



House of Commons
Home Affairs Committee

The work of the British Transport Police

Oral and written evidence

2 March 2010

*Chief Constable Andrew Trotter, British
Transport Police*

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The Home Affairs Committee

The Home Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Home Office and its associated public bodies.

Current membership

Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP (*Labour, Leicester East*) (Chair)
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Mr Gary Streeter MP (*Conservative, South West Devon*)
Mr David Winnick MP (*Labour, Walsall North*)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/homeaffairscom. A list of Reports of the Committee since Session 2005–06 is at the back of this volume.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Elizabeth Flood (Clerk), Eliot Barrass (Second Clerk), Elisabeth Bates (Committee Specialist), Sarah Petit (Committee Specialist), Darren Hackett (Senior Committee Assistant), Sheryl Dinsdale (Committee Assistant) and Jessica Bridges-Palmer (Select Committee Media Officer).

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Oral evidence

Taken before the Home Affairs Committee on Tuesday 2 March 2010

Members present

Mr James Clappison
Mrs Ann Cryer
David TC Davies

Mrs Janet Dean
Gwyn Prosser
Mr David Winnick

In the absence of the Chairman, Mrs Cryer was called to the Chair

Witness: **Chief Constable Andrew Trotter**, British Transport Police, gave evidence.

Q1 Mrs Cryer: Chief Constable, would you like to introduce yourself. I am Ann Cryer and I am chairing this session.

Chief Constable Trotter: I am Andrew Trotter, Chief Constable of British Transport Police.

Q2 Mrs Cryer: Thank you. What do you regard as the main issues facing the British Transport Police at present? What do you wish to achieve during your time as Chief Constable of that organisation?

Chief Constable Trotter: We are an organisation, from some modest history of some five or six years ago, that has seen some considerable increases in investment from the rail industry, and there has been a commensurate increase in performance across the board over the last few years. Quite clearly we run now into a very different financial environment, and so the challenge of difficulties in the rail industry as far as finance is concerned and the impact it has on us. At the same time, as far as I am concerned, we have had considerable decreases in every crime type over the last few years, with increases in detections. I intend to continue that improvement. I am going to have to do it for less money. That is the real challenge that we have right now. Of course the public's concern is not only around crime, it is around antisocial behaviour. I am making my officers more visible at night, with solo patrols where appropriate, and really engaging much more not only with the public but with rail staff and the rail industry to give them a better service. The service has been very good, but there is obviously room for improvement. Quite clearly the public are concerned about misbehaviour as much as anything else and I intend to continue to drive that down.

Mrs Cryer: I am well aware of your officers being present on Leeds City Station late at night. It is very reassuring for a woman travelling alone.

Q3 Mrs Dean: You have obviously mentioned the financial constraints at the moment. Are you having to consider reducing police officer numbers?

Chief Constable Trotter: I am having to look at a whole range of things. We have been well funded by the rail industry over the last few years, but quite clearly they are looking for efficiencies and economies, as we all are, and I am looking to drive out most costs from back-office functions wherever possible—not only police staff but police officers

doing intelligence functions and things such as that. They are perfectly worthwhile and very good jobs that they do, but I must preserve the frontline wherever possible. It is certainly my intention through a range of methods and means to continue to drive out those inefficiencies and to continue to improve. It is a real challenge, but we have been doing this for some years now, flushing out inefficiencies. We have put a lot more police officers and PCSOs on the frontline, and I am going to continue wherever possible to do that, wherever I can maintain the frontline whilst making those efficiencies behind the scenes.

Q4 Mrs Dean: Have you been able to quantify how many officers' posts? Also, how do you propose to fill the gaps that you create?

Chief Constable Trotter: We are going through our budgets at the moment for next year. One of my areas already is looking at reducing the number of supervisors. Whilst that is a reduction in police officer numbers, if I can reduce the supervisory ratio I can still keep constables and PCSOs on that frontline. It is looking at things like HR. I have taken 20% out of the HR costs over the last couple of years. I have amalgamated control rooms. In some cases we do lose police officer numbers, but it is the visible impact that I want to maintain. Even if my overall numbers go down, it is the ones outside that I want to keep up.

