



BRITISH
TRANSPORT
POLICE

Police restructuring and the British Transport Police





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British Transport Police (BTP) was given a remit in the 1830s to preserve law and order on the railways

Since then we have developed valuable expertise and the skills required to police a modern railway network. Fully integrated with local policing, BTP works closely with industry and community partners to provide a specialist, dedicated service protecting passengers, staff, and the network infrastructure from disruption and fear of crime.

BTP's policing of Britain's railways is considered to be among the most sophisticated and successful of any railway policing in the world.

The Home Office is reviewing all police forces to make sure that policing is fit for the 21st century

This review is being undertaken on the basis that there is a gap in the provision of protective services such as the fight against serious organised crime, counter terrorism, major crime, and public order. The 43 Home Office police forces in England and Wales could be reduced to as few as 12 by merging into larger strategic forces. This would be the biggest overhaul of policing for more than 30 years.

The Association of Police Authorities (APA) estimates that the restructure of the police will cost up to £1 billion.

Although BTP is not a Home Office force the Secretary for State for the Department for Transport (DfT), Alistair Darling, has committed to reviewing BTP in parallel with the Home Office review.

Home Office forces have been asked to evaluate their 'Fitness for Purpose' against a set criterion

The criterion includes the following points:

- The optimum force size is 4,000 officers or 6,000 total staff (based on the belief that a force's capability is directly related to its size).
- New force areas should not sub-divide an existing force between two or more new forces.

With less than 4,000 total staff, BTP falls short of this measure of 'Fitness for Purpose'. However, with our more narrowly defined specialist role and intelligence-led approach to policing the rail network, we believe our size is less important than our ability to provide the standard of law enforcement needed. The optimum size suggested is made in the context of regional Home Office forces and cannot usefully be applied to a specialist national force.

"BTP is different to other forces and the review needs to take this into account – BTP should not be considered just as a 'small force'."

The Secretary of State, Alistair Darling, to The Home Secretary, Charles Clarke.

We strongly believe that our 'Fitness for Purpose' should be judged against our ability to:

- keep the railway infrastructure and community safe
- help keep the railway network free from disruption
- manage major rail incidents
- manage and respond to terrorist threats to the railways
- investigate crime affecting passengers and the industry
- police across geographic borders

The increasing importance and visibility of BTP in recent years have encouraged government agencies to review BTP four times since 2001

All reviews were unanimous in their conclusions: BTP is efficient and effective, and provides a specialist police service that should be kept as a separate force.

Repeatedly, the Government has asserted that the rail industry and public are best served by BTP, Britain's national railway police.



Of all times, why merge now?

In 2004/05, we exceeded all our operational targets

And we are currently on course to meet all our 2005/06 operational targets. We believe that any form of merger will inevitably lead to a drop in policing standards for the railway environment. This is a significant risk in today's climate when the threat of terrorism is high.

Given our performance results, the consistently strong endorsements we have received (including the Metropolitan Police Commissioner's, Sir Ian Blair, for our performance in response to London's bomb attacks), and the recognised need for a specialist railway police force – why, at this critical point consider changing the structure of BTP?

In Europe, we are the market leader in rail and underground policing

Our policing model is being studied so that best practice can be implemented in European states. This sends a clear message that our approach is considered the best

Merger is not a risk-free proposal

In the 1990s, crime in the New York subway rose immediately after the merger between the transit police and the NYPD. While it was later brought under control, in a four-month period in mid-1997 thefts rose by 79%, assaults by 44%, and robberies by 38% on the previous year.

Crime is still prevalent today and a separate transit police is being considered for mainline railway stations.

available model. Several countries, including Germany, Holland, Belgium, and Italy, already have separate railway police to ensure the safety and security of their networks. And France has recently decided to set-up a rail police force of over 2,500 officers.

All of these countries have similar political structures (mayors, councils, city police forces, and transport bodies) to Britain.

