

Policing plan 'neglects' rural Scotland

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Justice secretary Michael Matheson has been warned not to neglect rural Scotland following the publishing of a 10-year strategy for policing.

The single force failed to mention countryside communities once in its 'Serving a Changing Scotland', which was released yesterday.

And today, shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross warned the Scottish Government not to concentrate all its efforts on the central belt when it embarks on policing reforms.

He pointed out the population of Scotland's rural communities is growing at a faster rate than anywhere else north of the border.

And the omission comes despite the strategy highlighting challenges such as migration, health and inequality.

But despite that, Mr Matheson failed to give assurances in Holyrood today when challenged on the issue.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

"It's all very well coming up with a plan for Scotland's cities when it comes to policing.

"But, as ever with the SNP, its obsession with the central belt leaves rural communities neglected.

"The document produced by Police Scotland doesn't mention our rural communities once, and that's utterly unacceptable.

"Crime in these parts of the country can differ significantly to offending in towns and cities, and it's regrettable the single force isn't acknowledging this.

"And when he had a chance in the Scottish Parliament to set the record straight, Michael Matheson failed to do so."

The Scottish Conservatives criticised the document when it was published yesterday:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/02/police-scotland-changes-must-not-deplete-the-frontline/>