



BTP Federation Conference 2018

Chairman's Speech to Conference

Wednesday 14 March

WELCOME

Shadow Minister, Chief Constable, fraternal guests, ladies and gentlemen, and colleagues, welcome to this year's British Transport Police Federation Conference.

Every year is a very busy year for the British Transport Police and our Federation, but 2017 was exceptional.

EXCELLENCE

One of the best parts of my job as Chairman is being involved in our Awards of Excellence. It is a true delight to recognise the hard work and professionalism of our colleagues who we paid recognition to last night, but it is also vital that we recognise the work of so many others, which often goes unseen, but is no less important.

It is their dedication and professionalism that keeps the travelling public safe.

The terrorist-incidents at Manchester and London Bridge understandably grabbed the headlines and our officers were actively engaged in both.

We owe you all a debt of gratitude.

2017 AND THE BTP

2017 was such an extraordinary year that it would be remiss of me not to revisit it. We had the results of the investigation into the Croydon tram disaster; a professional BTP investigation has satisfied the public that trams are a safe mode of transport and that, sadly the dreadful accident was caused by human error.

As more cities in England and across the world re-introduce tram networks, our investigation will reassure the public that they can use trams with confidence.

As I have touched on, 2017 was a truly dreadful year for terrorist incidents.

The first was the horrific Westminster attack and the tragic loss of PC Keith Palmer. Then on 22nd May we suffered the terrible attack at Manchester, when 22 innocent people having a night of fun and joy were brutally murdered.

Not many outside the world of policing know that the Manchester Arena is actually built on railway property and therefore falls within BTP jurisdiction, not that of Greater Manchester Police.

We are grateful to our colleagues in Greater Manchester for their assistance in dealing with the awful aftermath of such an incident. Our officers responded quickly and effectively but felt that due recognition was not forthcoming immediately.

As was witnessed last night there were some excellent acts of bravery and tenacity from officers in BTP and sometimes its those simple words of recognition at a very early stage that goes along way to motivate those same officers who just keep running towards danger and putting the safety of others first.

It's not about kudos; it's not about a desire for praise; it is simply about recognising our officers and our force.

We want the public and politicians to see us for the effective, professional police force that we are.

At London Bridge, Wayne Marques performed his duty bravely and heroically. Once again ordinary people going about their business were viciously attacked. Eight innocent people were brutally killed.

Thanks to Wayne, the BTP entered the public consciousness. Chief Constable, we must get better at sharing our achievements.

We have to ensure that the next time politicians decide to interfere in policing; they do so understanding the unique role of the BTP and what we do to protect the public.

The BTP must get more pro-active in raising our profile and highlighting what we do best on a daily basis.

UPDATES

Chief Constable, last year I made a number of pleas for change to improve the support for our officers. I thought it appropriate to update conference on any progress made.

Counselling

I asked for compulsory counselling for officers dealing with incidents involving loss of life. I told conference that BTP officers are 5 times more likely to deal with a violent or sudden death than their Home Office counterparts.

Chief Constable, thank you for recognising those officers who are healthy in mind and body are more productive; they have less sickness and spend more time protecting the public.

The HMIC recognised that our force was considering compulsory referral for counselling. Chief Constable thank you for what you have done, but please take that extra step.

It's common sense, it's good business practice, it's economically sound and it's the right thing to do.

Regulation 28A

However Chief Constable, a note of caution. In 2015, Police Regulation 28A created a new category of "adjusted duties" for those officers who had previously been on restricted duty and the circumstances in which an element of pay may be deducted, commonly known as the X factor.

But Chief Constable, the determinations to Reg 28 places a responsibility on the Chief Officer to act according to the principles set out in current national guidance,

AND this is important, in compliance with their statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010, particularly in relation to officers with a disability within the meaning of that Act.

The Police Federation of England and Wales believe that the vast majority of officers who may fall within a Regulation 28A pay reduction will be subject to the Disability Discrimination Act and they have pledged to support every officer who may be the target of discrimination.

