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DOUBLE WHAMMY UNFAIR ON BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE, SAYS MP

North East Bedfordshire MP Alistair Burt has fired off an angry broadside to Justice Minister Jack Straw following his controversial remarks that police are not overburdened with paperwork, but simply prefer to stay in the warmth of their police station rather than be out on the streets. Mr Burt, who spent a cold December night out on patrol with the police recently, believes the remarks were a cover for the financial black hole facing all forces, including Bedfordshire.

'Just before Christmas we learned of a very poor financial settlement for the police nationally, which could mean up to 100 officers cut from Bedfordshire. This is a reflection of the financial crisis of 'boom and bust' for which we will all be picking up the bill. At the same time Jack Straw produced his smokescreen to blame the police, rather than recognise how difficult the Government has made their work with the increase in red tape, and how difficult the next few years are going to be because of his Governments failure to support them.

Time spent with the police shows how tough their job can be. With the best will in the world, they cannot be everywhere, and they often face criticism from my constituents who sometimes cannot get the response they would want from them. So in a rural area like NE Bedfordshire the issue for the Justice Secretary should be how to help the police get more time out and about to cover often isolated areas, not blaming them for the Governments own deficiencies.

Constituents have been angered with Jack Straw's remarks, and I will be letting him and the Government know at the first Commons opportunity.

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