Results from the 2004/05 Policing Plan

Robbery

Target number recorded to be no more than 2,112

Result 2,081

Target detection rate to be at least 28%

Result 31%

Violent Assaults

Target detection rate to be at least 37%

Result 38%



Staff Assaults

Number of detections for staff assaults to increase to 1,034

Result 1,059

Hate Crime

Increase the number of offenders detected to at least 481

Result 636

Combating Anti-social Behaviour – Drugs

Number of offenders receiving a judicial disposal to be at least 127

Result 156

Combating Anti-social Behaviour – Graffiti

Number of offenders receiving a judicial disposal for graffiti offences to be at least 489

Result 569

Combating Anti-social Behaviour – Low-level disorder

Number of offenders receiving a judicial disposal for low-level disorder to be at least 6,774

Result 7,875

Fatalities

All fatalities to be cleared within an average of 90 minutes

Result 80 minutes

Would Britain's railways continue to receive the priority treatment it needs if BTP is merged with one or more Home Office forces?



Three countries, two legal systems, one national railway force

“The rail environment is not a series of discrete geographical locations. It is a complex network that must be policed as such.”

Ian Johnston CBE, QPM, Chief Constable of the British Transport Police

To reflect the national rail network, BTP is not constrained by the geographic boundaries of other police forces, which the rail industry cuts across

Our boundaries cover the total policing environment of the rail network (including assistance for businesses and individuals who operate, live, and work in the surrounding area). The structure of BTP provides a single point of contact and consistency in policing standards across the railways. Our policing model means we seamlessly police the network and the London Underground in an intelligence-led and targeted way.



We work within two legal systems and have a number of BTP police officers sworn-in in both England and Wales, and Scotland

The ability to police across two legal systems is important in day-to-day terms. When a crime or disorder occurs, often the exact location of the incident cannot be pinpointed. As BTP is responsible for policing the whole network, it does not matter especially where the crime happened. Should Home Office forces become responsible, some debate is likely over who would investigate crimes, which would be distressing for victims and cause unnecessary delay. A further concern would be how statutory requirements, under the Victim’s Code of Practice, would be complied with.

Without a national railway force, crime is likely to go undetected causing dissatisfaction and concern over the safety of using the rail network. This would have significant consequences for the rail industry.

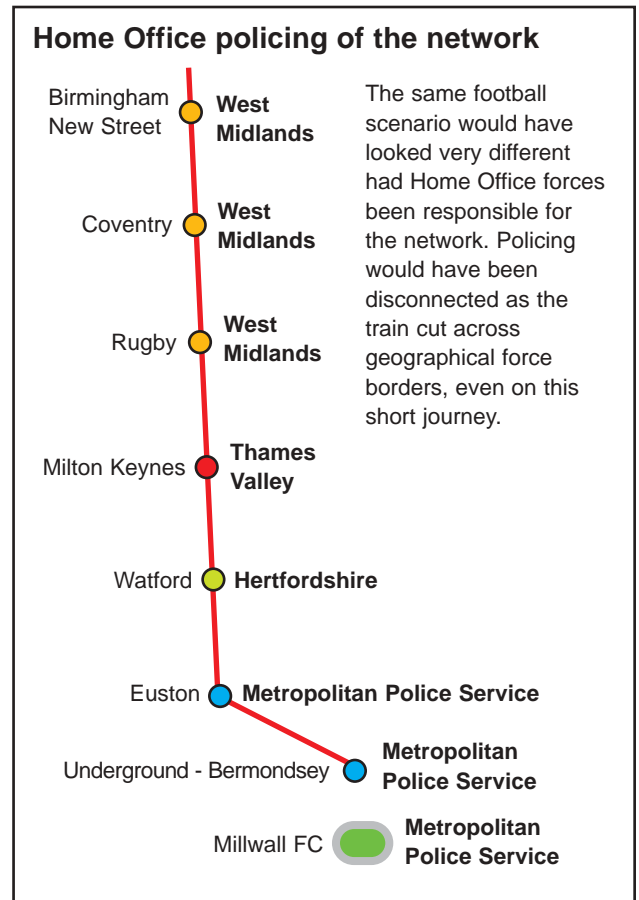
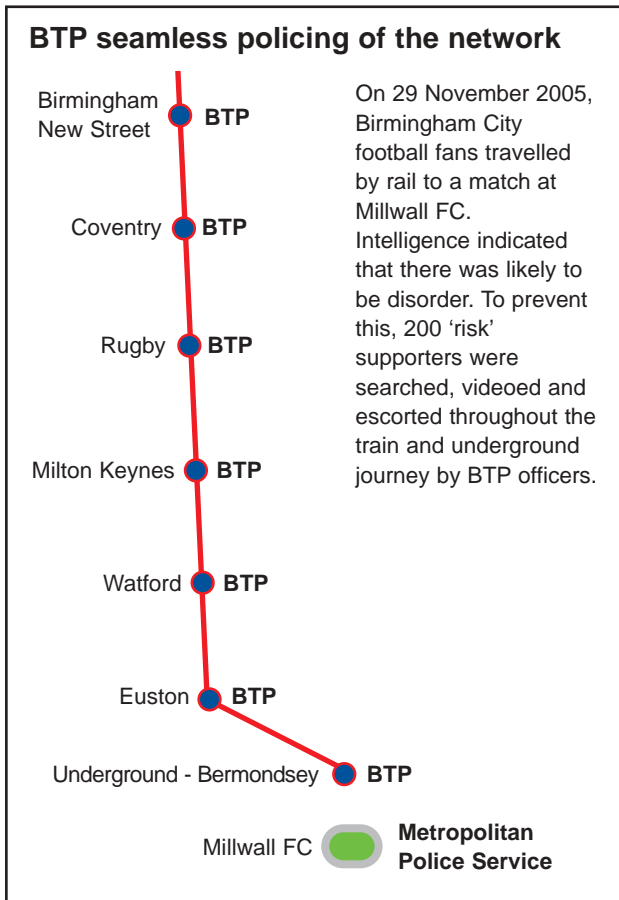
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The railway network is made up of 10,000 miles of track, 2,500 stations, and last year there were over two billion passenger journeys across England, Wales, and Scotland. We police inter-city, cross-country, suburban and rural services, the London Underground, light rail (trams), and international services through the Channel Tunnel.



