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# SNP orders new probe into McKie print fiasco

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THE Shirley McKie scandal that plunged the Scottish fingerprint service into turmoil is to be investigated by a judicial inquiry.

The former detective was accused of contaminating evidence by leaving her fingerprint at a murder scene in 1997.

Miss McKie, 44, of Troon, Ayrshire, was awarded £750,000 of public cash in damages in February 2006 on the eve of a legal battle she was due to launch to clear her name.

Last night, the Scottish Daily Mail discovered that ministers are set to announce another probe into the case, which started with the discovery of a woman's body a decade ago.

Marion Ross, 51, was stabbed to death on January 8, 1997. Joiner David Asbury, 21, of Kilbirnie, Ayrshire, was found guilty of the



Awarded damages: Shirley McKie

said last year the call for a full inquiry was 'designed to turn this into a political debate rather than a debate about the justice system'.

A Labour spokesman said: 'We have gone through this process before and we don't need to spend more taxpayers' money on an issue that has been resolved.'

Scottish Tory justice spokesman Bill Aitken said: 'We would support a judicial inquiry if the remit was clearly defined and in that way costs would be limited.'

Miss McKie began a legal battle to clear her name after she was accused of contaminating evidence by leaving her fingerprint at Miss Ross's home.

Experts disagreed over whether the print was that of the former Strathclyde Police officer. The Scottish Executive paid the damages to Miss McKie just before a court case she had begun to clear her name.

In February, the SNP's Kenny MacAskill, now the Justice Secretary, said the McKie case had 'tarnished the criminal justice system'.

An Executive spokesman said: 'We are committed to a judicial inquiry into the Shirley McKie case.'

## 'Tarnished criminal justice system'

murder, but his conviction was quashed in 2002 when doubts arose about the fingerprint evidence.

The decision to award Miss McKie damages triggered concern over the credibility of the fingerprint service and led to calls for the then Justice Minister Cathy Jamieson to quit.

In the run-up to the Holyrood election in May, the SNP pledged a judicial inquiry into the fiasco.

An announcement on the investigation - which will be led by senior judges tasked with finding out what went wrong - is expected later this month.

Some observers at Holyrood believe the SNP's move is designed to cause embarrassment to Jack McConnell's ousted Labour administration. The former First Minister