



## People for Proper Policing in North Wales

North Wales Police officers suffer low morale says survey

Sep 9 2008 by Tom Bodden, Daily Post

POLICE officers have lashed out at a “**points mean prizes**” culture in the North Wales force which they believe has sapped morale and compromised the quality of policing.

**A survey of more than 500 officers** reveals many feel overburdened by bureaucracy and encouraged to concentrate on issuing tickets rather than properly investigate crimes. Officers rated their morale as very low and were critical of the quality of service they provided the public.

**Now leaders of the** Police Federation, which represents 1,588 officers in the region, want talks with chief Richard Brunstrom over discontent over management style, mounting paperwork and targets.

Nearly nine out of every 10 officers believe their discretion to handle cases had been reduced and 54% that the performance regime recognised quantity of work while just 5% thought it rewarded the quality. Only 8% of officers felt less likely to be assaulted at work due to readily available support; 67% disagreed when asked if the force had improved service to the public.

One officer told the review: *“I’m sick and tired of the performance culture and having to justify to law abiding members of the public as to why they are getting a ticket. They are easy targets to achieve when what we should be doing is targeting the real criminals who are getting fat on the proceeds of crime and drugs.”*

Another added: *“I keep coming across decent people becoming disaffected with the police because they have been booked for seemingly trivial matters. The amount of time and resources used dealing with issues that should be the remit of the local authority is now bordering on the absurd.”*

**Police Federation secretary in North Wales Richard Eccles** said: *“There is clearly an issue around bureaucracy, quality of service, and discretion for officers. There is also concern about leadership. Officers felt they were pushed towards criminalising or going for detection because of this push for measurable targets. In rural areas, they feel they aren’t credited any longer for having a quiet patch.”*

Mike Cross, from the campaign group People for Proper Policing, said that the findings from the survey backed their own five-year campaign. *“We feel for the police officers and want to work with them. But there are some people who love to catch you with a light out on your bike, or your dog fouling the pavement.”*

**Assistant chief constable Ian Shannon** said that they had only received the 24-page report on Friday. *“Of course we will talk as chief officers with the federation. But in terms of specific issues, officers still have discretion, they haven’t lost that at all and it’s a point we have repeatedly made to them. They have more options open to them now. In fact there has been a substantial decline in the issue of fixed penalty notices.”*

The force had the highest detection rate for burglary in 2007-8 and a 27% reduction in the number of such offences, he said.

**A force statement added: “We know that the report is based upon a minority sample of Police Federation members, and does not include the views of police support staff.”**

**The survey...** THESE are some of the comments from North Wales police officers who responded to the survey:

*“The general bean counting attitude of the Force has alienated the Police from the community. The public feels there is no balance, we will not be there when they are assaulted or broken into, but we are always there to point a speed gun.”*

*“Targets and bureaucracy have added tremendous pressure. Rather than being allowed to be police officers that provide the visible, and reassuring presence that the public want, we are busy chasing detections that are not there in pursuit of targets.”*

*“As a custody sergeant of five years’ experience I have seen the quality of investigations fall miserably. There is simply no incentive to spend time on a quality investigation when all they are judged on is points for arrests.”*

*“There is no **reward for the reduction of crime**, e.g. conducting a good, lengthy investigation into a complaint which was proven not to have been a crime.”*

*“There is far too much emphasis on number crunching – the points system is having a negative impact on neighbourhood policing and the development of community contact.”*

*“There will come a time when we will shout for public help on the street. From what I see too often, the likelihood is people will walk on by.”*

*“I have seen officers rushing like Keystone Cops desperate to get booked into a job. I have seen officers virtually goading Friday night drunks in order to get public order lock ups/tickets.”*

**The PPP comments ....** Mike Cross was asked for comment by Tom Bodden.....his comments were totally misrepresented.... He said that the fixed penalty system was enthusiastically championed and developed by Brunstrom who described it as ‘exciting’. The PPP had good relationships with many officers from all levels and we were sympathetic and understood their morale problem. We reminded Bodden that the ACPO guidelines called for the exercise of discretion in the use of this policy but local senior officers were against this approach. He asked Bodden to look at the PPP website where these issues are covered by various articles in detail. The ‘light on your bike’ point was about the ‘good old days’ when you would get a severe telling off and respect for the Police was high. The dog fouling was related to his statement that, ‘the guilty until you dare to try and prove your innocence without any mitigation’, policy was applied to a range of ‘offences’ including this one. We will be discussing this reporting issue with the Editor of the daily Post.