Q5 David Davies: Chief Constable, we have been told by your predecessor that BTP sometimes feel a bit left out when it comes to the arrangement of new IT products. Hand-held devices were probably one particular area. Is that still a problem? Do you feel you are adequately consulted when these projects are being brought in?

Chief Constable Trotter: I do now. You mentioned particularly mobile data. We of course were one of the pioneers of mobile data and then managed to bid successfully for Home Office money to supply more, so I am quite pleased with what happened on that front. As far as the search arches that we use for looking for knives, again we were one of the pioneers of that. It is not so much about being left out of the consultation; it is more about being left out of the money. There is a tendency for Home Office money that is pushed through by ACPO colleagues to be

tagged “Home Office money” and occasionally we have to fight quite hard and say, “We’re a police force that covers England, Wales and Scotland, fully engaged in everything from murder to bye-law offences, and we should be engaged and be shown a fair share of the money.” That is one of the issues that tends to happen from time to time, and it is just making sure that we are fully represented. I sit on ACPO cabinets because I have ACPO responsibilities. My other colleagues have ACPO responsibilities for the Olympics and things such as that. We try to represent not only BTP but to get engaged in national policing issues. My Scottish Assistant Chief Constable sits on the ACPOS Committee. We are very well represented, but it is making sure that we are there when there is money to be handed out so that we have a part of that.

Q6 David Davies: Is the pensions issue now resolved? There has been an issue around people moving from the Home Office force to BTP and back again.

Chief Constable Trotter: It has not been resolved. In the past police officers could move in and out of British Transport Police and retain their pension rights. I think it is vital that continues. I do not want British Transport Police to be an island of only BTP officers. I think it is very important for cross-fertilisation of ideas and to refresh the organisation at every level that people to come in and out of Home Office and Scottish forces. The current arrangements preclude that, other than to a great disadvantage of the officers trying to come in. Lord Adonis has been very helpful in trying to resolve this. We are running into problems because the Home Office and Treasury, so we understand it, do not want to re-open the police officer 30 years scheme. I am again pushing back on that. I do believe that we cannot leave BTP to be just BTP officers. In every other force in the country people move in and out and they certainly should in BTP.

Q7 David Davies: Chief Constable, you will have seen that there has been some criticism of levels of stop and search, particularly section 44s, of the Metropolitan Police. I do not necessarily share that criticism, but there we are, it is there. Have you felt that criticism yourself and have you acted to try to reduce the numbers of random stop and searches taking place?

Chief Constable Trotter: Stop and search under section 44 is clearly there to protect the railway. Be it 7/7 or Madrid or Mumbai or Moscow, there are attacks on the railway across the world, and our duty is to protect against that. We know that if you go on an aeroplane you will have a thorough search before you get on, just as you will when you come into this building. We cannot have that on public transport, it would not work, so section 44 is part of that security regime, but I am very conscious that we need to ensure that we have public confidence and co-operation in order to achieve our goals. We want to reduce any disruption to the public when they go about their business and we want to ensure that what we do is polite and respectful at all times. The range of section 44, while that is a confidential matter, is

reduced considerably, and the numbers have gone down dramatically over the last 12 months. There have been considerable reductions. It is my goal that we will be very focused, based upon intelligence and based upon location, and it will not be some random power that we use. I am determined to preserve the power where it is within our gift so to do, by making sure that we deal with it properly and sensibly and sensitively. I have the national lead for ACPO on media matters and you may remember that I intervened over the section 44 stops of photographers. Photographers were complaining, quite rightly, that they were being stopped from going about their business, and so I issued national guidance which is basically: “Leave photographers alone unless there is a very good reason not to.” It was a misuse of the power, it produced no intelligence of any value, and it disrupted people doing something which they are perfectly entitled to do. So far, we have seen a lot of praise from photographers and the press, and the message I think has got through to our frontline to use our powers sensibly and proportionately.