Three countries, two legal systems, one national railway force continued



Number of force areas policing the rail network if it was policed by...			
Journey	BTP	Current force structure (51)	Proposed strategic forces (12)
London King's Cross to Newcastle	1	12	5
London to Leeds-Manchester	1	8	4
Birmingham to Leeds	1	4	2
London to Edinburgh	1	11 or 12	6 or 7
London to Aberdeen	1	15 or 16	8 or 10

While some may argue that single-source policing in a geographical area could potentially integrate road and rail policing, the disadvantages are much greater

"The steady reduction of resources allocated to traffic policing leads us to agree with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary that unless there is a national force dedicated to policing the rail network, the task will not be given the priority it needs."

House of Commons Transport Committee 2003/04

Having multiple police forces looking after the rail network would mean that the rail community would have less influence on policing. Funding arrangements

would be more complex, and the commercial interests of the industry are not likely to be the priority they are today. Management of service level agreements would also be bureaucratic. And there would be confused accountability for cross-border policing and ownership of crimes, with no single point of contact for the industry or passengers.

In formulating policy, and in developing our three-year strategic plan and annual plans, we have taken into account national policing priorities and consulted extensively with the railway community. We understand the importance of striking a balance between national aims and commercial needs; this is unlikely to continue if there is any change in who polices the network.



A specialist force in a unique environment

With the support of the British Transport Police Authority (BTPA), BTP functions like other police forces with similar units. However, the environment and crime mix we deal with is unique. The population we serve is mainly commercial, but we also help to take care of up to 5.5 million people who travel through or visit premises within our jurisdiction daily. Policing a transient population and undertaking major crime and other investigations presents challenges.

The demand for railway policing is expected to grow between 1-3% yearly for the next decade, mainly driven by increases in rail travel, station retail sites, and special events.

Strategic Review of Railway Policing, Roland Berger 2001.

The key to policing the rail network effectively is in understanding the environment served

The rail network does not lend itself to isolated decisions made in one location with little understanding of the wider implications. How well we understand this is illustrated by how efficiently we respond to a crisis, resolve issues, and reopen stations.

Between 2003 and 2005, the average length of station closure by the Metropolitan Police Service is almost double that of BTP: 126 minutes v. 64 minutes.

LUL study of station closure requests and responses by Metropolitan Police Service and BTP.

An intimate understanding of the physical complexities of the rail environment is vital: its unseen dangers, how it operates, and how the public behaves in these surroundings.

