

# Police Scotland planning to close stations in Edinburgh

Police Scotland has plans to close 29 police stations all over Scotland, in a cost cutting and rationalisation exercise and is asking the public for their views.

- In Edinburgh the stations affected include:
- Balerno which was used as a base for 10 officers during the pandemic but was previously vacant,
- the former police HQ at Fettes which is mainly now a lost property office,
- Leith which is manned from 7am to midnight and is now handily located next to the tramline in the city's most densely populated neighbourhood,
- the West End police station which is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm,
- and the station in Portobello.

Divisional Commander Sean Scott wrote: "Over the last year we have been working to look at the buildings we have across Edinburgh and how we use them. We were given the opportunity to consider where we would want to locate our people to be as effective and efficient as possible. This work has allowed us to identify buildings which we believe are no longer required.

"Transforming our estate is a fundamental part of the future of policing in Scotland and we must deliver something different that is less expensive and more effective than the

current model. Disposing of these buildings will also allow us to focus our efforts on developing better accommodation for our officers and staff whilst also enhancing successful relationships with our partners.”

Miles Briggs MSP for Lothians said: “I am concerned about the proposed closures of the police estate across Edinburgh.

“A strong police presence is essential for preventing crime and keeping our communities safe.

“I will be seeking answers on what measures are being put in place to ensure that a sufficient police presence will be maintained in these areas.

“The significant cuts that SNP Ministers have made to Police Scotland over the last 16 years has led to the Edinburgh Decision having to make this decision.”

The 29 locations are now surplus to requirements, three have closed and 14 others are not open to the public with officers and staff moved elsewhere.

There will be consultation on the future of another 16 properties which are either vacant or simply plots of land. Police Scotland already have a policy of being situated close to other services and where possible sharing locations. Divisional Commanders have been asked for their input on sites to provide better services, and to highlight any buildings which are no longer needed.

To review the proposals and have your say visit Police Scotland’s [engagement hub](#).

Deputy Chief Constable, Malcolm Graham said: “Our estate needs to be fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century policing, putting service enhancement, visibility, and engagement at the heart of the communities we serve.

“These are core components of the legitimacy and consent on which policing in Scotland relies.

“Our presence in communities is not defined by buildings but by the officers and staff who work there, and we have already introduced technology that enables our officers to remain in local areas, reducing the need for them to return to police stations to deal with paperwork.

“We are determined to continue to improve our visibility and accessibility, as well as to bring partners together to deliver services in the most efficient and effective way.

“The buildings in which our officers and staff work need to be safe, functional spaces, and they need to be sustainable and adaptable enough to meet changing public expectations and the changing nature of policing.”

He added: “Police Scotland inherited a very large and ageing estate, much of which was not fit for purpose, with high maintenance costs and environmental inefficiencies.

“The locations of many inherited buildings no longer meet the requirements of local communities and in some cases the organisation is currently maintaining multiple buildings in the same geographic area, less than five miles apart.

“Some of the buildings are just a few miles apart, others are used by only a handful of police officers or staff and have no public access, while many are rarely visited by a member of the public.

“For the majority of properties, the proposed moves will be an average of four miles from their current location.

“Local communities will therefore continue to receive the same high level of service from officers, and still from within their local area.

“We now have more than 60 co-locations with partners,

providing more sustainable, more modern, and safer workspaces for our people.

“We have great examples of successful partnerships in the North East, Perthshire, Forth Valley, and Ayrshire among others and this will continue to be an important part of ensuring policing in Scotland is prepared for the future.

“We understand and are sensitive to community concerns around changes involving police buildings and as we bring forward proposals we wish to communicate our proposals to the public and our staff and seek their feedback. Please do view our plans and let us know your thoughts.”

## **REACTION**

Scottish Labour Justice spokesperson Pauline McNeill said: “This is yet another hammer-blow to Police Scotland’s resources due to chronic underfunding by the SNP government.

“With offices closing and jobs on the line, the need for action to protect police services could not be greater.

“Police visibility in our communities is vital in tackling crime as well as preventing crime and making people feel safe – we can’t allow cuts to undermine confidence in services.

“Action needs to be taken now to prevent further cuts to jobs and services and to help Scotland’s police keep Scots safe.”

Scottish Liberal Democrat justice spokesperson Liam McArthur MSP said: “These closures will be yet another blow to community policing for a service that is being forced to take extremely tough decisions.

“While the police will always have operational decisions to take about which parts of their estate are fit for purpose and have a role to play in the future, it would be utterly naive to pretend that budget decisions made by SNP ministers have

not played a significant part in leading the service down this road.

“From cuts to capital budgets to the government’s failure to get to grips with the presence of dangerous concrete, the police are facing up to having to do more with less.

“Scottish Liberal Democrats want to see a properly resourced police service that is ready and able to operate in communities across Scotland.”

UNISON the union say that police staff in Scotland, are already facing job losses through a proposed Voluntary Redundancy scheme, and now many of their jobs will be moved “as Police Scotland further retracts from being accessible to the public”.

David Malcolm, Branch Secretary, UNISON Police Scotland said: “No one seriously thinks that this is about improving services – it is a cost cutting measure. It might deliver balanced books, but it won’t deliver better policing.

“These measures themselves will shape the demand from the public and put pressure on already stretched resources in the police contact centre and control rooms as more communities see their police offices taken away.

We agree with Police Scotland that the Police estate is in a mess – but the way to sort that is to make the case for long term investment, not short term asset stripping.”

**Pamela Nash, chief executive of Scotland in Union, said:** “Under the SNP, vital emergency services in Scotland continually get scaled back.

“The NHS is in crisis, our fire service is being forced to implement £11m in cuts this year and now we learn there is likely to be a further reduction in police stations across the county.

“This is all symptomatic of an SNP government which has driven

public services into the ground over 16 years of negligence and chronic mismanagement.

“Now Police Scotland has been forced to make yet another difficult and unpopular decision.

“Police stations are essential safe havens, and communities worried about crime levels need visible and accessible police stations.

“Many will be anxious about public safety after this disappointing announcement.”