Q8 David Davies: One of the concerns that I have had occasionally on the frontline, as it were, has been that the current laws around search, the PACE rules, do not allow people to take into account a previous criminal record when making a decision as to whether or not to carry out a search. In some instances I have seen people stopped for committing an offence that would not really be arrestable, but the radio checks reveal that that person has a very long record for carrying knives or guns or drugs or something, and that person is basically a prolific criminal. I would have thought at that point it would be reasonable to carry out a stop and search, but PACE does not allow it. All officers are taught this, and I have looked at the PACE regulations and a previous criminal record is not something that officers can take any account of at all. Do you think it is time perhaps to look at that?

Chief Constable Trotter: If we move away from section 44 to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, good stop and searches are very much a part of a preventative campaign as much as anything else. It is a street matter, so we are dealing with street drug dealers, we are dealing with robbers—the sort of people who are on the streets, often in areas of high crime—and, as far as we are concerned, those people coming onto railway stations. A good use of intelligence about the proliferation of, say, drug dealers and the location of robbers would legitimise the use of those powers. I want my officers only to use the powers they are entitled to use, and not to stretch them in any way whatsoever, but I think that by good intelligence and good targeted operations the powers that we have are quite robust and we do use them to good effect. The way that we use stop and search and the search arches and things like that are part of the dramatic reduction in crime that we have seen, and not only in BTP. Robbery has really gone down over the last five years—an over 50% reduction in robbery, which is quite dramatic—and

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most other Home Office forces have seen similar reductions. A lot of that is to do with good, visible policing and proper use of stop and search powers.

Q9 Mr Winnick: As you have said in reply to Mr Davies, Chief Constable, sensitivity of course is very, very important and action should not be taken that could be counterproductive. Recognising that, nevertheless bearing in mind what happened on 7 July nearly five years ago, do you feel there are steps in technology which could help, which were not around or not used at the time, that would prevent a massacre along the lines which sadly and terribly happened on 7/7?

Chief Constable Trotter: DfT and TRANSEC have been working very closely with us, looking at a whole variety of new bits of kit. We have seen the different scanners now in use at airports. But it is not just new technology, it is making better use of existing technology. CCTV is in a really interesting situation at the moment, where we have a changeover to digital systems. There is far more CCTV on the railway than ever before but a real need to ensure that it is co-ordinated properly. We have found some real problems of late getting what we call “mass export” or “mass download” of things from the system. If you remember back at 7/7, in order to do a mass download people took the hard drives out of the system and in so doing disabled the systems. The absence of back-up facilities resulted in a real problem during the middle of an ongoing terrorist operation. One of the things on which I have been working with the counter-terrorism branch of the Metropolitan Police is reviewing where we are now, because it is absolutely vital that we understand exactly what we have got, not only for a post-event investigation but perhaps for real-time tracking of a suspect now. Everyone is obviously aware of the number of systems, but people are not quite aware of the considerable amount of work needed to be done to bring those systems together in some way so that we can genuinely track people who might be out to do some mischief now. That is probably the number one issue for me right now, to ensure that we understand what we have got, and there is a real plan to make it all work together.

Q10 Mr Winnick: I assume there is no complacency whatsoever. It remains, unfortunately, not a question of if but when.

Chief Constable Trotter: Every time I go to counter-terrorism briefings, I am reminded of just how serious this problem is every day. We cannot relax for a moment. Keeping one’s frontline staff on alert at all times requires quite a lot, because not only us but other people start to lose focus on just what a threat this is. Counter-terrorism remains a major issue for us.

Q11 Mr Winnick: We saw what happened at Glasgow Airport, of course.

Chief Constable Trotter: Yes. There are many things happening every day where the counter-terrorism branch does a superb job, along with the security services, in thwarting a number of matters. We should not underestimate for a moment just how serious the threat is.

Mr Winnick: Thank you.

