



British Transport Police Federation  
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## **ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE FEDERATION**

**Edinburgh**

**March 2016**

### **SPEECH BY NIGEL GOODBAND, CHAIRMAN BTPF**

Fraternal Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, and colleagues, welcome to this year's annual British Transport Police Federation Conference.

The Secretary of State, the Rt Honourable Patrick McLoughlin MP, was due to be here today, but Parliamentary business has meant he is unable to be here in person.

However, I will nonetheless raise a number of issues today which I hope the Secretary of State can answer for us in the coming weeks.

As ever, it's been a very busy year for the BTP, and my first duty in this maiden speech as Chair is to commend and congratulate all of our steadfast officers for their continued excellence and professionalism in service to the travelling public throughout the country.

You will no doubt pick up on the recurring themes in this speech- namely, change and unity.

This is not just for BTP, which of necessity has to evolve and adapt to changing demands as a Police Service. This is also true for your Federation.

Over the last 2 years, there has been considerable scrutiny on Police Federations, leading to the Normington Report, commissioned by the Police Federation of England and Wales.

There is a trend when the findings of such reports are published that they filter out to other Police Federations and Staff Associations.

Thankfully, because of best practice on the part of your Federation, many of the recommendations do not apply to us.

We have no need to reform perceived grey areas on funds and finances, as these are always published by us the BTP Federation, and are in the public domain for all to see.

Nonetheless, I stand before you as your new Chairman following our elections last month.

We are meeting here in Edinburgh at a new venue, and we will aim to move around the country for future annual Conferences to reflect the national status of the BTP.

We have new rules and regulations, new financial standards, new misconduct processes, and new expenses policies –

All aimed at being as transparent and accountable as possible to you – our members.

Before turning to the business of Conference, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the new Chair of the British Transport Police Authority, Esther McVey, who joins us for the first time this year.

Following on from last year, I would firstly like to address the issue of firearms certificates.

At Conference last year, we were very content with the assurance that group licences for firearms was a forthcoming prospect.

However, we are still waiting for the legislation promised by Baroness Kramer, which doesn't seem to have been followed up by the current Government.

It is understandable that this might have lost its way in the wake of the elections last May, but I would ask the Secretary of State to advise us on any progress with this as the issue is still causing unnecessary and time-consuming problems.

Our members are also in the dark on the issue of the London night tube. There has been a lot of coverage in the media about certain London Underground lines becoming 24 hour services.

Indeed, the Force recruited a good number of officers in anticipation of this enhanced service, but we still don't know when this is coming.

I would ask the Secretary of State for any further information on this matter, as it has also caused a lot of uncertainty.

In a similar vein, we were delighted to see the Secretary of State officially opening the HS2 headquarters in Birmingham early last month.

The announcement of new stations at Curzon Street and the Birmingham Interchange when the Phase One route opens in 2026, with connections to Crewe in 2027, and the completion of lines to Leeds and Manchester by 2033 is all exciting news for our transport network.

We are told it will bring upwards of 50,000 new jobs, but with it will come a rapid increase in the amount of footfall from the public and a massive acceleration in demand on the BTP.

This will present a significant challenge for us, especially given that the BTP are currently disproportionately London-centric.

BTP has a total of 3,100 police officers, but we are faced with an ever increasing numbers of passengers.

London is well resourced with 1700 BTP officers policing in the capital. However, this is over half of our entire contingent as a Police Service. Half of us are in London, leaving half to police everywhere else.

Transport and logistics projects such as HS2, Crossrail and other developments will certainly lead to changes in the demographic as major cities become more readily accessible.

Shorter journey times will mean people are able to commute further to employment hubs from areas with more affordable housing and green spaces.

For us to maintain our current level of excellence, satisfaction from the public, and the industry which funds us, we need to adapt to map this change.

Our numbers, coverage and reach must reflect this increasing demand. Birmingham New Street is a prime example of this, where the new facilities and retail outlets are massively increasing footfall.

I would ask the Secretary of State for an assurance that long-term plans are in place to ensure our resilience in the face of such an undertaking, and that there will be uplift in BTP numbers proportionate to the increased demand from the public.

Despite uplift in officer numbers recently, demand for transport policing remains high in other areas of the country outside

London. This is especially true on match days, where football fans travel in groups to away games.

There is consistently a spike in incidents, as it is often the case that some travelling fans consume alcohol excessively on the trains, and their behaviour becomes disruptive and anti-social.

We have seen a significant decrease in such incidents where 'dry trains' are scheduled, and alcohol is not sold or permitted to be consumed.

This may not be popular with a minority, but makes for a far more pleasant journey for the majority of passengers.

On match days, dry trains will significantly reduce the strain on BTP throughout the country where transport police resources are already stretched.

The fact that we are under-resourced, especially outside London, is evidenced by the sheer volume of cancelled rest days, and we are having serious rostering issues which at times we struggle to manage.

This continued disappointing practice of cancelling officers rest days is totally unacceptable and without doubt is impacting on the officer's performance.

While I'm on the subject of resources, in the Comprehensive Spending Review and Autumn Statement in late November last year, we were delighted to hear Chancellor George Osborne's announcement on protecting policing budgets over the course of this Parliament.

His decision was no doubt influenced by the dreadful Paris terrorist attacks on 13<sup>th</sup> November which left 130 dead, and 368 injured.

However, there has been speculation that the Chancellor's announcement on policing applies solely to Home Office budgets, rather than policing as a whole.

Given the essential role of the BTP in counter-terrorism, not to mention the high level of involvement we've had following previous attacks, will the Secretary of State clarify if the BTP is also protected?

