Scotland).

Serious Organised Crime Agency: The Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) is a UK Home Office quango. The organisation deals with major crime such as Class A drugs, human trafficking and major gun crime. In terms of the organisation's role in Scotland, its activities are generally geared towards partnership working and intelligence support¹⁸. SOCA can only operate in Scotland with the agreement of Scottish ministers and would have to work under the direction of the Lord Advocate and procurators fiscal.

2.3 'A consultation on the future of policing in Scotland'

As previously mentioned, the current number of police forces in Scotland owes more to accident rather than design. The eight force areas largely reflect the old regional tier of local government which was abolished in 1996. As a result, their boundaries are somewhat arbitrary and there are the huge disparities between forces illustrated earlier.

These arbitrary boundaries have also led to a structure with little, if any, direct accountability to the man in the street. Operational matters, including police deployment, are rightly the responsibility of Chief Constables. Chief Constables are, in theory, accountable to police boards, which can remove the senior officer if they feel he or she is not doing a good enough job. However, police boards, made up of councillors from the various council areas covered by the police force, are generally neither accountable to the electorate nor particularly transparent.

For example, Edinburgh Councillor Iain Whyte is convenor of Lothian and Borders Police Board. However, not only does Councillor Whyte not have any responsibility to the electorate in West, East and Midlothian as well as the Borders, he isn't even answerable to the population of Edinburgh as a whole. Councillor Whyte is not a member of the ruling parties on Edinburgh City Council and is only answerable to the people of Inverleith who elect him. So, it is very difficult to challenge the policing methods or encourage the adoption of the sort of successful crime fighting strategies that have been adopted elsewhere.

¹⁸ <http://www.soca.gov.uk/about-soca/working-in-partnership/devolved-administration>

This current structure is too remote from voters and complex, therefore voters are unclear who is to blame if they do not approve of policing policies. This lack of local accountability has also contributed to the knee-jerk reactions of politicians wanting to be seen to be “doing something about crime”.

The issues of boundaries and lack of accountability together with the financial crisis facing Scotland contributed toward the Scottish Government launching a consultation¹⁹ on reducing the number of police forces in February 2011. The consultation takes into account work done by the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland and the Scottish Policing Board. A review carried out for the board found that planned efficiency savings under the current eight force structure would not be enough to maintain frontline services and investigated the possibility of a single police force as well as a reduced regional model.

The Scottish government’s consultation offered the following three options²⁰:

OPTION A: A SINGLE SCOTTISH POLICE FORCE

- One police force for Scotland under the leadership of a single chief constable.
- Potential for improving outcomes at the national and local level.
- Would provide improved capacity and capability to prevent and respond to threats which cross force and national boundaries, such as terrorism and large-scale emergencies like severe weather.
- Much easier to deliver a consistent standard of service to communities, improving consistency and performance at the national and local level.
- Offers significant scope for sustaining and enhancing frontline police services by delivering savings and efficiencies by reducing the duplication inherent across eight different forces.
- However, could be a tendency to centralise some functions and services, to the detriment of rural areas.

¹⁹ Reform Scotland submitted a response to the consultation process

²⁰ Scottish Government, “A consultation on the future of policing in Scotland”, February 2011

OPTION B: A RATIONALISED REGIONAL FORCE MODEL

- A reduction to three or four large regional police forces in Scotland, each led by a chief constable.
- Co-operation across a reduced number of forces would be less complex than the existing structure and there would also be some improved scope for providing communities with access to specialist policing skills, equipment and capacity to meet local needs when required.
- Does less to address the weaknesses in national capacity than a single force would be able to.
- Would still need to be national bodies such as the SPSA and SCDEA to provide national police services.
- Scope for delivering savings is less than the single force model
- The time, resource and uncertainty involved in moving to three or four forces will not fully deliver the benefits that reform could bring.

OPTION C – RETAIN EIGHT FORCES WITH INCREASED COLLABORATION

- Existing structure of the police remain unchanged but with significantly enhanced collaboration to deliver the necessary efficiencies.
- Existing structure is not ideally suited to address threats which cross national and force boundaries and there are differences in access to specialist policing skills, equipment and capacity across Scotland's communities. We believe this model offers the least scope for savings and, given the financial challenges ahead, may require reductions in frontline policing. This would have a detrimental impact on the delivery of local and national outcomes.
- Retaining police force boundaries that are remnants of the 1975 regional government structures, and out of line with other local governance structures, does little to improve national and local accountability.
- It is not clear where formal accountability for national issues lies.

