

**THE MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR POLICING AND CRIME (PERIVALE)  
COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2020**

**REBUTTAL TO UPDATING STATEMENTS**

**of:**

**DAVID MATHEISON, PROPERTY SERVICES, COMMERCIAL & FINANCE  
DIRECTORATE – METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE**

**ON BEHALF OF THE ACQUIRING AUTHORITY IN RESPECT OF THE MAYOR'S  
OFFICE FOR POLICING AND CRIME (PERIVALE) COMPULSORY PURCHASE  
ORDER 2020**

**14 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION AND EXPERIENCE**

1.1 My name is David George Mathieson. The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this Inquiry is true and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

1.2 My experience and responsibilities are set out in my Proof of Evidence and Supplemental Proof of Evidence already submitted for this Inquiry.

## **2 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

My evidence addresses the differences between the MPS operations and those of other forces in response to Mr Gomez-Baldwin's Updating Statement, section 9.

## **3 UTILISATION OF VRES SCHEME**

3.1 Prior to 2005, VRES operated in a similar way to that currently operated by other forces. It operated using a number of vehicle recovery services that recovered vehicles to a number of privately owned garages.

3.2 The decision to move away from this model was covered in detail in my earlier evidence and is set out in the 2004 Business Case. In summary, the old system (prior to 2005) was seen to be inefficient, did not properly protect the chain of evidence and provided a poor service to members of the public. It was also at risk from failure of outsourced suppliers, as was proven in 2001 when the vehicle recovery contractor entered into receivership.

3.3 London is a different environment to those operated by the other forces. It covers almost twice the population of any other force in the UK and has a population density significantly greater than any other (I note below the population densities in the Table for the forces identified by Mr Gomez-Baldwin in his Updating Statement). London has a higher prevalence of serious and organised crime (crime statistics demonstrate

that 25% of all such crime in the UK is London centric) and the MPS also has a national (and at times international) role.

3.4 The large objects forensics service operated from the Order Land is one of only 3 in the UK of similar sophistication – the other two similar facilities are operated by Greater Manchester Police and Police Scotland. The MPS facility is unique in that it is located alongside the routine forensics facilities and the seized vehicle storage facilities, bringing both continuity of evidence benefits, security for personal and assets and operational efficiencies (See paragraphs 4.3.4 to 4.3.8 of the SoC regarding need for these services to be provided on one site).

3.5 Mr Gomez Baldwin's evidence has indicated that other forces do not adopt the same model as that operated by the MPS. To assist with the key characteristics of the other forces and their respective models together with the MPS, I have identified the same in the Table below:

	<b>MPS</b>	<b>West Midlands Police</b>	<b>Greater Manchester Police</b>	<b>Merseyside Police</b>	<b>Police Scotland</b>
Size of force	36,000	6,500	7,500	4,000	18,000
Area covered	620 square miles	348 square miles	492 square miles	250 square miles	28,000 square miles
Population served	8.6M	3M	2.7M	1.5M	5.5M
Population Density	13,900 / sq mile	8,600 / sq mile	5,500 / sq mile	6,000 / sq mile	200 / sq mile
Model	Outsourced recovery and disposal. In house processing, examination and storage.	Fully outsourced to 9 suppliers (other than Road Traffic Collision investigation and forensics)	Fully outsourced to 7 suppliers (other than Road Traffic Collision investigation and forensics)	Outsourced to a single supplier with storage facilities provided on a subcontract basis	Fully outsourced via a managed service supplier who contracts with circa. 40-50 individual recovery agents. Forensics and Road Traffic Collision investigations run in house.
Approx no. of vehicles processed	38,000	25,000	20,000	10,000	Not known

per annum					
Number of sites used	2	9	10	6	40-50
Site capacity	1,800	1,400	1,000	800	Not known

3.6 The characteristics of the areas served by these forces (which include the 4 largest metropolitan police forces in the UK) are markedly different. The MPS services a population 60% larger than the next largest force, Police Scotland, and roughly 3 times as large as either the Greater Manchester Police or West Midlands Police forces. The population density of the MPS area has a population density 60% greater than the West Midlands Police area and 150% greater than the Greater Manchester Police area. Crime figures, transport and vehicle use figures and trends are also very different for the four forces areas.