The BTP federation makes that same pledge with regards to the new Limited Duties policy, which mirrors regulation 28A.

Chief Constable, there is an obvious reason that no other force has yet implemented this regulation. So, if welfare and well-being are going to be front and centre of everything we do, then be reassured we will closely monitor how the British Transport Police apply or suggest any reduction in pay for all our members.

TASER

Chief Constable, thank you for listening to us and increasing the availability of Taser. I know that you are aware that more work needs to be done in providing safe storage for such equipment at some of the smaller stations and I know that you are looking into this, thank you.

We appreciate that you are now considering extending the availability of Taser to include probationer constables. We welcome this initiative also.

We honestly believe that Taser is a vital tool in keeping the public and officers safe. I can't help but wonder if things might have been different if Wayne Marques had been equipped with Taser at London Bridge.

Firearms

Another request I made last year was to extend the availability of armed officers outside London. Chief Constable, once again thank you for considering what I said and thank you for extending our armed response capability.

We all hope they won't be needed too often, but 2017 has shown us the terror threat is all too real. Again, a word of caution from the Federation: your ambition to fulfil our CT responsibility should not be at the expense of our frontline officers and our core policing responsibility.

COUNTER TERRORISM

Shadow Minister, the British Transport police is at the forefront of Counter Terrorism. So it is a little frustrating that every time the Home Secretary finds a little extra money for Counter Terrorism that none of the money comes to us the BTP.

In order to fund our counter terrorism activities, we have to go cap in hand to the Authority, the Train Operating Companies or Department for Transport. The only alternative is to find money from existing budgets unsurprisingly leading to cuts elsewhere in policing.

This is unsustainable; our Counter Terrorism efforts help to keep people safe and we should receive direct government funding like any other police force.

INTEGRATION

I also asked the government to treat the question of Police Scotland taking responsibility for policing the railways in Scotland as a matter of national security. I asked for this to be a decision of the British parliament, rather than the none engaging Scottish Government.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister and the government ducked the question - I guess the overwhelming experience of calling an early election, which they supposedly "couldn't lose" and then ending up with a much-reduced majority may have lessened the government's appetite for another fight.

HMIC Report

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland published their findings into the integration of transport policing into Police Scotland.

Yes, it was a little late in being published, but nevertheless their report makes fascinating reading. Although written with a large degree of understatement, the report is littered with phrases such as "more work needs to be done" "lack of clarity" "there is no risk assessment". I could go on.

I hope the HMIC for Scotland will forgive me if I summarise their report in my own words:

There has been no proper assessment of the benefits of integration;

There has been no risk assessment;

No one knows the total cost;

No one knows who is going to pay for it;

The officers and staff affected have been left in the dark with no idea how their future careers will progress or what their retirement will look like,

And finally, other than the Political will of a select few within the Scottish National Party, no one truly understands why anyone would want to break up a very successful national police force.

Perhaps what sums it up best is that all the vital decisions regarding policing will be made by the Joint Programme Board.

Did you know they were formed in 2016 and held six meetings that year but, and I kid you not, it wasn't until 2017 that the BTP and Police Scotland were invited to attend.

Six meetings without the main stakeholders and the only people with any idea of how policing works. Shocking

Re-Planning

It therefore came as no great surprise when on the 20 February 2018, the JPB reported that integration was not achievable by April 2019 and there should be a pause in the process of full integration.

This pause is very much welcomed by this Federation and those officers that we represent.

Over the next 6 months there is to be a detailed re-planning exercise by the JPB. There is however a big question mark regarding who should be involved in that planning. It is vital that the experts in their relative fields are listened to; the risks they highlight are addressed in full; and that communication between those involved in and affected by the integration improves significantly.

The process to date has caused unnecessary worry and massive concern for those affected; this cannot be repeated in the coming months and years.

We therefore welcome the engagement from our own Chief Constable Mr Paul Crowther and CEO BTPA Charlotte Vitty.