- To achieve necessary efficiencies, there would be a high degree of complexity in delivering collaboration and shared services across force boundaries. The savings achievable from this model are likely to be lower than from the other options and we have not seen any compelling evidence to support the argument that collaboration or shared services can deliver significant savings.
- This option carries the risk that it would not be financially sustainable in the longer term and makes it more likely that further restructuring would be required.

The consultation closed on May 5, although the main parties set out their stance on policing in their manifestos. The Labour and Conservative parties backed the notion of a single Scottish force (though the Conservatives for their part also called for elected police commissioners to replace police boards, despite the fact that merging the police forces would scrap the boards and it was unclear what 'local' area these individuals would represent). The Liberal Democrats and Scottish Greens argued against centralising the police, though failed to address the current accountability gap, whilst the SNP hinted that they favoured some sort of reduction in the number of forces.

The response from the police to these proposals has been mixed. The police rank and file, represented by the Scottish Police Federation, voted 78% against merging the eight current forces into one at their annual conference on 20th April 2011²¹, however the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents has backed the proposed reduction as the best way to maintain officer numbers. Scotland's Chief Constables have also been mixed in their response.

The Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police, Stephen House, has said that smaller forces cannot respond to large scale emergencies and a single police force would be more robust in being able to deal with such events²².

Ian Latimer, who retired as Chief Constable of Northern Constabulary after 10 years earlier in 2011, criticised the centralisation in an interview with Holyrood Magazine²³ stating,

²¹ Ross, D. "Police federation votes against plans for single national force", The Herald, 21 April 2011

²² Philip, A. "Chief Constable backs national force", Scotsman, 13 February 2011

²³ Reid, R. "Supporting Change", Holyrood, 28 March 2011

"I cannot see that it is in the best interest of the Highlands and Islands for strategic leadership and direction to be provided either from Aberdeen, Edinburgh or Glasgow. There is a big difference between genuine local accountability and locally responsive divisional commanders within a single force who deliver policing within communities but have no real say in budgets, police officer numbers, support staff or service delivery with decisions affecting all of these being made outside the Highlands and Islands".

Just before the Holyrood elections, the current Chief Constables of Grampian Police, Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary and Northern Constabulary published a joint open letter opposing the move to a single force²⁴. They stated:

"Any significant changes to our current policing structures will be expensive and, even in the longer term, would come with no guarantee of delivering savings... The savings as projected to date are largely speculative and untested, and it is clear to all that savings can only be achieved by way of a significant reduction in police officers and staff."

It is interesting to note that it is Chief Constables of the more rural locations further away from the central belt that have spoken out most against the move. This is no coincidence. While the solutions put forward address to some extent the lack of accountability in the current policing structure, they represent a centralising move and offer no local accountability, a key requirement needed to both deal with crime effectively and build up trust with local communities. As a result the proposals should be rejected.

²⁴ Whitaker. A. "Chief Constables attack single police force plan", Scotsman, 30 April 2011

3. Police Structures Overseas

In 'Power for the Public', Reform Scotland highlighted the success of locally accountable policing in New York City with its emphasis on 'broken windows policing'. The zero tolerance approach meant that by addressing low level visible crimes, communities could see crime was being addressed and, therefore, had a greater confidence in their local police. This, in turn, meant that individuals were far more willing to come forward with information to help solve more serious crimes. New York City's police department was restructured to make it more decentralised and accountable to reflect the fact that local policing was important to the policy's success.

In the Scottish Government's consultation on a single Scottish police force, it highlights a few of the European countries which have a single police force, some of which cover populations and geographical areas larger than Scotland. However, there are also a number of European countries which have many more police forces, including multi-layered systems, some of which cover populations and geographical areas smaller than Scotland.

While cultural issues, as well as differences in definitions, can make it difficult to properly compare overall crime rates and the effectiveness of the police, it is useful to examine some of these other countries to show ways in which we could have a far more localised level of policing.

3.1 Belgium²⁵

In 2001, the structure of the police in Belgium changed, creating an integrated police system based on two levels – federal and local. Police officers have the same status regardless of whether they are federal or local police officers. The Federal Police Service, headed up by a general commissioner, is responsible for particular areas including traffic police, forensics, specialist support, SWAT and air support as well as offering support to local police.

