

News Release

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APPOINTMENT OF NEW POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSIONER

John McNeill has been appointed by Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill as the new Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland (PCCS).

The new Commissioner, who will replace Jim Martin who recently stood down from the post, will begin work on 17 August 2009.

He will provide independent scrutiny of the way the police handle non-criminal complaints from the public. He will also have powers to direct police forces to reexamine any complaints that he considers have not been dealt with properly.

Investigations of criminal allegations about the police will continue to be handled by area procurators fiscal.

Mr McNeill is a member of the Northern Ireland Probation Board, Civil Nuclear Police Authority and Service Complaints Panel and is part time commissioner of the Scottish Human Rights Commission. He was previously a prison governor in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, Chief Executive of the Scottish Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders, a Member of the Parole Board for England and Wales and a Member of the Risk Management Authority. On taking up appointment as Police Complaints Commissioner, he will stand down from the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Civil Nuclear Police Authority.

Announcing Mr McNeill's appointment, Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said:

"For the first time ever we now have over 17,000 police officers in Scotland, working hard to make our communities a safer place to live and work.

“It is vital that the public continues to have confidence in our police service. Modernising Scotland's police complaints system through the Police Complaints Commissioner is an important element in that work.

"Jim Martin, in his role as Scotland's first Police Complaints Commissioner, held our police forces to account and played an important part in driving up standards and ensuring consistency in the way the police handle complaints.

"I am confident that John McNeill the new Commissioner, like his predecessor, will continue to set standards for the way the police handle complaints and, when something has gone wrong, help the police learn lessons and improve the way they work."

John McNeill said:

I am delighted to be taking up the role of Police Complaints Commissioner. I am looking forward to building on the work Jim Martin did in establishing the position. I hope I can make a genuine difference to the service people receive from the Scottish police service.”

NOTES FOR NEWS EDITORS

1. The Police Complaints Commissioner's appointment will take effect on 17 August and he will take on his functions on that date. The appointment will be for three years. The role is expected to require approximately 8 days per month, and he will be remunerated at the rate of £331 per day.
2. The Commissioner provides a national overview of standards and consistency in complaint handling by all police organisations in Scotland. He has powers to undertake a complaint handling review to see how a matter was dealt with and depending on the outcome of this, he is able to direct the police to reconsider a complaint.
3. The Commissioner also has a general responsibility for ensuring that police organisations in Scotland have in place appropriate procedures for handling complaints and that these procedures are followed effectively.
4. Any complaints involving allegations of criminality will continue to be referred directly to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. The Commissioner will only consider non-criminal complaints.

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