

Five years of Police Scotland: A thank you

 ***Justice Secretary Michael Matheson reflects on a time of change for the police service.***

I am reminded every day in my role as Justice Secretary of the commitment and dedication of Scotland's police officers and police staff. With crime in Scotland at a record low, and down 43% since 2006, I am confident policing in Scotland is on the right track thanks to the incredible contribution of our police officers to Scottish society.

We can all acknowledge that the move to a single service five years ago has created lots of changes, challenges and lessons learned.

But we also know there have been innovations and successes, and, moreover, a stronger commitment than ever to protecting our communities in Scotland.

The landscape of policing in Scotland has changed significantly since becoming a single service in 2013. As those who prey on our communities have sought to exploit new opportunities, and as the needs and vulnerabilities of our population continues to change, our officers have provided vital and visible protection on our streets.

Moreover, our police go above and beyond what many would consider to be traditional police work, supporting the most vulnerable people. Working with the wider public sector, other partners and communities to strengthen their service and to embed prevention into everything they do has become part of everyday work.



It is not inconceivable to recognise that the policing landscape will continue to change again over the next five years. The new Scottish Crime Campus at Gartcosh has provided a focal point for excellence in intelligence sharing, evidence gathering and forensic science. There is now a need to tackle new and developing threats to the public, including cybercrime. Our police service needs to be increasingly resilient, flexible, responsive and locally-focussed to help keep us safe. It is a challenge, but one I know our police officers and staff can accept and excel at.

Looking ahead, the Policing 2026 strategy includes a commitment to increase frontline capabilities, including new civilian specialists in cyber-crime. We have committed to increasing new civilian specialists in mental health, as outlined by our mental health strategy – something I feel particularly passionate about. Police Scotland is one of the first in the UK to implement mandatory mental health and suicide prevention training for all officers, and now 17,600 of you have completed this training. These aspects are vital to support our police officers and staff to deliver a modern and forward-looking police service in Scotland.

In Scotland, there are also over 1000 more permanent officers than there were in 2007. England and Wales have around 20,000 fewer officers compared to the same period. And while we ask our police service to be more adaptable, this government is committed to protecting the police resource budget for every year of this parliament – a boost of £100 million by 2021.

We have a world class police system in Scotland, supported by a hugely dedicated and professional workforce who work each and every day to secure the safety and wellbeing of people and communities across the country. The next five years will undoubtedly bring their own challenges. But for now, for the past five years, I'd like to thank all our police officers and policing staff for their efforts since 2013.

This blog was originally published by [Police Oracle](#) on 29 March 2018.

The post [Five years of Police Scotland: A thank you](#) appeared first on [Justice and Safety](#).

[Marking five years of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service](#)

 ***Community Safety Minister Annabelle Ewing looks back on the first five years of the single service.***

Today marks the fifth anniversary of Scotland's fire reforms and the creation of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). It is fair to say that the merger of eight regional bodies into one national service was not a task to be taken lightly. However, this complex process was completed effectively,

resulting in an increase in capability, better distribution of resource and protection of frontline services.

The first five years of the SFRS have included many achievements and milestones. It is now the largest service in the UK and fourth largest in the world, with 356 fire stations, 422 pumping appliances and around 8000 personnel. It has invested £44.5m in new fleet across Scotland, £17m in operational equipment and £52.7m in new buildings and refurbishment including new North headquarters in Aberdeen and a state of the art control centre in Dundee.

Incidents like last week's [major fire in Glasgow's Sauchiehall Street](#) remind us of the sheer bravery of fire teams willing to put themselves in danger to assist others. At the same time, it's important to recognise the service's valuable programme of preventative work which includes helping the most vulnerable and elderly members of the community stay safe in their own homes.

Since 2013 the SFRS has responded to more than 350,000 emergencies including over 45,000 non-fire incidents. In the same period the SFRS conducted almost 335,000 home fire safety visits and installed over 270,000 smoke alarms. These figures highlight the considerable support that goes beyond what many would see as the service's traditional 'bread and butter' work.

✖ Earlier this month I visited the site of the leading edge £12 million training centre in Edinburgh. Scheduled for completion in 2019, it will allow simulation of multi-vehicle road collisions and enable crews to hone specialist skills such as urban search and rescue and rope rescue.

Another area that has been strengthened through reform is the capacity to respond to water-related emergencies. New water rescue units have been established in Oban and Dumfries and there are now 20 water rescue teams across Scotland.