The local police is made up of 196 local police forces; 50 of which cover one city or town while the other 146 cover more than one city or town. Each local force is headed by a chief of police who is responsible for local policing policies. The police strength of each force is determined by the council in one-city forces or police boards in the other areas.

²⁵ http://www.police.ac.be/menu_58.htm

3.2 Netherlands

The Dutch police operate a two-tier policing system. The service consists of 25 regional police forces and the National Police Services Agency (KLPD). Each of the 25 police regions is headed by a regional police board, including a mayor and chief public prosecutor.²⁶ Local municipalities and mayors have a large role to play in developing and implementing policing policies, though, like Scotland, police regions can cover more than one municipal area (there are 489 municipalities in the Netherlands). The regional police board has wide discretion over areas such as funding, staffing, equipment and operational management. The police force manager of the board is the mayor of the largest municipality within the police force area, though all mayors of a region sit on the force's board.²⁷ There is a wide variety in the size and scope of the regional police boards.

The KLPD is an agency of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and carries out work independent of the police regions as well as support and coordination work. Divisions coming under the jurisdiction of the KLPD include traffic police, logistics service, the Royal and Diplomatic Protection Service and the National Criminal Intelligence Service.²⁸

3.3 Spain

Policing in Spain is multi-layered. The Guardia Civil, which is a national body, is generally responsible for national security, customs and patrolling Spain's highways and rural areas. The National Police are stationed in towns with a population of over 20,000 and deal with serious crime such as theft, rape and muggings, and are also used to control demonstrations and crowds. Spain also has 1,800²⁹ municipal police forces accountable to local town halls in towns with a population of over 5,000. Municipal police deal with minor crime such as traffic control, protection of property, civil disturbances and the enforcement of municipal laws. Additionally, the Basque Country, Navarra and Catalonia all have autonomous regional police forces.

3.4 France³⁰

There are three police forces in France. The National Police has primary jurisdiction in cities and large towns with populations over 16,000 and comes under the authority of the Minister of the Interior. The French Gendarmerie is part of the armed forces so falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence for administrative purposes though is operationally attached to the Ministry of the Interior.

26 <http://www.poltie.nl/English/>

27 Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, "Policing in the Netherlands", 2004

28 Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, "Policing in the Netherlands", 2004

29 http://www.cepol.europa.eu/fileadmin/webiste/About_CEPOL/Police_Colleges/Spain/Spain_org_GESL.pdf

30 <http://www.interpol.int/Public/Region/Europe/pjsystems/france.asp>

The Gendarmerie is generally responsible for policing French countryside areas and small towns, usually with populations less than 20,000. The Municipal Police are responsible for daily urban policing and cover all criminal and public order matters within their urban boundaries and come under the authority of the mayor.³¹

3.5 Switzerland

Switzerland is a federal country and, as such, has a multi-layered policing structure. The Federal Office of the Police is responsible for national security, though also offers support to the federal police forces while local police forces are responsible for law and order.³² Each of the 26 cantons has jurisdiction over its own police forces and as a result there are different policies regarding training, arming and even the style of uniform across Switzerland. In addition to the cantonal forces, Switzerland also has 300 communal and municipal police corps. These bodies don't cover every area; though tend to operate in communities with a high level of autonomy, such as Bern or Zurich.³³ Cantonal or municipal police forces are headed up by a member of that tier of government.

The very federalised system of government in Switzerland has also led to different ways of police working being developed in different areas³⁴ :

- German-speaking cantons divide their police forces into three main areas: criminal, security and traffic police.
- The French-speaking cantons divide their forces into two sectors: the “gendarmerie” and “sûreté”. The “gendarmerie” is equivalent to the security police in the German-speaking cantons, and usually also includes the traffic police. The “sûreté”, on the other hand, is equivalent to the criminal police.
- The Italian-speaking canton Ticino has its own system and divides its forces into geographical sectors.
- In the Canton Basel-Stadt the public prosecutor's office is in charge of the criminal police, and the police commando unit is in charge of the force that carries out search operations.

