



People for Proper Policing in North Wales

Single Police Officers to govern the streets.

The Daily Telegraph reports that, in a return to more traditional policing, **the Metropolitan Police Commissioner** believes single officers will be more approachable than when walking with a partner and that they will "govern" the streets.

It has been common practice to walk with a partner for the past 20 years, but the commissioner is seeking a "cultural shift" in a force which accounts for around a quarter of Britain's police.

In a recent address to 2,000 staff and officers, Sir Paul said: *"The public, politicians, police authority, everybody you speak to, cannot understand why police officers don't patrol on their own any more, and on occasions neither do I."*

He hopes the public will notice a change on the streets by the end of the year. His championing of old-fashioned values in policing marks a clear break from the style of his predecessor Sir Ian Blair the move is likely to find support among police chiefs across the country.

An insider said: *"In daily briefings, every officer going out will be asked to patrol singly where they can, think about how they can be more visible and take control of the streets. Sir Paul wants a culture shift where people are out on the streets whenever they can be. We have tended to see, almost by default, that police officers patrol in pairs. There are some situations when two officers are needed, and some areas where more than two are required. What we are trying to move to is that the norm is that there should be single officer patrols."*

Although police numbers nationwide have reached the record level of **141,000**, police chiefs have acknowledged that most people feel there are fewer bobbies on the beat than **30 years ago, when the total number of police was closer to 100,000.**

Of the Met's 31,000 officers, around a half routinely patrol the streets. Aside from officers being tied up filling in forms, the **"double-crewing"** of patrols is seen as one reason why fewer are available in any one place.

Although there will be concerns over safety, Sir Paul has insisted that officers should not patrol alone in any situation thought too risky. However, one study has suggested that lone officers are less likely to be assaulted, as they will tend to call for back-up rather than be confrontational.

Acting Assistant Commissioner Rose Fitzpatrick, who is responsible for territorial policing, has been asked to ensure the plans are implemented. All senior officers have been urged to challenge any paired patrols they spot.

Last night **David Ruffley, the shadow police minister**, said: *"At a stroke this simple, common sense reform can radically increase the number of police visible to the public. This can help win the hearts and minds of the British public and we support Sir Paul. I hope other chief constables will give serious consideration to adopting this measure."*

Shortly after his appointment in January, Sir Paul called on "scruffy" officers to "smarten up" and take pride in their uniform.

On visits to police stations and tours of the streets, he has stopped constables and sergeants and asked why they were not on patrol. He has told borough commanders he will hold them to account for increasing the presence of officers on the street.

In briefings to senior commanders, he has criticised current practices which, for instance, mean a group of officers return to a station to process an arrest rather than just one officer going back and in a recent message to all his officers, he urged them to get away from their desks as often as possible to make themselves more visible.

"We must be the visible uniformed governance on the street. The way in which we engage with the public is hugely important. I want our public to feel that if there's uniform from the Met they are there because they want to engage them and make them feel safer."

Police officers routinely walked the beat alone until the 1970s, but began patrolling in pairs in the 1980s.

The public will still see officers in pairs, however, as 1,000 novices at the Met still need supervision. Officers in response cars will continue to work in pairs as it is illegal for one person to drive while operating a radio. Firearms officers are also likely to work in pairs for safety.

A Home Office spokesman said: "*Whether officers patrol singly or in pairs is a matter for local operational decision, which should take account of relevant risk factors.*"

The PPP comments This is a major step in the right direction and makes zero tolerance and control of the streets a real possibility. When we ask 'where are all our Police Officers' they should be able to say 'mostly patrolling the streets and the highways'.