Protecting frontline services is our priority and our 2018-19 budget provides additional spending power of £15.5m to allow the SFRS to invest in service transformation. This is on top of a £21.7m increase in operational budget this year, supporting investment in vital equipment and resources. The SFRS recruited 100 new firefighters in 2017 and is in the process of hiring 300 more across Scotland, helping to ensure the service is prepared to face the new and emerging threats to our communities.

Importantly, the national service has maintained a local focus – with 17 dedicated local senior officers working with councils and other local partners to meet community needs. The SFRS has invested in its services all across Scotland, including a major ICT infrastructure upgrade in the north of the country and state-of-the-art appliances to benefit rural communities.

Any anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect and I would like to take this chance to thank all our firefighters and support staff for their hard work and commitment in responding to the complex and challenging situations they face every day.

This article was originally published in Fire Magazine.

The post [Marking five years of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service](#) appeared first on [Justice and Safety](#).

The week in review

This week marks the fifth anniversary of the creation of Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. With the anniversary itself on Sunday (April 1), look out for plenty of activity on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) as well as police and fire partners as we mark five years of improvement. The anniversary hasn't been the only thing on our minds, however.

Scots feeling safer than ever as crime falls

✖ The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2016-17 was published this week. The now annual publication – this year based on interviews with almost 5,600 adults about their experience of crime, whether or not reported to police – estimated that property crime is down 34% and violence down 27% over the same period.

Other key findings confirmed that overall crime in Scotland has fallen by around a third in just under a decade and that more people than ever feel safe in their neighbourhood. Responding to the survey, Justice Secretary Michael Matheson said:

“Scotland's firm focus on prevention, responsive policing and local partnerships to help individuals and communities keep themselves safe has had a positive impact on long-term crime trends and people's feeling of safety, with recorded crime at a 43-year low.

“While this progress is cause for encouragement, it will never be an excuse for complacency. As well as continued government investment in policing and funding partners such as Neighbourhood Watch Scotland, Crimestoppers and the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, I have commissioned further research into those areas where violence persists.”

Read more on the [main Scottish Government website](#).

Most adults (86.6%) experienced no crime in 2016/17. The [#SCJS](#) estimates that the proportion of adults experiencing crime has fallen from around 1-in-5 in 2008/09 to fewer than 1-in-7 last year. pic.twitter.com/paTs7VJaZJ

– ScotGov Justice (@ScotGovJustice) [March 27, 2018](#)

Sauchiehall Street fire

✖ Frontline firefighters have been praised by Community Safety Minister Annabelle Ewing for their tireless efforts to bring the recent significant fire in Glasgow city centre under control. At the incident’s height, more than 120 firefighters attended Sauchiehall Street after the alarm was raised on the morning of Thursday, March 22.

Crews worked through challenging and dangerous conditions to contain and extinguish the fire, which had taken hold within a block of commercial properties. While a number of buildings were damaged during the incident, the efforts of SFRS crews protected surrounding historic buildings.

Ms Ewing said: “I want to thank firefighters on behalf of the people of Glasgow and on behalf of the people of Scotland – their professionalism and heroism knows no bounds. “Firefighters were presented with one of the biggest incidents the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has ever faced and they managed to contain this blaze under very challenging and complex circumstances.”

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Deputy First Minister John Swinney hosted an event bringing together a number of government ministers, including the First Minister, and Cabinet Secretaries for Justice and for Health, with professionals working to tackle Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

There are ten recognised ACEs – traumatic experiences that can have a profound effect on a child’s developing brain and body with lasting effects, categorised into three broad types – abuse, neglect and household dysfunction. The latter type of ACE includes having an incarcerated relative, a mother treated violently, substance misuse and mental illness in the household.

As outlined in Scotland's Justice [‘Vision & Priorities’ strategy](#), there is an increasing understanding about the relationship between ACEs and future offending and imprisonment.

More than 80 experts working across Scotland in all of the main sectors affected by ACEs took part in the discussions aimed at understanding what is already working well, highlighting where further action is needed and exploring opportunities for collaboration to drive progress.

Mr Swinney blogged on the meeting, you can read more [here](#). You can follow more of the conversations on Twitter via the [#ScotlandACEs hashtag](#) – and watch a video from Monday's event, below.

Yesterday the Deputy First Minister [@johnswinney](#) hosted an event for Government Ministers and key stakeholders to discuss how we tackle adverse childhood experiences in Scotland. Watch the video below for more info [#ScotlandACEs pic.twitter.com/DPfvI0Kqlo](#)

– Engage for Education (@engagefored) [March 27, 2018](#)

Cashback for Communities

✖ The Justice Secretary celebrated Prince's Trust Scotland Development Awards in Glasgow this week – hearing first-hand how the scheme is benefiting young people, having previously received a similar grant award himself as a young person.