Q12 Mrs Cryer: Chief Constable, could we look forward to the Olympics in two years. Further to the reply you have just given, are you perfectly happy that your communications and information systems are going to be compatible with the other forces that you are going to have to work with at that time?

Chief Constable Trotter: Most certainly. One of my Assistant Chief Constables has the national transport lead not only for rail but for other things. I have the lead for control rooms across all the Olympic forces. We have airwave radio. We are one of the first adopters of that. That works across the country, and every force now has it and so do the other emergency responders. There is a lot of work to be done to ensure the control rooms all work together, to ensure that we all understand information flow, that we all understand decision-making points, because it is a highly complex operation, as you can imagine. I have every confidence that the national lead for the Olympics is clearly on top of all of these issues, and there are a number of exercises which will start quite soon to test those various arrangements. I am content that we have the technology. It is now putting that into practice in what will be probably one of the biggest challenges any of us have faced in our police careers.

Mrs Cryer: Chief Constable Trotter, thank you very much for being with us.

Memorandum submitted by the British Transport Police

WHO WE ARE

British Transport Police is the national police force for the railways providing a policing service to rail operators, their staff and passengers throughout England, Scotland and Wales. The railways are a unique policing environment with a unique set of needs. British Transport Police’s 2,835 police officers and 1,455 support staff exist to provide a specialist policing service to meet those needs. We work to targets and a budget set by the British Transport Police Authority.

We police the journeys of over six million passengers and transits of 400,000 tonnes of freight over 10,000 miles of track and through more than 2,500 stations. We also police the London Underground system, Docklands Light Railway, the Midland Metro tram system, Croydon Tramlink and the Glasgow Subway.

As rail crime crosses counties, its impact crosses areas and networks. BTP uses the latest technology to track, prevent and detect crime across the country. Our present structure works across seven regional areas and we work with local forces to provide the best possible service to the communities we serve.

OUR PERFORMANCE

The railways are a low crime environment. Overall crime is down by 19% over a four year period and our detection rate has improved from 16.2% to 32% over the last seven years.

However feeling safe is just as important as being safe for passengers and staff and we are always looking at ways to improve perceptions. New rosters and a single patrol introduced earlier this year aim to increase the visibility of officers and staff at the times people need them most (late at night) and next year's policing plan targets will begin to measure the impact of these changes.

OUR VISION

I have set out a clear vision around protecting passengers, railway staff and the railway itself with year on year improvement in crime reduction, detections and the level of confidence from stakeholders. I am determined that performance will continue to improve, but BTP will need to do it for less money.

POLICING FOOTBALL MATCHES AND OTHER EVENTS

The policing of regular football commitments is planned by each Area and coordinated by the Force Headquarters Event Planning & Co-ordination Unit (EPCU) which produces and publishes a national overview document covering the deployment of officers to individual fixtures.

Regular liaison takes place with Train Operating Companies and local Police forces to ensure plans reflect local needs, but have a national context. This is supported by a weekly Football tasking teleconference to share information and to plan further action as appropriate.

EPCU also plans major London events such as Notting Hill Carnival, New Year's Eve and major Wembley events, working within the liaison arrangements established with the Metropolitan Police (Operation Benbow).

Football teams are prioritised for special attention with the focus on the organised groups who are often responsible for serious violence. However, most problems are caused by some fans who are not necessarily linked to such organised groups but who tend to drink to excess and then cause problems for other passengers and staff with anti-social behaviour.

Where offenders are identified and arrests made, applications are made for football banning orders. Up to mid February 2010, 55 banning orders had been secured for convicted offenders compared with a total of 78 last year, while 17 had been secured on complaint, compared with three last year.

BTP policing operations include travelling with supporters from first trains until last trains and on various lines of route. This occurs due to cheap ticket offers available from train operators, but is a significant strain on BTP's finite resources.