Another breath of fresh air is Designated Deputy Chief Constable of Police Scotland Ian Livingston who has engaged with many others, including us and he has openly voiced his concerns regarding integration and we obviously welcome this style of leadership.

Opportunities to engage with our staff must now be planned and delivered regularly and thoroughly.

We therefore also welcome the JPB's intentions to improve engagement with all stakeholders and staff.

We have and we will continue to support these intentions hence inviting the joint Chairs of the JPB here today to our conference.

As you can see they are not here, so it is slightly disappointing that at the first opportunity to do what it says on the tin they have failed miserably.

We believe that the first step of the re-planning exercise should be to consider the alternatives to full integration. We proposed an alternative solution right from the outset that was simply ignored by the SNP.

So, Scottish ministers, if you are truly committed to better engagement, you should stop ignoring us and listen:

- The BTP is a National Police Force with a successful seamless command structure throughout the country.
- The BTP have access to specialism within the force and with good joint working practices with Home Office forces and other specialist police forces. When the wheel truly comes off, it matters not what Police badge you wear, it's all hands to the pump.
- The BTP is already accountable in Scotland. BTP officers carry Taser in Scotland? How can that be? Because, the Chief Constable of BTP simply approached the Scottish Government and sought permission.

Clearly there is already accountability and yes it can be improved upon but this could be through a commissioned service agreement. It doesn't need a total break up of BTP to achieve simple accountability.

Everything else is in place now and it works, so why dismantle a successful service, that results in: passengers feeling safe; rail staff being secure in their working environment; crime being tackled; and delays being prevented and reduced. A policing model provided by the BTP for many many years.

The Scottish Government has repeatedly stated its three aims for integration as accountability, access to specialism, and seamless command and control. All of which can be achieved within a commissioned service model, we don't have to rob Peter to pay Paul.

As we see it, such a model would strengthen accountability, improve access to Police Scotland resources and retain the specialist skills of BTP officers without any of the operational or financial risks. It would also remove the issue of pensions liabilities, training costs and the challenges of terms and conditions.

It seems only logical, now that integration has been paused, to revisit this option and give it due consideration

Today I am saying we need to use this planned pause wisely. Let's have a proper risk assessment; let's revisit previously disregarded options; let's have a proper benefit and cost analysis.

Devolution can be achieved and if you are serious about listening and engaging then you should listen to what we propose, because it is the common-sense solution.

Members, your BTP Federation has repeatedly asked to attend the Joint Programme Board but have been refused on every occasion. We have asked to see and share the pensions proposals. For many months, our requests have been rejected. **Why?**

What is the Scottish Government hiding?

Where is their engagement?

Where is their accountability?

Finally, late last week we received the pension proposals from the Scottish Government. Remember these terms: triple lock Guarantee, Engagement, inclusion and no detriment.

So why has it taken nearly 50 days for the SG to share this proposal if they are engaging and being inclusive of our members?

Why does the SG acknowledge that contributions will increase with an ageing membership in their newly formed segregated pot, but state it is their **intention** that the members don't suffer the effect of such an increase?

No detriment, triple-lock guarantee? I don't think so.

This is a flawed proposal, a disappointing proposal and an insult to our members. Members, be reassured we will be seeking legal advice.

So finally and most importantly, there must now be an independent body to oversee the review

At present it is hard to name anyone outside the SNP that has any confidence in the process. We have no confidence that it will produce an effective Transport Police structure in Scotland and there is an understandable level of distrust. We fear that there are very real risks that it could damage the effectiveness of BTP not only in Scotland but also in England and Wales.

So, I'm saying to Scottish Ministers, you must appoint an independent body to oversee this vital review so that you can restore the trust of all the parties concerned.

What is clear is that politicians of all persuasions, except the SNP, have expressed concerns about the timetable. Police Scotland has a 10- year strategy for policing: Policing 2026. It's bizarre. They are giving themselves eight years to decide how their force should look in the future but only months to rush over the cliff edge to achieve integration.

This is now called Transformation. Would you believe that there is a budget for transformation to deliver the 10-year strategy of Police Scotland?