The Development Awards, supported by Scottish Government CashBack for Communities fund, are facilitated by Prince's Trust Scotland to help disadvantaged young people aged 13-24 who are unable to access education, employment or training opportunities because of financial barriers which hold them back.

Mr Matheson said it was a privilege to meet young people and hear from them about the positive impact the awards can have. He said: "Thirty years ago, I was awarded a £500 grant award to help me buy equipment to participate in an international event, which helped me develop transferable skills.

"The funds from the CashBack programme need to be focussed on helping young people in Scotland's most deprived communities to provide them with a platform to develop their skills. The Scottish Government is determined to ensure CashBack is carried forward in the years ahead and I look forward to watching young people and entrepreneurs make their mark."

Drug seizures

[New figures](#) have provided information on drug seizures made by the police in Scotland and the characteristics of those found in possession of drugs. The main Class A drugs seized by Police Scotland in 2016-17 were heroin (54.1

kilograms), cocaine (120.3 kilograms) and crack cocaine (5.2 kilograms). In addition Police Scotland also seized 8,600 ecstasy-type tablets.

The Scottish Government is reviewing its current drugs strategy, recognising that the patterns of drug taking and their challenges have changed since it was first published in 2008. A new strategy is due to be published in the summer.

Drug enforcement, including seizures, remains a key part of Police Scotland activity, supported by the Scottish Government's commitment to protecting the police resource budget in every year of this Parliament – a boost of £100 million by 2021.

The post [The week in review](#) appeared first on [Justice and Safety](#).

Further action to tackle sectarianism

✖ Nine projects will receive £515,000 for anti-sectarianism work – building on the unprecedented investment in this area by the Scottish Government in recent years.

The new funding will help reduce and prevent sectarianism in communities by delivering education in schools and workplaces. The new initiatives build on previous Scottish Government investment – which to date has supported 108 organisations to deliver anti-sectarian education – and bring total funding for this work to £13.5 million in the past six years.

Representatives of three of the organisations receiving the new funding made the following comments in response:

[Nil by Mouth](#) Campaign Director Dave Scott said:

“This record investment in our work will allow Nil by Mouth to challenge, and raise awareness of, sectarianism in workplaces and communities right across Scotland. Over 13,000 people from more than 100 employers have taken part in the ‘Beyond Religion & Belief’ Programme so far including almost half of Scotland’s local authorities, FTSE 100 companies, private businesses, and training providers. Increased investment in this and other grassroots education projects is exactly the sort of approach required to make continued progress in tackling this problem and prove that Scotland is bigger, better and bolder than bigotry.”

Mark Reid, [Supporters Direct Scotland](#) said:

“We are delighted to have received continued funding towards the development and delivery of our Colours Of Our Scarves anti-sectarian project. Our engagement with football supporters across the country and some recent high-profile incidents enforce the fact that sectarianism remains a problem within our society and we’re therefore pleased this funding will enable us to continue to deliver our vital work with centres of higher and further education across the country, the Scottish FA’s Schools of Football and also allow for the expansion of our delivery to include provision to local sports club across Scotland.”

Mark S Adams, Director of [North Kelvin Sports](#), said:

“We are delighted to have the opportunity to both continue and expand the highly successful and popular Bridges & Barriers programme. The informal style of educational delivery in a sports environment directly supports and reinforces the formal education delivered in the classroom.”

You can find out more about the nine funded organisations by clicking on the links to their websites below:

- [Bridging the Gap](#) – £25,000
- [Nil by Mouth](#) – £95,000
- [North Kelvin Sports](#) Development Group – £25,000
- [Sacro](#) – £65,000
- [Sense Over Sectarianism](#) – £85,000
- [Supporters Direct Scotland](#) – £75,000
- [Youth Scotland](#) – £60,000
- [Youthlink Scotland](#) – £60,000
- [West of Scotland Regional Equality Council](#) – £25,000

The funding was announced by Minister for Community Safety & Legal Affairs Annabelle Ewing, who also announced the appointment of Professor Duncan Morrow to chair an independent working group to look at defining the term ‘sectarianism’ within Scots law, potentially making it easier for police and prosecutors to tackle sectarian behaviour. the move is in response to the recommendations of the Scottish Parliament’s Justice Committee.

