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Research by the Scottish Conservatives has found that the number of Special Constables in Scotland has more than halved since 2013.

The figures, from a Freedom of Information request by Maurice Corry MSP, show that since 2013, over 750 officers have been lost, with numbers down from 1387 in 2013 to 610 in 2018.

This appears to be the result of a failure to recruit new Special Constables which have also been falling dramatically from 251 in 2013 to only 85 in 2017.

At a local level, the response shows that there are only 23 officers in Renfrewshire & Inverclyde (K Division), while the whole of Lanarkshire (Q Division) has only 27. These two areas had 63 and 126 specials respectively in 2013.

Commenting on the figures Maurice Corry, Scottish Conservative community safety spokesman said:

“Special Constables make an important contribution to the policing of our streets, deterring crime and interacting with communities.

“The SNP has presided over years of declining numbers of Special Constables without addressing it in any meaningful way.

“I am extremely concerned about this massive drop in numbers of Special Constables given their importance and the effect this is having on Police Scotland capability.

“The SNP must explain why it has let this happen, if it is by design or just sheer incompetence.

“The SNP must address this decline quickly and ensure that the policing capability in Scotland is not compromised in any way.”