



Life on Mars pic: Mark Campbell / Rex Features

Don't take policing back to the 1970s

The government's Bill to create a single Scottish police force could have a very damaging effect on law and order if it signals a fresh round of cuts to police staff.

Police staff work in a variety of roles from 999 call handler to forensic technicians, from detention officers to crime and incident advisors. All play a vital role in cutting crime as part of a modern, balanced police force.

The new Scottish Police Authority will be expected to achieve savings of between £88m and £151m per year. It is also under the government's political constraint of maintaining police officer numbers at 17,234. This means up to three thousand more police staff jobs are now under threat – even though a thousand staff posts have already been cut.

Audit Scotland has warned of the potential impact of 'reverse civilianisation' which could divert resources away from front-line policing. Cutting police staff makes no economic or policing sense. It simply means that important support and expert jobs are increasingly done by police officers – taking more than a thousand officers off the streets.

Cutting thousands of police staff would take policing in Scotland back to the 1970s. It would be like *Life on Mars*, a cop show set in a timewarp – but in fact, not in TV fiction.

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