There are a number of policing specialities related to the railway environment

We have well-developed strengths and experience in tackling route crime, counter terrorism, major incidents, and football policing, where a national policing capability is essential.

Continued over



All BTP officers:

- have detailed knowledge of their local railway environment (e.g. location of contingency plans, communication, managerial arrangements and evacuation procedures)
- know how to deal with safety issues and undergo track safety training yearly
- understand how decisions made at the scene can have an effect on the entire railway network, creating secondary issues elsewhere down the line
- have confidence to deploy rapidly in a complex environment, and work in a way that does not compromise evidence gathering but minimises disruption
- are able to deal with track related fatalities effectively and sensitively

This way of working is required whether it is a 'railway crime' (low-level disorder, obstruction, bomb alert) or major incident.

BTP's policing family

Police Constables – Leading the fight against crime

Police constables are the backbone of policing in the UK. BTP officers deal with a broad range of incidents such as serious crime, robbery, assault, and attending the scene of major incidents.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) – Making the railway community feel safer

PCSOs are the eyes and ears of the service, patrolling trains, stations and platforms providing reassurance to the travelling public. PCSOs have selected police powers and support BTP officers by helping control crowds, patrolling major public events, and protecting the public from security threats.

Special Constables (Specials) – Providing voluntary support

Specials are people who make a positive difference to communities. Working on a volunteer basis, they support BTP officers and increase police visibility by working throughout the mainline network and the London Underground.

Railway Safety Accreditation Scheme – Supporting BTP

BTP, under the Police Reform Act 2002, is empowered to accredit individuals within organisations with minor police powers to deal with anti-social behaviour, nuisance offences, and minor disorder. The scheme enables the Train Operating Companies (TOCs), Network Rail and BTP to work together to improve safety on the trains.

A specialist force in a unique environment Continued

Route Crime

Route crime includes trespassing on railway lines, vandalism, train obstructions, and other offences that endanger rail users and disrupt the network. Policing this is a priority and we work closely with our industry partners to implement a national route crime strategy. This includes examining opportunities to prevent and reduce incidents and emergencies on the rail network, and educating the public (particularly young people) about the danger of trespass and other route crimes.

Counter Terrorism

The railways will always be a prime target for terrorist activities. To combat terrorism on the railway, we regularly exchange information and share lessons with international law enforcement agencies. As a result, we are well equipped in prevention measures and enforcement, and have developed unmatched professionalism and expertise.

Specialisation is critical when it comes to bomb detection. We have established a graded response approach for the assessment of unattended items and bomb threats. The success of our approach is unrivalled by any other organisation in the world.



7/7

The bombings on 7 July were unprecedented in terms of the number of people killed and injured in railway-related attacks. The co-ordinated response of the three London police forces (BTP, City of London Police, and Metropolitan Police Service) demonstrated the professionalism of our police and our collaborative capabilities. BTP's expertise and specialist knowledge of the railway environment clearly showed that we have an integral and crucial role in policing Britain.

Unattended items

Over a 10 year period, records show that of 2.5 million unattended items assessed by rail staff using BTP procedures, all but 36,000 were immediately eliminated as not suspicious. Our officers assessed those not eliminated. None of the items found were explosive devices, and major station closures were averted.

Bomb threats

Since 1992, BTP has assessed almost 8,000 threat messages. Of these, only 53 led to large-scale evacuation with approximately 50% linked to an explosion or the discovery of a bomb.

Oxford Circus Underground Station – 1994

When BTP assessed the threat, there was an immediate evacuation and a 2kg bomb was found by a BTP officer in a litterbin near the station entrance.

South Quay Station (Docklands Light Railway) – 1996

BTP's assessment led to the station and immediate area being evacuated. Within one hour, a BTP officer located a vehicle containing a bomb in excess of one tonne, which exploded next to a railway bridge at South Quay.

Acton/Ealing Overground Station - 2001

BTP's assessment led to the evacuation and suspension of local rail services. A BTP bomb search team subsequently located a bomb at the side of the track beneath a bridge.

“The train operators have a very high respect for BTP, underlined by their performance in the recent terrorist incidents. We place a high value on this specialist force and their unique knowledge and skill in policing the railway.”

