

Headline: Central Police to continue Cullen inquiries

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Article: CENTRAL Scotland Police last night vowed to carry on with interviews for Lord Cullen's inquiry into the Dunblane massacre despite calls by Scottish political leaders for an independent police force to carry out the investigations.

Yesterday, leaders of the Scottish National Party, Labour and the Liberal Democrats told The Scotsman that they were concerned that Central Scotland Police officers could come under investigation in the light of evidence that the force had allowed the killer, Thomas Hamilton, to renew firearms certificates on seven occasions during the past 19 years.

There were also concerns that the Central Scotland force, along with Fife Constabulary, Strathclyde Police and Lothian and Borders Police may have failed to take appropriate action when parents complained about Hamilton's activities with young boys.

Alex Salmond, the leader of the SNP, said the inquiries should be conducted by another Scottish police force which has not had dealings with Hamilton. "It is absolutely essential that the Cullen Inquiry is above any accusation of vested interest or suspicion of favouring any group which may be questioned in the preliminary stages," he said.

John McFall, the deputy Shadow Scottish Secretary also said there was a "strong case for another police force to conduct the investigations".

"It is important that people from outside, with nothing to do with events, conduct the investigations if the independence and objectivity of the Inquiry is to be maintained," he added.

Menzies Campbell MP, a spokesman for the Scottish Liberal Democrats and a QC, said he believed the Lord Advocate would ensure that the inquiries are "thorough and impartial", but said other police forces should help with investigations to avoid "overstretching the resources of Central Scotland Police".

A spokesman for the Lord Advocate said Lord Cullen's powers outweigh those of the police and the procurator fiscal. "If he is unhappy with any aspect of the investigations he can order further investigations as he chooses and into whom he chooses," he added.

Last night, Central Scotland Police said it would continue inquiries into the Dunblane massacre, under direction of the procurator-fiscal and the Lord Advocate.

The last of the Dunblane victims being treated at Glasgow's Yorkhill hospital is set to go home, doctors said yesterday.

Amie Adam's thigh was shattered by a bullet during the massacre on 13 March in which Hamilton killed 16 children and their teacher.