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IPCC to launch inquiry into collapsed case against environmental protesters

Police watchdog called in to investigate reasons why prosecution fell apart



■ The controversy about police infiltration erupted after Mark Kennedy, a former undercover officer, expressed remorse over his years as a spy. Photograph: Guardian

Vikram Dodd, crime correspondent

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The Independent [Police](#) Complaints Commission is to launch an inquiry into this week's collapse of a case against environmental protesters amid calls for a wider review of police undercover tactics.

The controversy about police infiltration erupted after a former undercover officer, [Mark Kennedy](#), expressed remorse over his years as a spy.

The IPCC was called in by the Nottinghamshire force, which had gathered the evidence for the collapsed case, to investigate the reasons why it fell apart.

But the police watchdog may announce its inquiry as soon as tomorrow and may widen its scope to examine whether Kennedy acted as an "agent provocateur", and whether he strayed beyond his remit in instigating or inciting any alleged crimes by others.

It is unclear whether it will also widen its remit to meet demands from those targeted by the police, and examine the decision by senior officers to deploy Kennedy to gather intelligence against protesters.

Other inquiries or reviews may follow. Nottinghamshire says it is talking to "a number of bodies" about a wider review into the undercover operation involving Kennedy. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary says it would only intervene if asked by the force or by the home secretary.

The other option being discussed is a review by the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo), which would be carried out by officers with expertise in covert tactics.

This could prove controversial as the National Public Order Intelligence Unit - the agency Kennedy was working for - is run by Acpo, meaning there would be a clear potential conflict of interest.

The now discredited governance arrangements covering the national units tracking domestic extremism, which have even been attacked Acpo's president, have left the Nottinghamshire force feeling it is carrying the can, one force insider said.

Jenny Jones, a Green party member of the Metropolitan Police Authority, said: "The continuing story of undercover police officers in eco-protester groups is becoming more and more like a story line in The Sopranos. We

have state spies, embedded in a fairly fluffy ... group that has no plans to kill anyone and that is trying to raise awareness of the potential lethal effects of climate change.

"Those spies are run by a private company, the Association of Chief Police Officers, that answers to no one except the occasional select committee.

"It's time to drag the Association of Chief Police Officers into the full glare of public accountability, take away any anomalous powers, such as spying, and have them answer questions about their inept deployment of highly-trained, highly-paid police officers. What a terrible waste of money and resources."

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