³¹ http://pols.osce.org/countries/details?item_id=24

³² http://www.ejpd.admin.ch/ejpd/en/home/themen/sicherheit/ref_polizeistruktur.html

³³ http://www.ejpd.admin.ch/content/ejpd/en/home/themen/sicherheit/ref_polizeistruktur/ref_kommunale_polizeikorps.html

³⁴ http://www.ejpd.admin.ch/content/ejpd/en/home/themen/sicherheit/ref_polizeistruktur/ref_kommunale_polizeikorps.html

3.6 Norway

While Norway only has one police force, each of the 27 local police districts comes under the command of a Chief of Police and the chief of police has full responsibility for all kinds of policing in the district, as well as budgets and outcomes.³⁵ Each regional district also has its own administration. In addition to the police districts there are seven specialist units, such as the National Criminal Investigation Service, which are directly responsible to the National Police Directorate, which in turn comes under the Ministry of Justice and the Police.

Although Norway doesn't have fully autonomous police forces, if the Scottish government pressed ahead with its plans to rationalise Scotland's police forces, Reform Scotland would urge the government to consider the Norwegian model as one which could be replicated in Scotland, with one Scottish police force, but with 32 police districts, matching up to local authority areas and with the same high level of autonomy offered to Norwegian chiefs of police.

³⁵ National Police Directorate, "The police in Norway", June 2010

4. Policy Recommendations – Local and accountable policing

Reform Scotland recognises that the current policing structure in Scotland needs to change, however, centralising the eight forces into one national force moves in totally the wrong direction. There are problems with the way policing is organised at present, particularly with regard to accountability, but centralising the problem will simply cause further problems. As illustrated in chapter two, the eight forces already face very different problems and it is therefore imperative that areas have the power to allocate budget and resource as they see fit to address local problems. Just as any proposals to centralise other local services such as housing, education or even bin collection would be opposed as misguided and centralising, even if monetary savings could be made, plans to centralise local police should also be opposed.

However, there is no particular reason to believe that one police force would deliver cost savings from economies of scale. While it may be possible to save some chief constable salaries, it is just as likely that additional and more complex management structures would be required. Administration efficiencies may be possible, but these could also be achieved by sharing services and do not require the creation of a single force.

More local and accountable police forces that match local authority boundaries are more likely to lead to cost savings. The police forces would be accountable for their spending as well as their effectiveness, putting downward pressure on costs; smaller organisations would require fewer layers of management; and there would be opportunities to deliver efficiency savings in costs by sharing administrative and support services. These could involve groups of police forces and/ or other public sector organisations (including local authorities) with which the forces would share boundaries.

Reform Scotland believes the following recommendations set out a path to deliver more effective, locally accountable policing in Scotland.

Match up police forces to local authority areas

Already in Scotland there are two areas where the police force area matches up to a single local authority area in Fife and Dumfries & Galloway. It would therefore be easy to pilot these policies in one or both of these areas. The existing divisional structure within the other six forces would also aid a fairly straightforward change, as illustrated in Table 7:

Table 7: Proposed new police forces

Existing Force	Potential New Force	Constituted from the following divisions or subdivisions
Central Scotland Police	Clackmannanshire	Clackmannanshire Area Command
	Falkirk	Falkirk Area Command
	Stirling	Stirling Area Command
Grampian Police	Aberdeenshire	Aberdeenshire Division
	Aberdeen	Aberdeen Division
	Moray	Moray Division
Lothian and Borders Police	Edinburgh	A Division
	Scottish Borders	G Division
	Midlothian	E Division – Midlothian subdivision
	East Lothian	E Division – East Lothian subdivision
	West Lothian	F Division
Northern Constabulary	Eilean Siar	Western Isles Area Command
	Highlands & Islands	Caithness, Sutherland & East Ross Area Command
		Ross & Cromarty Area Command
		Lochaber, Skye & Lochalsh Area Command
		Inverness Area Command
		Badenoch, Strathspey & Naim Area Command
	Orkney Islands	Orkney Area Command
	Shetland	Shetland Area Command
Strathclyde Police	Argyll & Bute	Argyll & Bute sub division
	East Ayrshire	East Ayrshire subdivision
	East Dunbartonshire	East Dunbartonshire subdivision
	East Renfrewshire	East Renfrewshire subdivision
	Glasgow	Glasgow Central and West division
		Govan subdivision
		New Gorbals subdivision
		Cathcart subdivision
		Pollok subdivision
		Maryhill & Saracen subdivision
		Baird Street subdivision
		London Road subdivision
		Shettleston, Easterhouse & Baillieston subdivision
	Inverclyde	Inverclyde subdivision
	North Ayrshire	North Ayrshire subdivision
	North Lanarkshire	North Lanarkshire division
	Renfrewshire	Johnstone and Renfrew subdivision
		Paisley subdivision
	South Ayrshire	South Ayrshire subdivision
	South Lanarkshire	South Lanarkshire division
	West Dunbartonshire	Clydebank, Dumbarton and Helensburgh subdivision
Tayside Police	Angus	Eastern division
	Dundee	Central division
	Perth & Kinross	Western division
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	No Change	
Fife Constabulary	No Change	