Read more on the [main Scottish Government website](#).

The post [Further action to tackle sectarianism](#) appeared first on [Justice and Safety](#).

The week in review

This week's round-up includes the announcement of Scotland's new HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, planned reforms to the oversight of police use of biometric data, and a report into the prevalence of cyber crime in Scotland.

New Code for police use of biometric data

✖ Plans for a new code of practice governing police handling of biometric data such as DNA, fingerprints, facial and other photographic images, have been confirmed this week.

An [Independent Advisory Group on Biometric Data](#) recommended a series of changes to how such data is used by Police Scotland.

The group, established by Justice Secretary Michael Matheson last year and chaired by John Scott QC Solicitor Advocate, examined the acquisition, retention, use and disposal of biometric data, and what improvements could be made to the regime governing this.

[Recommendations](#) include a new code of practice on the acquisition, retention, use and disposal of biometric data, and encouraging a 'national debate' to improve public understanding of and confidence in the use of such material.

Mr Matheson said the [Scottish Government accepted the Group's report](#) and the thrust of its recommendations, adding "The public should continue to have confidence in how their information is held and I hope that the publication of this report will kick-start a wider debate on biometric data and how it is best used to help keep our communities safe."

Police Scotland Assistant Chief Constable Gillian MacDonald added: "Any endeavour to strengthen the legislative framework and provide a balance between keeping the public safe from harm whilst ensuring the appropriate consideration of human rights and ethics is welcomed."

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary appointed

✖ Gillian Imery will succeed Derek Penman as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland in April, the Justice Secretary [announced this week](#).

Mrs Imery is currently Assistant Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland. She will lead HM Inspectorate of Constabulary Scotland (HMICS) to deliver an annual programme of independent inspection, monitoring and evaluation of Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority.

She said: "I am extremely proud to have been appointed to the role of HM

Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, and am optimistic about the part HMICS can play in supporting improvement in policing for the benefit of the Scottish public. I believe it is important to have independent and objective scrutiny of policing to ensure challenging issues are addressed as well as to highlight the positive contribution policing makes to our communities.”

Michael Matheson welcomed her appointment, saying: “With a career spanning over 30 years in Scottish policing, most recently as Assistant Inspector of Constabulary, Gillian Imery brings with her a wealth of experience to the role of Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland. I am confident that Mrs Imery’s invaluable policing background and time already spent in HMICS will stand her in good stead as the new Chief Inspector.”

New Scottish Police Authority board members

The Scottish Police Authority (SPA) Board will be strengthened by the appointment of seven new members, announced this week.

Welcoming the new appointees, the Justice Secretary said: “These new members will bring a broad range of skills and experience to the SPA, further strengthening it as it continues to scrutinise Police Scotland. Their backgrounds and successful track records in a number of fields will enhance the SPA as we approach the fifth anniversary of police and fire reform. This, coupled with the improvements in governance, engagement, and strategic leadership that the new Chair has initiated, will better enable the SPA to address the many new and evolving demands on Scottish policing.”

Read more about the new appointments on the [Scottish Police Authority website](#).

Evidence report on cyber-crime

✖ A report published this week has drawn attention to the increase in the potential for criminals to exploit the growth in internet-use across Scotland. [Cyber-crime in Scotland: A Review of the Evidence](#), highlights that a number of different types of crime can and likely do involve the use of the internet and cyber-technologies, either as a precursor to a crime or in the committing of a crime itself.

Michael Matheson said: “This report shows how the internet and new technologies can impact on the scale and nature of criminal activity across Scotland. While fraud, online sexual crimes and computer misuse such as hacking might be the most obvious examples of cyber crime, we must remain vigilant at all times while online.

“The Policing 2026 strategy acknowledged the need to respond to new challenges in crime and Police Scotland are committed to recruiting more civilian cyber specialists to ensure they have the right mix of skills in place to counter the threat posed by cyber crime.”

Strengthening home fire safety

Scotland's Housing Minister Kevin Stewart announced this week that the existing high fire safety standards required in the private rented housing will be extended to all homes.

This includes having at least one smoke alarm installed in the room most frequently used, at least one smoke alarm in spaces such as hallways and landings and at least one heat alarm in every kitchen. Additional requirements will include specifying a maximum age of ten years for alarms and a carbon monoxide detector will be required in all homes.

The Minister said: "Fires and fatalities from fires are decreasing but even one death is one too many. Scotland already has rigorous standards for smoke and fire alarms developed over time, with the highest standard currently applied to new-build and private rented housing.

