

The Herald

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£40m supercampus for Scotland's crime-fighting specialists

Scotland's first crime supercampus aimed at tackling the country's main gangland players is due to be announced today by the Scottish Executive.

The FBI-style headquarters, which will be housed at Gartcosh in Lanarkshire, will be used to target the growing threat of serious and organised crime.

The huge centre is expected to bring together organisations including the Scottish Crime and Drugs Enforcement Agency (SCDEA), Customs, immigration, forensics experts and the Serious Organised Crime Agency (Soca).

The campus, which is estimated to cost £40m, is expected to open in 2010 and will be on a direct rail link to Glasgow Queen Street.

Around 500 people could be based there, bringing together specialists in money-laundering, fraud, covert surveillance, and drugs trafficking. Joint working should enable arrest warrants to be issued more quickly and help prevent criminals from fleeing the country.

It will also target foreign gangs and international networks whose operations extend to Scotland.

The campus may also attract other crime-fighting organisations such as the Scottish Police Intelligence Strategy, the Scottish Forensic Science Service and the Scottish Criminal Records Office.

The plan was first mooted in 2004 by the former Scottish Drugs Enforcement Agency, which requires a new base for its 200 officers.

At the time, the move was welcomed by Graeme Pearson, now head

of the SCDEA, who has vowed to crack down on the organised gangs that make millions of pounds from drugs smuggling, human trafficking and counterfeiting.

Mr Pearson has already visited the headquarters of the American FBI in Washington DC, the J Edgar Hoover Building, in order to see how the new crime-fighting body might be operated.

In addition to fighting organised crime, it has recently been suggested that the SCDEA could take over major criminal fraud investigations and counter-terrorism from local police forces.

Ministers expect the centre will be recognised internationally as one of Europe's leading weapons in the fight against crime. They have been waiting for the results of a report from property consultants Drivers Jonas, detailing four possible locations and outlining options for the campus's scale.

The Herald understands that the site of the former steelworks in Gartcosh has now been chosen.

12:45am today

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