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## Welsh public 'supports police devolution'

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**A poll commissioned by the body examining the case for devolving more powers to the Welsh government from Westminster has reported significant public support for moving policing powers for Wales to Cardiff.**

The survey, carried out by Beaufort Research for the Silk Commission on Devolution in Wales, found 63 per cent of 2,009 respondents polled between May 21 and June 12 this year were in favour of policing powers for Wales being devolved from central government in England.

Only 35 per cent of those responding said they wanted policing powers to remain within the remit of the UK government, with the report on the survey describing the findings as indicating the Welsh public "clearly favoured" further devolution.

With eight in ten also saying they felt the National Assembly for Wales worked in the best interests of the country and had "given Wales a stronger voice in the UK", the survey said two in three backed bringing in the devolved powers within five years.

However, 63 per cent of those taking part in the survey said they did not support devolution of the criminal justice system, and in the statistical analysis policing was noted as one of two areas "for which the greatest uncertainty over control appears to lie" over who was already in control.

Paul Silk, chair of the commission, which has also previously discussed the possibility of creating a single Welsh police force along the lines of Police Scotland, said the "very interesting" results "provide a real insight into the public's views" on the extent of Welsh devolution. While he acknowledged the survey indicated "continued growth in support for the National Assembly as an institution and for it to have further powers", the wide range of views on the subject needed to be considered.

"Our terms of reference are clear that our recommendations must command a wide degree of public support," he said.

"This poll is an important method to help us assess public opinion on Welsh devolution and attitudes on where powers should lie. I hope the poll's findings will stimulate wide debate on these important issues."

Alun Michael, police and crime commissioner (PCC) for South Wales, supported the survey's findings, arguing it was "common sense" to devolve policing and bring it in line with the NHS and other agencies that are also run from Cardiff.

"I think this demonstrates that the approach I have taken has enormous support in Wales, mainly to connect the activity of policing, whose main purpose has to be to reduce crime and protect the public, to the issues that are already devolved," he said.

"I'm very pleased we have close cooperation with the Welsh government on a whole range of issues affecting local communities, and I believe that this will increase rapidly over the next one or two years, even without devolving policing powers.

"I simply think it's the logical step from the Government having devolved policing to the four commissioners [in Wales]."

However, Chris Salmon, PCC for Dyfed-Powys, said it would be "dangerous" to split the policing powers between England and Wales without also devolving the criminal justice elements, which he said would risk the "confidence and coherence" of the system. He added PCCs will bring the requisite localism to satisfy the public.

"Though I support very much the principle of devolution, I think PCCs will provide it," he said. "I don't think adding Cardiff as another step in the chain would be necessary."

By [Liam Barnes](#)

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