

Sir Roy Cameron, QPM BA M.Phil.,  
HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary,  
2, Greenside Lane,  
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7 December 2002.

Dear Sir Roy,

### **Inspection of the Scottish Criminal Records office**

In response to two recent written Parliamentary Questions from Michael Russell MSP Mr Jim Wallace the Minister for Justice made the following replies.

*1. HM Inspector of Constabulary will carry out a Review Inspection of the Scottish Criminal Record Office (SCRO) in January 2003. This Review Inspection will address any issues that are outstanding from the SCRO Primary Inspection Report published in May 2001 and the Review Inspection of December 2001.*

*2. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) will be reporting on its Review Inspection of the Scottish Criminal Record Office (SCRO) in March 2003. SCRO will also be included in the HMIC Race Relations Inspection Report that is due to be published in February 2003.*

I am writing to you to highlight a number of issues that I believe are relevant to your coming inspection.

As you are aware your predecessor Mr William Taylor and the Change Management Review Team (CMRT), established by ACPO(S), in their reports into the Scottish Criminal Records Office laid great stress on openness and accountability, integrity, and culture.

In this respect some important statements were made in the CMRT Report:

***13.11.1 A main thread of HMIC's Primary Inspection Report is the need for SCRO Fingerprint Bureau to move away from a historically introspective culture. In doing so it must become more open and engender the principles of transparency and accountability.***

***13.11.4 At Suggestion 19 HMIC suggests that the adoption of a code of ethics should be an integral part of the change proposed for SCRO.....the introduction of a code of ethics would outwardly demonstrate a willingness and intention, on the part of SCRO Fingerprint Bureau, to aspire to the highest standards of integrity and independence required of a fingerprint bureau.***

***13.11.6 The CMRT is fully supportive of HMIC's direction towards a more open and accountable service***

**13.12.1 The fundamental importance of the principles of integrity and independence are highlighted throughout this report and HMIC's Primary Inspection Report.**

**13.12.18 Erroneous Identifications - The essential element in dealing with erroneous identifications is transparency. When mistakes do occur, for whatever reason, it is imperative that they are dealt with in a rigorous fashion, which can withstand external scrutiny.**

**13.12.25 While the importance of independent scrutiny is recognised, it is essential that an open culture be encouraged where mistakes of whatever nature are immediately identified and highlighted.**

**15.5.1 The culture of SCRO has been criticised as being introspective, internalised and elitist and although this may be more perception than fact, the assessment of how an organisation is regarded is critical to its progress and development....**

**15.5.2 The goal must be to create an organisational culture that has integrity at its heart, is professional, transparent, open to innovation and able to adapt to change.**

SCRO's current stance is clear:

1. Fingerprint identification is a matter of opinion and not of fact.
2. No mistakes were made by SCRO fingerprint experts in the Shirley McKie and David Asbury cases
3. No mistakes were made by SCRO personnel in relation to these cases.

Not only does this fly in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary but it also provides clear evidence that important lessons have not been learned and that few if any of the recommendations aimed at bringing about openness and accountability have been implemented.

The SCRO's continued failure to admit to mistakes is perverse and is a threat to every person seeking justice in the Scottish Courts where fingerprint evidence is involved.

**Could I please have your assurance that the concerns I have raised about the continued failure of the SCRO to implement the HMCI's recommendations in respect of openness, accountability, integrity and honesty will be addressed during your coming inspection and will be referred to in your subsequent report.**

Yours sincerely,

**Iain A J McKie**

**Copy: Mr Michael Russell M**