Changing the force of habit

WHILE members of the Northern Ireland Police Authority are turning to reforms, Protestant leaders say they will not settle for anything less than full powers without powers or a new structure for the police. The DUP session at the DUP policy conference in the early 1990s, when the police had to be divided into two forces, is reminiscent of the last time the issue was considered.

On the other hand, when a chance in the title of policing, the authorities have been able to agree. The British government has announced a new structure for the police, which will replace the existing system of 18 districts and 22 police stations with a single force controlled by a single chief constable. The new force will be called the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and will be based in Belfast.

The decision to create a single police force is seen as a significant step forward in the process of devolution. The PSNI will be responsible for policing law and order in Northern Ireland, and will be answerable to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The new police force will have the following responsibilities:

- Maintaining law and order
- Investigating crime
- Catering for the needs of the community
- Enforcing traffic laws

The new police force will be funded by the British government, and will be responsible for enforcing the laws of Northern Ireland.

The new police force will be led by a new chief constable, who will be appointed by the Northern Ireland Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The new police force will be established by an act of the Northern Ireland Assembly, and will come into operation on 1 April 2010.