Association of Train Operating Companies

In the aftermath of the London bombings, we ensured that King's Cross mainline station was reopened later that evening, allowing people to carry on with their lives. The industry was unanimous in their praise of our response and assistance in getting the network running as soon as it was viable. This helped curtail industry losses to a minimum (thought to be in the region of £20m).

These terrorist attacks have brought a new normality to Britain. Transport networks remain highly vulnerable to attacks. Countering terrorism is one of our highest priorities. It is imperative that we have an effective protective service for our railways and the capacity to deal with a major terrorist incident.



Fatalities and Major Incident Management

Around 300 people are killed on railways each year. When dealing with fatalities and major incidents, we aim to strike a balance between thorough investigation and keeping the railway running. We have developed protocols with the industry and local coroners for handling these incidents, and also personal resilience and professional capacity in dealing with badly mutilated and damaged bodies.

In the past 15 years, there have been 8 major train crashes. These train crashes happened in 5 force areas. This means that 46 police forces (as they are currently structured, including Scotland) have had no experience of this type of major incident, and 5 have had minimal experience. We have dealt with them all.

Major Events and Football Policing

“BTP has a well-rehearsed operation to deal with organised events particularly associated to football policing, providing a well co-ordinated country-wide service. It would be difficult for the Home Office forces to provide a similar level of service due to their geographical constraints.”

HMIC, A Review of the British Transport Police on Behalf of The Minister for Transport, December 2005

The controlled movement of large numbers of people across the rail network to attend special events, such as major sporting occasions, G8 Summit, Live 8 and Gay Pride, is a key activity. Low profile events also attract large numbers, for example, 25,000 people attended the two-day Sunderland Air Show. We have specialist officers who work in the environment daily. They know the characteristics of stations, how to manage crowds, and how to activate emergency procedures such as stopping passenger flows or trains.



“Organised football hooliganism is on the rise again after a period of contraction.”

DfT review of BTP, BTP Activity Analysis

Football supporters move all over the country. Having a dedicated force provides a single point of contact during events on an operational level. Central intelligence allows us to make predictions about policing capability needed to plan and prevent problems. We liaise regularly with the rail industry about football related issues and participate in joint initiatives to promote reassurance. We achieve this by increasing police visibility through hotspot policing and targeted patrol, and tackling football related crime and disorder (hooliganism, anti-social behaviour, and alcohol related crime).

By escorting and effectively managing large crowds, we help to reduce fear of crime and promote a safe environment. Reassurance policing increases trust and confidence in using the rail service.



Low-level Disorder

Ticket touts (often selling travelcards to feed drug habits), graffiti offenders, trespassers, vandals and others affect quality of life and operation of the rail network. This low-level disorder is seen as an indicator of wider criminality. No other force deals with this type of crime on a similar basis. We uniquely maintain a database of all non-recordable offences, and detections of low-level disorder have increased dramatically over recent years. We have worked hard to ensure that the criminal justice system recognises the effect of a crime that is often seen as victimless. Economic costs are enormous and accordingly we make this type of crime a priority.

“We provide a specialist service that focuses on things like route crime and low-level disorder, which costs the industry £250 million a year. This is the sum of a series of minor acts of vandalism, which would not get on the radar of Home Office forces. It means that some very important work on the railways would not otherwise be dealt with.”

Ian Johnston CBE, QPM, Chief Constable of the British Transport Police



BTP is the best model for policing the national railway

“Any proposed changes to the policing of the network would have to take into account the impact on the current nationally delivered approach.”

HMIC, A Review of the British Transport Police on Behalf of The Minister for Transport, December 2005

A safe and efficient rail network is vital to the life of Britain. Law enforcement not only requires specialist policing skills, but also an understanding of the impact that police actions can have on the rail network's operation.

As proved in our response to the London bombings and in other testing situations, current arrangements are working well. We have consistently shown our

ability to work hand-in-hand with the rail network on a day-to-day basis to keep disruption to a minimum.

Performance monitoring shows that we stand-up well to comparisons with Home Office forces and that we are continuing to improve. There is no analysis to suggest that replacing BTP would be of any benefit, in either the reality or perception of safety and security, to the industry or travelling public.

It is difficult to foresee how any other police force, hard-pressed as they are with their own priorities, would be able to provide anywhere near the same level of accountability, engagement or specialist understanding of policing the rail network at this critical time.

The need for a single specialist national police force for the railways remains.



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