It was confusing that the BTP integration was not part of that 10-year strategy but I guess the project so far of integrating BTP into Police Scotland has spent a lot of that Transformation budget.

At what point do you stop spending taxpayers' hard-earned money on a flawed decision?

If integration is to go ahead then surely 2026 is a more realistic date so that there is sufficient time to get everything right; to enable any transfer to go through with the minimum of disruption and with the maximum opportunity to keep people safe.

Yet again the SNP are putting their political timetable ahead of public safety and consideration for those involved.

Any integration of Transport policing into Police Scotland should not be rushed. It is far too important for that.

The Prime Minister has had more than one occasion recently to regret accusing the Police Federation of "scaremongering".

Rest assured that when things start to go wrong in Scotland, and it could go seriously wrong then I won't hesitate to shout it from the rooftops.

IPCC

Last year I criticised the IPCC, which upset them apparently. You'd think they'd be used to it by now. You don't have to take my word for it because a sure sign of when an organisation isn't working properly is when the government change its name - **so now we have the IOPC**. Independent Office for Police Conduct.

I looked at the new IOPC website. There is a section for what you do if you are not satisfied with the IOPC investigation into your complaint. They tell you to complain to the "appropriate authority". If you click on the link, it tells you who the appropriate authority is.

Honestly, I laughed out loud. It is the Chief Officer of the force that the original complaint was about. So if someone complains against a BTP officer and it is referred to the IOPC and the complainant is not satisfied with their investigation, they can complain about the IOPC to the BTP. Seriously **You couldn't make it up.**

Since 2010, 85 complainants have been so dissatisfied with the IPCC that they have asked for a Judicial Review. In all 85 cases the IPCC have admitted their investigation was not good enough and have settled out of court with public money.

With such a dreadful track record, they might need more reform than changing their initials.

So, what will change, apart from the name? There is still a complete lack of accountability. There are still officers whose careers are blighted waiting an unacceptable eternity for the IOPC to complete a simple investigation often involving just a few statements.

How can the IOPC justify a simple matter taking over a year? Quite simply it can't.

The new IOPC must deliver improvements for both complainants and those complained about. To repeat the same mistakes will make the name change nothing more than cosmetic.

Lets now move onto our Regulations

For far too long our terms and conditions and the regulations, which govern how we work, have been piecemeal. Part Home Office Police Regulations; part BTP Railway Safety Act, part Green minutes and local Standard Operating Procedures.

We have for some time been urging the Chief Constable and the Authority to standardise the position and put all these things in one place, for the benefit of our officers and management. Thankfully we are now looking at this in more detail and again we welcome this approach.

Nonetheless if we are to “mirror” Police Regulations and the changes made since Winsor, then surely we have to adopt all such regulations and not just “cherry pick” those that suit us and disregard those that don’t.

We are keen to work with the Chief and the Authority in having a grown-up conversation; to work together to produce a consolidated set of rules and guidance that will ensure common practice and fairness for all.

A work force that knows the rules is surely better than a work force who work with a pick and mix style of governance.

Career Development

The recruitment of people with certain skills direct into policing at all levels is sometimes understandable. Time will tell if it is desirable.

However serious care needs to be taken.

The BTP in recent times has seen a steady stream of retired officers from Home Office forces parachuted into some senior and specialist posts and this unsurprisingly means less promotion and career progression for officers who are BTP to the core.

If our officers are to feel valued they must be afforded career opportunities, and they must not feel that they can be frozen out. Given that we are a specialist policing service, our preferred option should be for managers and specialist officers to come from within the BTP.

If the force is to fully acknowledge the staff survey results, then they need to address this current perception of an imbalance.

A valued officer is a productive officer and, as was proven last night, we have some fantastic dedicated officers who deserve the recognition and career development opportunities or otherwise they will leave.

Constant Change

I spoke last year about change and the need to ensure it is not change for change’s sake. Unfortunately, we are still in a state of great uncertainty as change continues. I understand there is a need to cut costs, and I understand that there is a need to work smarter.

