

Dorset Police funding plea to Home Secretary

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By Jane Reader

HOME Secretary Theresa May is being urged to boost **Dorset Police** funding on the eve of her visit to Bournemouth.

She will address members of the Police Federation during their conference at the Bournemouth International Centre tomorrow.

Chairman of the Federation's Dorset branch, Clive Chamberlain, is urging her to reconsider the funding formula which puts Dorset at the bottom of England and Wales' 43 forces.

He said: "Dorset has lost an astounding 340 police officers since 2007 – 23 per cent of our total number of officers.

"We are expected to do more with less but by 2018 we will barely have 1,000 officers to police a diverse, busy and burgeoning county, with its 14 million visitors a year, thriving night-time economy, an international airport, seaports and half the population dispersed across large rural areas."

He is backed by Dorset's Police and Crime Commissioner, Martyn Underhill, who last week announced he was having to explore possible sponsorship.

Mr Underhill said: "We are the lowest funded force and have seen the worst cuts. This is wrong and I will continue to fight this."

Mr Chamberlain said he was against sponsorship and claimed it would reduce the ability of police forces to be completely independent.

He added: "The local Bobby has already been added to the endangered species list – let's make sure that he or she does not become extinct."

Thousands of delegates are in town for the conference, which will also see a visit from Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper.

[Back](#)

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