

## Mike Barton



# A tough man for the tough challenges

I WAS absolutely delighted when it was announced this week that Mike Veale was to become the new Chief Constable of Cleveland.

Mike, who has been Chief Constable of Wiltshire, was revealed to be Cleveland's preferred choice for the top job earlier this month and that decision was confirmed by the police and crime panel on Tuesday.

In my opinion it is a fantastic appointment, not just for the people of Cleveland, but also for County Durham and Darlington.

When I started on the beat in Blackpool back in 1980, different police forces pretty much worked on their own, whereas today we operate together in so many critical areas.

Durham and Cleveland officers work together every single day to police the region's road through our joint Specialist Operations Unit, home of the Police Interceptors, and our firearms officers put their skills to the test alongside each other at the Police Tactical Training Centre.

So I'm thrilled that such an experienced chief constable has chosen to come to work at one of our closest neighbours.

Mike Veale is a tough cop, who joined the service as a cadet and, like I did, worked his way up through the ranks from constable, up to Head of CID and eventually to Chief Constable.

His experience as an investigator throughout his 30-year service, but particularly during his time with Avon and Somerset, will be an invaluable asset for Cleveland.

I served 28 years with Lancashire Police before I joined Durham and I still remember the warm welcome I received when I moved north in 2008.

I'm sure Mike can expect a similar reception when he joins us in the spring.

Our two forces already work very successfully together and I'm looking forward to building on that already close working relationship as we go forward.

Simon Nickless has done a great job since Iain Spittal retired as acting chief. No boss ever works alone: in my time as Chief I can count on one hand the decisions I've made alone – running any large organisation is a team game.

**T**HE team I've supported all my life is Blackpool FC, so I was deeply saddened by the death of Jimmy Armfield this week.

All of the tributes to him are so well deserved – he was loyal to Blackpool all his career; captained England and, but for a cruel injury at the start of the 1966 campaign, would probably have lifted the World Cup with Bobby Moore as his vice-captain.

What might have been.

Still, Blackpool still had Alan Ball playing in the final and, to my mind, he was man of the match.

Throughout his life as player, manager, commentator and pundit, Jimmy was generous in spirit to everyone and I think more people could learn from his humility and putting the team before himself.