However sometimes the proposed changes don’t work. It’s ok. It happens. But when it happens let’s just admit it, rather than cobbling something together to make it look like the changes work! There is no disgrace in trying something new and reverting to the tried and trusted methods if the change doesn’t work.

The Demand Review has tried to make a one size fits all shift pattern. We and those officers on the frontline said it wouldn’t work and we were right.

It would be nice if on occasions we were listened to as new shift patterns are now being brought in.

The HMIC 2017 report states that officers “found the amount of change and the resultant communications overwhelming.” That can’t be good for morale or efficiency as the recent staff survey reveals.

Men and women join policing knowing that they will be working unsocial hours. They do not join knowing that they will be working so many late shifts and so many weekends they will not have a family life.

We understand that officers are needed at the times of high demand but we have to ensure that officers have the family life they are entitled to. Every piece of research that I have ever read says that a happy worker is a more productive worker.

So, here’s a radical change. Let’s listen to the people who have to apply and manage the change. Let’s listen to them when they tell us what works and what doesn’t. Let’s listen to their suggestions for improvements.

Please let’s work together so we have a workforce that is appreciated and delivers the excellent service we all want.

POLICE PAY

Police officers have lived with “austerity” now for a number of years. They see it every day in their pay packets with a “real terms” pay cut of 14% since 2012.

In 2016, the Independent Salary Review on parliamentary salaries recommended a 10% increase in MP’s pay. Unsurprisingly MP’s accepted the recommendation; after all it was “independent”. Luckily for MP’s such a massive rise in pay also produces a massive rise in pensions, so a nice double whammy.

What happened to “We’re all in this together.”

For the last two years the independent Police Pay Review Body recommended that police officers get 2.4% but the government chose to ignore this independent recommendation.

Clearly “We are not all in this together”

2017 PAY AWARD

So what do we get but a lot of “smoke and mirrors”. In 2017 the government decided to maintain the public sector pay limits and award police 1%, with an additional ONE year 1% non-consolidated (no extra pension for us) “Bonus” to be paid for out of existing budgets.

In one move the government gave the public and other public sector workers the impression that the police were being given better treatment; the impression that public sector pay restraint was coming to an end.

They also gave senior management the headache of how to pay this bonus from existing budgets that had already been cut to the bone. They managed to anger police officers who, far from feeling appreciated after such a tough year, were insulted by the “bonus” when they knew it would mean more reduced policing budgets.

Prime Minister, that's a real achievement. You managed to upset everyone and please no-one.

Having first made sure they had a huge 10% pay rise, MP's pay is now linked to the pay of other public sector workers. I can't help but recall that Police pay was for years linked to the average increase of other workers, until politicians decided that wasn't fair?

In 2018 the Federation have asked for a 3.4% inflationary pay rise. Let's see what happens! Let's see what the independent Police Pay Review Body recommend and lets see what the government actually decide.

At a time when politicians have never been lower in the public's estimation, they must learn that you can't keep knocking good people down and expecting them to keep getting back up.

CONCLUSION

I believe that one of the jobs of the Police Federation is to be a critical friend. Criticism can be hard to take but if it is constructive and fair, only a fool doesn't listen.

We have more in common than we have difference. We all want a professional, effective police force that acts in the interests of the communities and people we serve. We all want and need a productive, motivated and successful Police force. We all want Passengers and rail staff to feel confident and safe whilst travelling on our railways throughout the country. And we all should want those officers that we represent to feel valued, to be safe and to have confidence in the support that they rightly deserve.

I am proud to be the Federation Chairman

Proud of the men and women I am lucky enough to serve alongside and represent

Proud of their record of accident investigation, the way they deal with tragic deaths

Proud of the way they seek to improve the service they deliver

Proud of the professional way they go about their duty

And very proud of the bravery they show every day they come to work

I am, and always will be, proud to be a police officer - a British Transport Police Officer.

Thank you for listening.