The fact is that transport hubs remain key targets for would-be terrorists, and we would appreciate some assurance on this.



This brings me on to another matter, which perhaps the Secretary of State could also shed some light on.

It is rumoured that the government is looking at a merger between the BTP, the Ministry of Defence Police and the Civil Nuclear Constabulary.

It seems a somewhat odd alignment in the first consideration, though speculation remains that government is seeking to bring them all under one umbrella.

Both BTP and CNC are separately industry-funded, so it is questionable how this would work.

Where a Police Service is maintained with private funding from industry, which uses targets that we need to deliver, their perspective will naturally be that their industry funds need to be clearly channelled into the resource they are paying for.

They will be understandably concerned that their service will be diluted, and industry funds dedicated to either BTP or CNC will be reallocated to cover shortfalls elsewhere.

However, I'm sure that's an easy rumour for the Secretary of State to quash or confirm.

I would say though, given BTP's success with private finance and our recognised professionalism and expertise; we are not at all opposed to expansion and growth.

Indeed, with sufficient provision of BTP officers and resources, we encourage the government to consider extending the British Transport Police remit to cover our motorways, docks, ports and airports.

If there is to be a merger, or a convergence of services, surely the common sense approach would be to extend the umbrella of transport policing to the entire transport network.

Continuing with our theme on change, we are still unclear on what is happening to BTP officers in Scotland following the Smith Commission recommendation 67, which states that, 'The functions of the British Transport Police in Scotland will be a devolved matter.'

The level of uncertainty around this issue is damaging, and we already have officers leaving because they simply don't know

what the future holds, where they will be based, or how their pay and pensions will be affected.

We are also unsure of how a number of operational issues will be impacted, such as cross-border and jurisdictional arrangements.

This alone could be a major problem, especially with the travelling football fans mentioned earlier.

Again, any updates on this issue would be sincerely appreciated, and give our 230 members in Scotland the opportunity to decide their future, as well as peace of mind for them and their families.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly commend the Chief Constable on the expansion of Taser. We would like to see this rolled out across the BTP as it has proven to be an important addition to an officer's ability to protect themselves and the public in dangerous and volatile situations.

This is another area where the Scotland question needs to be addressed, as Police Scotland officers are not permitted to use Taser.

This is just one of many areas where we differ in equipment. Armed officers are at a level which the Scottish Police Federation recently described as leaving them 'woefully unprepared' in the event of a terrorist attack.

However, this issue goes beyond terrorism – it's about personal protection for police officers and the safety of the public.

A survey by the Scottish Police Federation last October is also very worrying. It revealed that one in three police officers wanted to quit their posts within three years, and that three quarters of the 12,000 participants in the survey believed that they don't have the resources to do their job properly.

Findings such as this obviously add to the worries of BTP Officers in Scotland, who were no doubt as pleased as the rest of us with the Chief Constable's wellbeing initiative.

One of Chief Constable's responsibilities is to deal with mental health/PTSD issues within BTP, and his wellbeing initiative rightfully deserves praise.

I cannot stress enough how important this work is, bearing in mind the amount of fatalities officers deal with on a monthly basis.

On occasions, such incidents have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of officers, and the effects on and state of mind of those involved in worse case scenarios needs to be a priority for the BTP.

I would like to encourage the DFT to be supportive with this strategy, especially in ensuring that funding is ear-marked specifically for counselling and care for those suffering PTSD or mental illness because of the sometimes horrific nature and extreme requirements of the job.

Without such support, BTP will ultimately spend what money they have solely on frontline policing, much to the detriment of those dedicated officers who are occasionally overwhelmed and consumed by stress and shock in the course of their duties.

It was good to see the Government recognising the importance of dealing with mental health in the autumn statement, and surely that train of thought should also apply to British Transport Police Officers.

The BTP has also led the way in the provision of care regarding members of the public with mental health issues, and we hope

to continue in partnership with the NHS to ensure the most effective way to handle incidents involving the mentally ill.

While mental health cases are a considerable drain on our resources, we hope that there will be nationwide consistency in providing properly resourced 136 suites, so-named after provision 136 of the Mental Health Act relating to detaining the mentally ill.

The Chief Constable's 'days of action' around football have also seen positive outcomes, and the 20/20/10 objective has helped to achieve an increase in passenger numbers.

This increase reflects public confidence in the safety and security we provide, and the great uptake from the public using the 61016 number is also reassuring.

We have received excellent feedback on social media for this, and many other aspects of the great work carried out by each and every one of our transport police officers.

I would like to thank all members for their flexibility around cancellation of rest days and changes to rosters, especially for the extra hours so many of you put in following the terrible events in Paris.

The dedication and professionalism of BTP officers also ensured that the huge crowds travelling to and from games up and down the country for the six weeks of the Rugby World Cup were kept safe. It was a huge success for the BTP, even if the Home Nations didn't share that success in the tournament itself!

We have a lot of changes coming over the next few years with the roll-out of huge transport and logistics infrastructure projects, and the redevelopment and transformation around many of our transport hubs into business and retail outlets.

However, if there is one constant in all this flux, it's that the few thousand dedicated individuals who comprise the British Transport Police will continue working together to keep the millions of members of the travelling public as safe as possible.

I very much hope to report back to you very soon when we get a response from the Secretary of State for Transport, the Rt Honourable Patrick McLoughlin MP, and get some answers to these pressing issues which affect the future of the British Transport Police.

Thanks you.

[ENDS]