



**SCOTTISH POLICE FEDERATION**  
Established by Act of Parliament

Ref: DK/DK

The Clerk  
Finance and Public Administration Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH  
EH99 1SP

By email to [fpa.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:fpa.committee@parliament.scot)

Dear Convenor

**The Financing of Public Enquires**

On behalf of the Scottish Police Federation, I write to raise concerns regarding the escalating and unsustainable burden that public inquiries are placing on policing in Scotland. The current situation is critical.

At present, **six major public inquiries** are ongoing in Scotland:

1. **The Sheku Bayoh Inquiry**
2. **The Emma Caldwell Inquiry**
3. **The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**
4. **The Scottish Hospitals Inquiry**
5. **The Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry**
6. **The Eljamel and NHS Tayside Inquiry**

Each of these inquiries demands significant input from the Police Service in terms of legal support, evidential preparation, officer time, and administrative resources. Taken collectively, they represent a crippling financial and operational burden on a service already facing the most acute resourcing crisis in over a decade.

Police Scotland operates with its lowest officer numbers since its creation, with front-line services under relentless pressure and no capacity to absorb additional workload. Yet, time and again, officers are abstracted from their core duties to meet the requirements of public inquiries often for months or years at a time with no dedicated budget, no additional staffing, and no structured

engagement in the planning of those inquiries other than in which the police have to do so.

This is not sustainable. It is not fair on our members, and it is not in the public interest.

- **The Sheku Bayoh Inquiry** has already resulted in **over £20 million in direct costs to Police Scotland**, with more than £25 million spent overall. This includes legal representation, document retrieval, officer abstractions, and dedicated staffing—funded entirely from core policing budgets.
- **The Emma Caldwell Inquiry** is expected to cost millions requiring extensive review of historic evidence and major disclosure operations. It will demand years of officer time, much of which will be abstracted from active investigation units.
- **The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry** continues to draw in extensive support from Police Scotland, particularly from legacy records, witness management, and safeguarding coordination.
- **The Scottish Hospitals Inquiry**, though healthcare-focused, has involved police in issues of public safety, documentation, and security procedures adding to cumulative workload pressures.
- **The COVID-19 Inquiry** has required Police Scotland to account for its emergency response during the pandemic, enforcement decisions, and operational policy-making across a vast timeline.
- **The Eljamel Inquiry**, while focused on NHS practices, still calls on police resources for records management and historic investigative review as the Lord Advocate has stated that the actions of the surgeon, met the criminal test.

In each case, no additional funding has been made available to cover the costs incurred. These pressures are absorbed by reallocating staff, reducing local presence, delaying investigations, and increasing the burden on already overstretched colleagues. To believe that public safety hasn't been compromised would be foolhardy. Officer wellbeing is being totally neglected, and we are seeing more and more officers wanting to leave the service.

The Scottish Police Federation supports transparency, accountability, and institutional learning. We support the principle of public inquiries. But we cannot support a system that expects those inquiries to be delivered at the expense of core policing services, with no financial safeguards, no formal consultation, and no regard for the cumulative impact.

## **1. Effectiveness and Value for Money**

The current inquiry model is not effective. Many inquiries become protracted and unfocused. Without statutory timelines or budget oversight, costs spiral, and impact is delayed. Policing resources are used heavily at the cost of local policing.

## **2. Transparency**

Transparency is inconsistent. The public, and contributing participants, are rarely informed about inquiry costs, remits, or extensions. Scope creep is common. We urge mandatory publication of budgets, timescales, and planned deliverables at the outset.

## **3. Legislative Framework**

The legislative process for establishing inquiries is heavily centralised and lacks adequate consultation with operational agencies like Police Scotland. We call for a statutory duty to consult impacted public bodies, including police staff representatives, before an inquiry is established.

## **4. Cost Monitoring**

There are no enforceable mechanisms for monitoring costs. This leads to unchecked overruns. We advocate for:

- Independent financial oversight
- Maximum inquiry durations unless formally extended by Parliament
- Annual public reporting on progress and spend

## **5. Cost Effectiveness and Independence**

Independence is essential—but it must be balanced with accountability. Inquiry chairs can remain independent while working within a framework that ensures value for public money. We suggest a model similar to Australia's Royal Commissions, which mandate financial planning and delivery milestones.

## **6. Implementing Recommendations**

Recommendations from inquiries are too often shelved. We propose:

- Statutory deadlines for publication of implementation plans
- Annual reporting to Parliament on progress
- Independent post-implementation review

## **7. Alternatives to Full Public Inquiries**

In many cases, alternatives such as independent commissioned reviews, judicial audits, or parliamentary select-style investigations may achieve the same objectives with less cost, quicker timelines, and reduced resource pressure. Scotland should look internationally at models in Canada, New Zealand, and Ireland where inquiry frameworks are more proportionate and cost managed.

We would ask the Committee to consider

1. Legislate for ring-fenced funding for all police-related inquiry costs.
2. Create a statutory pre-inquiry assessment process, including resource impact and operational feasibility.
3. Reform the structure and governance of inquiries, placing enforceable controls on scope, duration, and financial oversight.
4. Require early and formal consultation with the Police Service and other key stakeholders before inquiries are established.

The Scottish Police Federation cannot support a model that delivers accountability at the cost of capability. The Police Service cannot continue to fund public inquiries by hollowing out its ability to police. Reform is not optional, it is essential.

We would welcome the opportunity to give evidence in person and to work constructively with the Committee on this issue.

Yours sincerely

**DAVID KENNEDY**  
General Secretary