

Countryside to get specialist police, commissioner pledges

by Sally Williams, Western Mail | Feb 12 2013

WELSH farmers in Snowdonia have welcomed plans to appoint a sergeant and police officer with special responsibility for agriculture and rural areas.

There was a large attendance when the new North Wales Police Commissioner Winston Roddick was guest speaker at the Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW) Meirionnydd county executive meeting about rural policing issues.

FUW Meirionnydd county executive officer Huw Jones said: "Members were extremely pleased with Mr Roddick's announcement to give priority to safety within the home and in public places and that funding will be available to fund 51 extra police officers.

"We were particularly pleased with the announcement that there will be a dedicated sergeant and a police officer appointed, with special responsibilities for agriculture and rural issues.

"We feel the job should include collating information specific to agriculture and should also develop an expertise which will then be of use to other officers within the force.

"Having the visible presence of a police officer in livestock markets will be of great benefit. The SMS alert messaging text system has also worked very well in Meirionnydd.

"There is an extensive database of farmers using this system in Meirionnydd and it is important that it continues."

Mr Jones said committee members stressed there was a tremendous increase in the population of Meirionnydd during the summer in coastal areas such as Harlech, Ardudwy, Barmouth, Aberdyfi and Tywyn.

He said: "We feel police coverage for a county such as Meirionnydd should reflect the increase in the population at certain times of year.

"Some members said there was a lack of police coverage during the hours of midnight to 6am and that there is a constant need to take particular notice when livestock is transported at this time of night.



"It was felt that livestock trailers should be stopped during these times much more often than is currently the case."

The committee noted Mr Roddick's suggestion that there was an opportunity for young farmers to become special constables.

"We will certainly keep this in mind in future discussions and we were pleased that several Meirionnydd YFC members were present at the meeting with their organiser Sioned Evans," said Mr Jones.

"Another issue raised during the meeting was the importance of establishing a good working relationship and links between police in North Wales and other neighbouring forces such as Dyfed-Powys.

"An example was given of a theft on our border with Powys at Machynlleth.

"The importance of CCTV cameras in strategic places within the county was emphasised. Examples were given of thefts in areas such as Tywyn and that the main route out of the area would be the A458 towards Welshpool. Similarly, the placing of cameras on the A494 at Bala would be of great benefit.

"We were particularly pleased to hear of the commissioner's determination that every attention is given to agriculture and rural areas and that every effort should be made to combat crime.

"When instances of crime do occur, swift reaction by the police is absolutely imperative."

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