

Call for single Welsh police force as 'cost effective'

Wales could follow Scotland and merge its four police forces, [a report by a former Metropolitan Police commissioner](#) has suggested.

Lord Stevens's report for the Labour Party says the current structure is no longer cost effective.

Options include one Welsh force, a single Wales and England force, or mergers cutting 43 forces to 10.

The report also suggested scrapping police and crime commissioners (PCCs), who were only introduced last year.

In April, eight regional police forces in Scotland were amalgamated to form a single body, Police Scotland.

The report looked at the system of PCCs, which Lord Stevens said was "riddled with failings" and had "fatal systematic flaws".

He recommended it should be discontinued in its present form at the end of the current term of office for PCCs.

The UK government, which has responsibility for policing in Wales and England, has said it will look at the report but it is not required to implement any of the recommendations.

The overall structure of the police service was last examined by a royal commission in 1962.

'Collaboration'

South Wales PCC Alun Michael said his local force showed that collaboration, not merger, was the way forward.

He said the options of a single Welsh force or mergers were "impractical" and did not "reflect this commitment to building neighbourhood policing".

Mr Michael added: "Collaboration is something that South Wales Police is committed to achieving, both with other police forces and local authorities.

"I welcome this report as a starting point for wider discussions about future developments of policing."

But Dyfed-Powys PCC Christopher Salmon said the report was "years out of date".

"The Stevens Report provides the wrong answers to the right questions," he said.

"More laws, more central diktats and clumsy legal obligations that drag police from their core mission are not the answer."

Shadow Welsh Secretary Owen Smith said the report had an important message, adding: "We need a police service that is accountable to local communities, one that helps prevent crime rather than being reactive, and one that is visible on our streets.

"Lord Stevens has warned that the successful neighbourhood policing model developed under Labour is under threat.

"We can see this in Wales as we've lost more than 500 police officers since the general election."

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