COUNTER TERRORISM

BTP is an active member of the committee run by the Association of Chief Police Officers on terrorism and allied matters, both on the main committee and on the advisory group. The Force also works closely with Government, particularly with DfT as a member of the Transport Security Programme Board and its relevant committees involving rail. BTP also has a good practical working relationship with Transec, with regular contact and dialogue, as well as involvement with other national agencies. Given the focus of the terrorism threat on London, there is also regular liaison with the Metropolitan Police and regular attendance at their meetings.

Effective policing for passengers requires a proportionate response to threats. Public safety comes first but it is also important to recognise the need to keep the country moving. Based on many years of experience in this area, BTP has developed bespoke systems for dealing with telephoned threats, unattended bags and other suspicious activities. This has also involved work around developing the capabilities of dogs trained in detection of explosives and on other projects such as screening devices jointly with DfT. Resources are also devoted to the threats posed by chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear attacks, working with the relevant national agencies and again, focussed on the London rail and Underground networks.

Much of the basic security equipment such as CCTV systems is provided by train operators while BTP works with them to enable them to get best value from its procurement and effective deployment.

OLYMPICS AND THE BTP

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be the first public transport Games and this underlines the green credentials of the London Games. An estimated 80% of the nine million ticketed spectators will travel by rail to attend Olympic venues during the Games, with many more using public transport to attend the various Olympic related 'Live Sites' that will take place to celebrate the Games across the UK.

The Olympic Park itself will have three gateway stations and 10 lines, with trains arriving every 13.5 seconds, bringing 215,000 spectators per day to the Stratford main Olympic Park. The Javelin train will take seven minutes to complete the journey from St Pancras to Stratford carrying up to 1,000 people each with trains leaving every five minutes at peak times (12 per hour).

Any disruption (whether through terrorist activity, suspect packages, fatalities or infrastructure failures) to these train, underground and Docklands Light Railway services could have a considerable impact on the Games and its ticketed spectators. BTP 2012 Games operation will link all of the 33 UK wide venues and all of the 11 Venue Home Office Force operations together, and it will be the only Police Force involved in each and every venue.

The summer of 2012 will also be busy with numerous large scale events including the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the World Pride event, Euro 2012, Notting Hill Carnival and the start of the football season.

BTP planning, preparation and delivery is led by Assistant Chief Constable, Stephen Thomas. He is also the Olympic Security Directorate National Co-ordinator for Cross Modal Transport Security covering rail, road, maritime and aviation transport—a joint Department for Transport and Home Office appointment.

The Department for Transport is supporting BTP's planning and delivery of a safe and secure rail network with up to £23.8 million of funding (2008–13) from a total policing and security cost of £600 million. The majority will be spent on operational delivery in 2012 where BTP plans to deploy an additional 1,000 officers on the rail network on the busiest days of the Games. BTP will require mutual aid for the Games as will both the Metropolitan and Dorset Police Forces.

BTP's planning and preparation involves using a variety of specialists to lead key Olympic project work streams. Additional specialist counter terrorist response vehicles have been purchased and ten additional explosive detection dogs have been recruited and fully trained. These will supplement existing resources during the period of the Games.

LEVEL CROSSINGS

Level crossings are safe if used correctly, but every year some 2000 cases of misuse are reported, with the risk of death or injury that this implies. BTP supports Network Rail's Don't Run the Risk campaign focussing on education and the 'hot spot' level crossings where the highest levels of misuse are recorded. Other partners include the Office of Rail regulation (ORR), Ministry of Justice, Railway Safety Standards Board (RSSB) and Highways Agency.

Education initiatives include leafleting, a high profile approach to prosecutions for misuse and school and other local visits by police officers along with Network Rail's community safety officers.

Surveillance of level crossings is very demanding on police resources, so a number of practical initiatives are being proposed by BTP to improve the detection rate of offences relating to level crossings and to underline the risks of misuse to road users. These include:

- A marked CCTV van for use initially in the South East to deploy to hot spots.
- The use of fixed cameras at level crossings to identify people jumping the lights or driving round the barriers.
- Development of a fixed penalty notice for the relevant offences.

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