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PCC approves axing of Cleveland Police mounted section

Cleveland's police and crime commissioner (PCC) has approved a decision by the force to axe its mounted section.

Disbanding the unit of five horses, two staff members and seven officers will save about £88,000 a year, according to Chief Constable Jacqui Cheer.

Last month more than 3,000 people signed a petition urging the force to rethink the decision.

However, PCC Barry Coppinger said the move was necessary to save money.

Ms Cheer described the decision as "one of the hardest" she has had to make, but insisted it was necessary to cut overall spending.

The force has already said it will axe hundreds of officers in an effort to save an estimated £26m by 2014.

'Emotions high'
Mr Coppinger said he had "concluded that the decision to disband the mounted section is the right one, under the circumstances which now exist".

He added: "It is clear from this exercise that emotions have run high and this is an issue dear to the heart of many local people.

"We are already engaged in cutting around 300 police officers, also in reducing senior and middle management costs and in looking to build a better HQ.

"Every police officer represents an investment of some £50,000 per year. The mounted section costs some £550,000.

"The bulk of this expenditure is on the staff assigned to the section rather than the horses. This is a considerable sum. If it is not found from the mounted section then it will require cuts elsewhere."
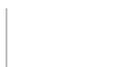
Petition organiser Jane McGravey said: "There are lots of areas where that money could be saved.

"The horses were very much involved with the community, and over the past 40 years they've earned a lot of trust, and people are really opposed to losing that."

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