3.7 The delivery models for West Midlands Police, Merseyside Police and Greater Manchester Police mimic those adopted by the MPS prior to 2004, i.e. outsourcing the recovery, processing, storage and disposal of all vehicles, whilst identity checks are carried out at police stations; and forensics and crash investigations facilities are carried out in the relevant garages. These models of operation all require a significant number of third party owned and operated premises which have to be secured and maintained to police standards. As noted at paragraph 5.16.2 of the Statement of Case, the MPS requires a higher standard of security than any other force in the UK.

3.8 Prior to the release of any seized vehicle, identity and vehicle documentation checks are required to ensure that vehicles are released to the legal owner and that the vehicle is safe to use and has all the required documentation (insurance, road tax and MOT). Greater Manchester Police, Merseyside Police and West Midlands Police forces require members of the public collecting vehicles to attend a specific police

location for identity and vehicle documentation checks to be carried out after which they are directed to the appropriate facility to recover the vehicle. Police Scotland allows the checks to be carried out at any police station (primarily due to the size of the area served. All of these models require significant additional journey time for the owner of the vehicle, over and above that required if the checks are carried out at the vehicle location. As third party operated garages are used to store vehicles, these garages do not have the facilities nor the expertise to carry out such checks, nor are they empowered to release vehicles seized under the Road Traffic Act without separate approval from a police officer.

- 3.9 Another disadvantage of this model is that the identification of suspicious objects in Non-Crime Vehicles is much more difficult as the recovery agents are neither trained nor legally empowered to investigate such vehicles further.
- 3.10 All of these forces have encountered ongoing security incidents including break-ins, theft of vehicles and the torching of storage facilities in order to recover or destroy evidence. The implications of this on criminal investigations and on the ongoing effectiveness of the service is a matter of concern to all of the four other forces.
- 3.11 As a consequence of these concerns, several of these forces are now reviewing their contracting and operating model ahead of the expiry of the current recovery and storage contracts and are considering adopting the MPS model of centralising the storage and processing of vehicles on a police controlled site.
- 3.12 Whilst the MPS is able to provide dedicated and resilient forensics facilities at their two vehicle pounds, all other forces in the UK carry out routine forensics on a mobile basis, with mobile forensics teams visiting the third party operated garages. Police Scotland and Greater Manchester Police also have sophisticated large object forensics facilities similar to that operated by the MPS at the Order Land; these are the only two comparable forensics facilities to that provided at the Order Land

anywhere in the UK. Vehicles or other large objects are transferred there if needed – as with any movement of evidence, this transfer causes risks to evidence integrity and risk to the persons involved.

3.13 The Forensic Science Regulator has recently mandated that all incident scene examination and forensic collision investigations must comply with BS EN ISO/IEC 17020 standard. The standard sets out the management approach and control principles that must be followed for such activity and ensuring compliance with the standard will be considerably more difficult in circumstances where affected vehicles are stored across a large number of privately operated sites. The implications of the requirements of this standard are still under review by all four forces and additional steps will need to be taken to improve the forensics capabilities at all facilities as the standard is enforced. The current VRES facilities at the Order Land mean that the MPS is able to comply with the requirements of the ISO17020 standard relatively straightforwardly and with only minor changes to operating procedures.

3.14 A further issue that Greater Manchester Police, West Midlands Police, Merseyside Police and Police Scotland forces are now all reviewing is the fire risk arising from damaged electric vehicles. None of the current outsourced contracts make proper provision for this and the operating models, premises provision and management approaches will be reviewed to reflect these as the contracts come up for renewal.

3.15 Police Scotland have a very different set of challenges given the need to operate over a comparatively vast geographical area with in general low population densities. They operate a fully outsourced service with a managing agent supplier operating a network of recovery agents and storage garages. The entire operational process is managed via the outsourced supplier.

