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Friday, December 5, 2008

Inquiries cost £5m a year - PSNI

GERRY MORIARTY, Northern Editor

RESEARCH FOR a number of public inquiries in Northern Ireland is costing the police more than £5 million each year to carry out, PSNI chief constable Sir Hugh Orde has told the policing board.

The demands of assisting the Bloody Sunday and other inquiries comes as the PSNI faces a budget shortfall of £130 million over the next three years.

Sir Hugh said it was costing the PSNI £100,000 each week to conduct work for the Bloody Sunday, Rosemary Nelson, Robert Hamill and Billy Wright inquiries.

This was in addition to the £250 million estimated cost of these investigations.

The chief constable in the past month was forced to find £15.3 million in savings to help meet a deficit of £24 million in the police budget for this year.


This week he was allowed draw down the remainder of the shortfall from next year's budget by the North's direct rule minister for security, Paul Goggins.

The chief constable said there was an urgent need for so-called legacy or issues of the past to be financed separately and in a manner that did not cut into the policing budget.

Coincidentally, it was disclosed yesterday that Lord Saville, chairman of the Bloody Sunday inquiry, has informed the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee that he was not in a position to explain why publication of the inquiry's findings was postponed to next year. To do so would risk revealing sensitive details of the 10-year-old investigation, he told the committee.

The policing board yesterday released details of a survey which showed public support for the PSNI was just short of 70 per cent, the highest figure recorded so far.

Ninety-three per cent of those surveyed felt very or fairly safe in their communities, and 86 per cent had some, a lot or total confidence in the PSNI's ability to provide a day-to-day service for everyone in Northern Ireland. "Overall these results are very positive and it is good news that people are feeling safer," said the board's chairman, Prof Sir Desmond Rea.

 This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

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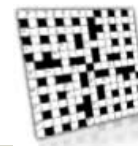
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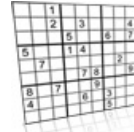
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