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My Views: Police Resources
04/08/2009

There is no doubt that the proposed sell-off of Police Station buildings, many of which are in rural areas, will not be welcomed by the vast majority of people who live near them. However, the sad fact is that many of the affected Police Stations have in all reality been closed for a number of years, and have not even been operating on a part-time basis.

What people really want to know is that their local area is adequately covered with sufficient police officers on the ground. People want to see regular and highly visible police patrols to reassure the public and deter criminals. What they also want to see is proper sentences being handed out to those criminals who the Police do catch and bring before the courts.

Without even mentioning the threat posed by so-called republican “dissidents” the simple fact is that people in rural areas feel particularly vulnerable to criminals. There has been a huge increase in thefts from farms in recent times, and hardly a week goes by without a report of a vicious robbery of people in their own home.

Unfortunately recent experience of station closures in Mid-Ulster means that people do not believe that closures can take place without the service to the public being compromised. Recent events in Moneymore bear this out where the closure of the local police station has coincided with a massive increase in anti-social behaviour.

I believe that if decent law-abiding people could be guaranteed that the trade-off for police stations being closed and sold off, would be an improvement in service delivery from the Police, then they might reluctantly be prepared to live with it.

I also believe that it is imperative that the new Police Training College planned for Cookstown is completed and opened as soon as possible. The people of Northern Ireland need to know that they are being served by a police force comprising the highest calibre of men and women, and that they have received the best training available in order to prevent and detect crime and to protect the public from criminals. It is no less than they deserve.