3.16 Due to the sheer size of the country, Police Scotland allows document and identity checks to be carried out at any Police Station in Scotland, by any police officer, prior

to vehicles being released. Comparatively, the MPS has a relatively small number of specialist staff at the MPS VRES sites who routinely check thousands of documents per annum and are highly experienced at identifying counterfeit driving licences and certificates of insurance and ensuring compliance with the relevant underlying legislation and regulations prior to a vehicle being released.

3.17 The MPS rejected the outsourced delivery model in the original 2004 business case. It considered reverting to an outsourced model as part of the 2018 SOC and rejected it on the grounds that:

3.17.1 The London supplier market does not have sufficient appropriately capable suppliers that could provide an outsourced version of the VRES service. Significant investment would be required by such providers to be able to do so and that, even where the market is already suitably mature, the quality of providers is variable;

3.17.2 While other forces do outsource their entire VRES service, the MPS has significantly higher volumes and severe traffic conditions which make service fulfilment significantly more challenging in London.

3.17.3 The availability of sufficient commercial land is uncertain and the impact of purchase / lease costs on the overall budget would be higher than under the current model;

3.17.4 There is no certainty that the market could develop the capability to safely and securely handle and store weapons and/or drugs regularly found in vehicles;

3.17.5 Outsourcing brings business continuity and cross-contamination risks to evidence which are very difficult for the MPS to manage or mitigate; and



3.17.6 The MPS VRES teams have now developed considerable expertise in managing crime exhibits and tackling crime and the two operational sites both contain local on-site policing teams. An outsourcing solution will lose both the skills developed by the VRES staff and the immediate availability of policing expertise and resources at the two sites.

## **4 SUMMARY**

- 4.1 The MPS adopted an insourced delivery model for VRES in 2005 following major service failures arising from the failure of outsourced storage suppliers. This insourced operating model is supported by outsourced vehicle recovery and disposal contracts.
- 4.2 The MPS operating model has been developed over the past 15 years and has been proven to provide an effective and efficient service which delivers the policing and public service needs for London. Over this period the MPS VRES service has developed significant specialist in-house expertise that supports the MPS's wider crime fighting responsibilities.
- 4.3 The MPS re-assessed the operating model as part of the Strategic Outline Case in 2018 and concluded that the risks to service delivery from an outsourced delivery model were significant and that the current delivery model should be retained.
- 4.4 Other metropolitan police forces do continue to operate under more fully outsourcing models; these deliver the core vehicle removal and processing facilities in an effective way but the mode of operation that results, requiring a large number of small sites, brings significant compromises in terms of the identification of evidence and the protection of evidence continuity, of facility security and in the simplicity of the service to the public. Additionally, these forces operate across significantly smaller and less densely populated areas with lower overall crime numbers and a

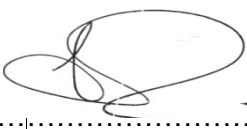
lower threat from terrorism and organised crime than is faced by the MPS.

- 4.5 Whilst the MPS could revert to an outsourced model if the supplier marketplace in London was able to deliver such a model (which is in doubt), an outsourced delivery model would reduce the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the VRES service to London and would increase the impact on the users of the VRES service, whether members of the public who are victims of crime or those who are arranging to collect vehicles seized for other reasons.

## 5 **EXPERT DECLARATION AND STATEMENT OF TRUTH**

- 5.1 I confirm I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this Proof are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my knowledge I confirm to be true.
- 5.2 I confirm that I have complied with my duty to the Public Inquiry as an Expert Witness which overrides any duty to those instructing or paying me.
- 5.3 I can confirm that I am not instructed under any conditional or other success related fee arrangement.
- 5.4 I can confirm I have no conflicts of interest.
- 5.5 I confirm I am aware of and have complied with the requirements of the rules, protocols and directions of the Public Inquiry.
- 5.6 I confirm that my proof complies with the requirements set out in the Institution of Civil Engineers Code of Professional Conduct.

Signed



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**David George Mathieson**

Dated 14 September 2021