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Gloucestershire PCC says police could be jail tour guides

Gloucestershire's police and crime commissioner has said police and special constables could act as tour guides at the former Gloucester prison.

Martin Surl was speaking after a mix up over tickets for tours at the jail left many people disappointed.

The Ministry of Justice offered 500 free tickets through a website which were immediately snapped up.

This meant there were none available for people who queued at Gloucester's Tourist Information Centre.

'Breakdown of communication'

Mr Surl said he would be contacting the Ministry, offering his support to find a solution as ministerial approval would be needed for more tours to be laid-on.

"I am sure the constabulary and special constabulary could find enough volunteers to act as guides that would satisfy the necessary security issues to help facilitate wider access," said Mr Surl.

"Although Gloucester is now closed, there are lots of other prisons still operating which are very similar.

"I think it's important for people to see what life behind bars can be like."

Tours of the prison were intended to be part of the city's Heritage Open Days, from 12 to 15 September, organised by Marketing Gloucester, the Civic Trust and Gloucester MP Richard Graham.

"There was a real breakdown of communication," said Liz Barnwell from Marketing Gloucester.

"The Ministry of Justice decided to get involved in Heritage Open Days at a national level and they sorted out their own ticketing arrangements using an online ticketing company."

Richard Graham MP has said he will try to get more tours at the prison but was keen not to raise false hopes.

"I am going to try to get further access later when Parliament meets in early September and I've asked people to email me if they are interested," he said.

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice said currently there were no plans for further open days at the prison.

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