While some may argue that 32 police forces seems too many, that is more a question of the number of councils in Scotland. The key feature is that this recommendation would mean that police forces matched up to local authorities and provided local accountability. This structure would not politicise the police anymore than a single police force – rather than one chief constable being accountable to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice we would have 32 chief constables accountable to councillors. As well as addressing the current accountability gap and ensuring that the service was more local, this model provides the opportunity for more effective policing at a local level. It is also more transparent for councils to choose to spend more, or less, on policing as their area requires as well setting new by-laws for their police forces to enforce.

Local leadership and accountability

Linking up local authorities and policing would also lead to a clearer sense of who was in charge of policing; while the local chief constable would have operational responsibility, a local politician would have political responsibility, just as is the case for education, housing and a number of other local services. For example, currently there is no identifiable person in charge of policing in Glasgow; rather there is Chief Constable Stephen House who is responsible for the whole of Strathclyde and three chief superintendents who cover different parts of Glasgow.

Devolving power down through divisions

The success of New York City's policing strategy also depended on responsibilities being devolved down to precincts, which is why Reform Scotland would argue that powers should be devolved down through Scotland's divisions. Just as there are different crime problems facing the different police forces in Scotland, there are different crime problems facing different areas within forces. As a result, it is important that enough freedom is given to area commanders to try out different policing methods. This also enables innovative and new policing practices to be tried out. As with all public services, increasing diversity can raise standards for all. Imposing a one-size-fits-all structure from the centre will stifle that innovation.

Stronger role for the SCDEA

Reform Scotland believes, and in doing so would agree with the Scottish government's consultation, that there are areas where there is scope for more shared services and greater joint working.

As a result, it is certainly in favour of strengthening the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency. In addition to focusing on serious crime and co-ordinating threats across national and force borders, we would envisage this national force, which would be directly accountable to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, offering support, training, specialist services and resources to local forces if required. As a result, rather than the SCDEA being part of the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA), we would recommend the functions of the SPSA become part of the SCDEA.”

In our report, 'Democratic Power', Reform Scotland argued that the majority of quangos should be abolished with their functions either taken on by fully independent bodies or brought back in to government. As the SPSA, which the SCDEA is currently part of, is a quango, we would propose that the new, strengthened SCDEA, is brought back into government as an executive agency to improve transparency and accountability. An executive agency is a constituent part of the Scottish Government with a stronger focus on operational management and direct delivery of public services.

5. Conclusion

According to the Scottish Government's consultation, the driving force behind the proposals to merge Scotland's police forces is to save money. It is possible that merging all of Scotland's police forces together will save money in the long term although this is by no means certain given the previous experience of nationalised industries and the potential requirement for more complex management structures. However, the Scottish Government has not demonstrated that their proposals will improve the effectiveness of policing. With a large minority of the public already not having full confidence in their local police, as illustrated in Table 1, such a move is only likely to increase the problem. The same principle being offered as the rationale behind the rationalisation of the police would also suggest that we get rid of all education authorities and deliver education from the centre or even abolish local authorities themselves. But such centralisation will not offer better value for money and is a false economy.

In contrast, the driving force behind Reform Scotland's proposals is what will lead to more effective policing in Scotland. We know from the statistics illustrated in chapter two that there are a wide variety of different crime problems facing different areas of Scotland. Autonomous police forces are needed that have the power to manage budgets and assign resources to deal properly with those issues and co-ordinate their actions with the provision of other local services. A one-size-fits-all approach driven from the centre is not the answer.

The current problem within policing is not just a lack of accountability, but more specifically a lack of local accountability. This can be solved by making Chief Constables accountable to local communities via locally elected councils. Instead of one police chief accountable to central government, we want police chiefs accountable to local communities, whilst strengthening the role of the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency will mean that there is greater capacity for providing co-ordinating and supporting roles from the centre.

Replacing the current system with the one outlined by Reform Scotland will improve accountability and help re-establish greater pride and confidence in both local and national policing in Scotland.

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