"The tragic events at Grenfell Tower last year emphasised how important building and fire safety is, which is why we brought forward our consultation on this issue. Now everyone will benefit from the same level of protection, whether you own your home, or rent from a social or private landlord."

Read more about the plans on the [main Scottish Government website](#).

Monthly statistics update

The latest monthly Safer Communities & Justice briefing bulletin, prepared by Justice Analytical Services and containing the latest trends in criminal and civil justice was published this week. You can read the March briefing, including a feature on recent Criminal Proceedings statistics, on the [main Scottish Government website](#). And you can follow JAS on Twitter [@SGJusticeAnalys](#).

Morning cuppa and wee read of [@ScotGovJustice](#) safer [#communities](#) brief. Recorded [#crime](#) and numbers of [#victims](#) down. Positive! But, still more to be done. If you have been a [#victim](#) even if not reported to [@policescotland](#) you can contact [@VSScotland](#) for support 0345 6039213 [pic.twitter.com/rzlGrmFjDY](#)

– VSS Policy (@VSSPolicy) [March 22, 2018](#)

Court improvements

This week the Scottish Courts & Tribunals Service revealed that it will shortly seek planning permission to build a new two-court complex in Fife, co-located with Police Scotland at its existing police station in Kirkcaldy.

The creation of the new courtrooms, supported by Scottish Government funding announced in the recent Budget, will improve efficiency and flexibility in

managing day to day business increasing the number of courtrooms and providing improved accommodation for court users, including victims, witnesses and jurors.

SCTS Chief Executive Eric McQueen said: "Current court performance at Kirkcaldy Sheriff Court remains strong and continues to improve, with summary trials being offered within the agreed 16 week period. However the reporting and detection of crimes, particularly domestic abuse and sexual offences, has increased, not only in volume but in complexity requiring more court time, and the new court facilities will provide the flexibility to accommodate this business."

Chief Superintendent Colin Gall, Divisional Commander for Fife, added: "As part of Policing 2026, Police Scotland is committed to strengthening partnerships and improving outcomes for local communities. This opportunity will result in a key criminal justice partner being located within Kirkcaldy Police Station along with Police Scotland criminal justice resources and the existing local policing team."

Read more on the [SCTS website](#).

[@SCTScourtstribes](#) are planning to build a two court complex to hear sheriff and jury cases and custodies in Kirkcaldy. The proposal is for new criminal courtrooms and a court custody unit to be located in the existing Kirkcaldy [@policescotland](#) building.
<https://t.co/FlfaFappCl> [pic.twitter.com/Wi0bVd0KMr](https://t.co/Wi0bVd0KMr)

– Courtsandtribunals (@SCTScourtstribes) [March 19, 2018](#)

Glasgow city centre fire

Finally, as many of us headed home for the weekend, the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service was continuing its work to completely extinguish fires resulting from the major blaze in Glasgow city centre.

At its height, more than 120 firefighters and 20 fire engines were mobilised to the incident in Sauchiehall Street, after fire took hold within several commercial properties including a nightclub, on Thursday morning.

Atmospheric testing has concluded that there is no risk to the public from asbestos, but the Incident Commander, Assistant Chief Officer Lewis Ramsay said on Friday afternoon that much work remained to be done to prevent further damage to surrounding properties and to ensure the area is made safe.

ACO Ramsay commented: "This was an incredibly difficult and complex incident – but the actions of our firefighters were and continue to be outstanding. This is a historic area of Glasgow – through our aggressive intervention and planning we were able to protect iconic buildings, such as the Pavilion Theatre, from significant damage. I would like to take this opportunity to

thank the hotels, businesses and people of Glasgow who opened their doors to our firefighters and our emergency service partners for their invaluable and continued support.”

An investigation will be carried out in due course to establish the cause of the fire.

Minister for Community Safety Annabelle Ewing, as well as Mr Matheson, and First Minister Nicola Sturgeon were among those paying tribute to the skill and professionalism of the firefighters and the other emergency responders who mobilised quickly to the centre of Scotland’s largest city in order to keep people safe.

Just chaired a meeting of [@scotgov](#) resilience group to be updated on current situation with [#SauchiehallStreet](#) fire. This remains a serious ongoing incident and my sincere thanks go to [@fire_scot](#) and other emergency services for their heroic work.

<https://t.co/TTE8UKo9W7>

– Nicola Sturgeon (@NicolaSturgeon) [March 22, 2018](#)

The post [The week in review](#) appeared first on [Justice and Safety](#).