

Police brief SPA on Brexit contingency



Police Scotland will today update the Board of the Scottish Police Authority on plans to put 360 officers on standby to deal with any incidents relating to the potential impact of the UK's decision to leave the European Union.

Deputy Chief Constable Will Kerr will brief members of the Authority at a meeting in Glasgow today that officers will be available from mid-March to respond to any issues that may arise across the country, such as protests and disruption at ports.

They would also be available to be deployed elsewhere in the UK on a mutual aid basis. Other officers will work in a multi-agency control centre that will be set up in a Police Scotland control room at Bilston Glen in Midlothian.

This centre will be used to help co-ordinate the response to issues arising from the impact of Brexit on behalf of Scotland's three Regional Resilience Partnerships, which include local authorities, emergency services and other public

sector bodies.

DCC Kerr said: "This is purely a contingency at this stage and part of our planning to allow us to give officers the required notice about changes to their shifts under police regulations.

"These officers will be deployed to local policing duties when not required for policing purposes related to Brexit. "We have taken this decision so that we have enhanced capacity to respond to greater policing demands during this period. Our principle focus is, and will remain, the safety of the citizens of Scotland. "As outlined to the SPA board last week, we are currently planning for a variety of possible scenarios, including potential disruption around Scottish sea and air ports, and protest events, to wider challenges across the UK leading to potential public disorder, which could lead to mutual aid requests from other police services in the UK.

"The Chief Constable has made it very clear that we will respond to such requests, particularly in relation to Northern Ireland, but any request will always be considered against the needs of policing in Scotland."

Susan Deacon, Chair of the Scottish Police Authority, said: "These contingency plans can give the public confidence that our police service is well prepared to deal with the potential implications of the UK's exit from the EU.

"Over recent months, the Chief Constable has reported regularly to the Board of the Scottish Police Authority on the development of his contingency plans and the Authority has considered carefully the resource implications of various scenarios.

"The operational deployment of police officers is a matter for the Chief Constable and it is important that his operational responsibility is understood and respected. As the situation develops, the Chief Constable will brief the Scottish Police Authority regularly so that we can continue our scrutiny of

these arrangements and raise matters of concern and public interest.”

The officers will be drawn from local and national divisions and from back office functions. Police Scotland has been running a recruitment campaign since the start of January to bring in an additional 100 officers in the current financial year.

In addition, the Chief Constable has cancelled plans to reduce police numbers by 300 in 2019/20. The service has been working closely with staff associations, including the Scottish Police Federation, on its contingency preparations to ensure officer welfare considerations are taken into account and planned for appropriately.

Contingency planning is being done in conjunction with colleagues across UK policing and is based on identifying the “reasonable worst case scenarios” that may be faced in the event of a “no deal” exit