DRIVERS URGED
DON’T TAKE THE RISK

Motorists who misuse level crossings targeted in new initiative

BTP is carrying out enforcement and education operations at level crossing misuse hotspots around Britain.

Operation Galley supports Network Rail’s ‘Don’t Run the Risk’ campaign.

A national day of action will take place this month, with a second planned in January 2010.

Increasing numbers of motorists are risking their lives daily in what is a growing hazard on the rail network, where there are more than 7,600 crossings on public and private land.

In 2008, Network Rail recorded an increase of 20 per cent in crossing misuse and there were 15 deaths.

A survey was carried out following Network Rail’s advertising campaign that ended in February 2009. In it, 67 per cent of respondents said they understood what not to do at level crossings, up from 55 per cent. More than half said the campaign had already influenced their behaviour at crossings.

“The statistics for misuse of level crossings make chilling reading given the seriousness of what can result,” said Chief Superintendent David Wildbore.

“BTP will be out in force supporting Network Rail to raise awareness of the dangers of crossing misuse. We will not hesitate to arrest any offenders who risk the lives of other people by failing to comply with laws that are there not only to protect them, but the public and staff on the railway.”

Level crossing misuse: the toll in 2008

3,479 recorded misuse incidents

60% increase 2003–2008

FIFTEEN PEOPLE DIED AT LEVEL CROSSINGS

55 DAYS OF DELAYS

Operation Galley in action

Following a BTP operation in Scotland, a bus driver will be one of four people reported to the Procurator Fiscal after failing to stop at railway level crossings.

The operation, which took place on 12 October, will see the driver of a local passenger service served with a notice in connection with the offence at Clachanoch level crossing in Lanarkshire. Two other drivers will also be served with notices after failing to stop at the same crossing.

In another incident, a 56-year-old local man will be the subject of a report for not following the proper procedures at Charleston crossing in Perthshire.

• Three family members tragically died after their Nissan Almera was struck by a train at a level crossing in Bridge Street, Halkirk, Caithness on 29 September.

Angus McKay, 81, was the driver, his wife Margaret, also 81, the rear seat passenger and his brother Donald, 66, was in the front.

An investigation by BTP and Northern Constabulary, working closely with the Rail Accident Investigation Branch, will report to the Procurator Fiscal.
The new roster, which covers 24/7 police posts, will standardise operations across the Force and meet the needs of the railways by having more officers on duty during peak incident times. The move follows analysis of incident and crime profiles, looking at the times and patterns of criminal behaviour on the network. The Force also considered officer duty and work-life balance, and the many variations of rosters currently in use.

Officers were balloted on the proposed new roster and supported the new pattern at all of BTP’s 24/7 police stations.

Assistant Chief Constable Alan Pacey said: “I’m delighted our officers have chosen this new roster, which will enable us to provide better cover on Britain’s railways. It will ensure we have the right people in the right place when passengers, rail staff and other stakeholders need them.”

The new pattern is expected to go live on 10 January 2010.

• The chart shows an average day in 2008 hour by hour, comparing planned officer duties (blue) to crime (red) and incident (orange) levels.

The new roster will better match resources to demand. There is no doubt that BTP was transformed under Ian Johnston’s tenure. It had been a real barrage of policy, earning itself a seat within the rail industry and none outside it. Now it is seen as a modern police force: its strength lies in its ability to survive a series of reviews by various parts of the government (at one time it seemed like an annual event rather like the opening of the shooting season), emerging unscathed and with a recognition that its increased budget was totally justified.

However, the new chief, Andy Trotter, faces a different situation than his predecessor. Gone are the days when the cost of paying for BTP was easily lost in the accounts of train operators who were enjoying consistent and impressive growth of passenger numbers. Instead, the train operators are struggling, as illustrated by the collapse of National Express East Coast and losses in other franchises. So far, the owning groups are covering these by cross subsidy.

There may not be another review pending, but Chief Constable Trotter will be faced with demands from the operators to, at best, maintain a steady budget or, at worst, make cuts. Therefore it is vital that he should retain the respect of the operators which his predecessor earned for the Force.

There is no shortage of goodwill. The operators also like the fact that BTP has made considerable efforts recently to establish good relationships locally. In the past too much went through Head Office and policies tended to be set down in stone centrally, but there is no shortage of goodwill. The operators want to ensure that their priorities are aligned.

Certainly, there is no question in the minds of the operators that they want the present arrangements to continue. However, inevitably, there is a ‘but’. The restrictions on spending are going to put a lot of pressure on the relationship between operators and BTP. In particular, the operators want to ensure that their priorities are aligned.

One source of possible friction is, ironically, BTP’s recent success in hugely improving its detection rate. There has been much focus in the Force on this issue but the operators feel that this could lead to concentrating too much on offences where the detection rate is high. A case in point is the recent drugs operation at Castle Cary for the Glastonbury festival. There were many easy catches there, but the operators do not see drugs as a major issue.

The same goes for issues which can take up a lot of the Force’s time such as organised crime. While many criminals, of course, use the railway to get around the country, that is somewhat out of the Force’s purview.

This, despite these areas of potential friction, and there are bound to be some, there is no doubt that the operators are broadly satisfied with BTP.

Nevertheless, Andy Trotter, faces two difficulties in his new position. Not only does he have to match his predecessor’s achievements, but he also has to do so in an atmosphere of cutbacks and restricted budgets while satisfying the operators who are ultimately his paymasters. Not easy, but a challenge I know he is happy to face.

 Chief Constable Andy Trotter is under no illusions about the challenges he faces as he takes the BTP reins. Here, he talks candidly to The Line about his vision for the Force and the difficult decisions he believes lie ahead.

I want to re-emphasise that our role is very much around protecting passengers, protecting railway staff and the railway itself.

Do you have a vision for BTP and, if so, what does it look like?
I have a very clear one – I want to re-emphasise that our role is very much around protecting passengers, railway staff and the railway itself – a very simple and direct approach. Everything we do should come under that umbrella and we should challenge anything we do that doesn’t. Our recent history has seen one of our aims being improvement in performance in every aspect, whether that’s crime reduction, detections, the level of confidence from stakeholders or reducing staff sickness. But we are now moving in a different direction in terms of budgets. After four years of steady growth we are now in a position of no growth. I’m absolutely determined our performance will continue to grow but we will have to do it for less money.

With less investment, how do you think that target can be achieved?
First and foremost, we need to confirm why we are here and redefine what we do. We need to drive down cost and remove anything that doesn’t support our goal, while not losing the good things we do. That’s quite a tough process because we’re not a wasteful organisation. We will be looking at the organisation on a post by post basis across the board to see what we have got, what we can do without and what we can do for less money – everything from contract management to patrol patterns. As with all public services, we are going to be facing some extremely tough times, but I’m determined we won’t go backwards.

How do you plan to keep officers and staff engaged during this cost-cutting process?
I have started a tour round the country seeing people at every level. I’ve been holding twice daily meetings primarily with supervisors but also with those from the industry who can set the scene so people understand what the conditions are for our stakeholders. This is my chance to get my vision across to the Force in a face-to-face approach, but also to listen to people’s views – a lot of the good ideas will come from the ground floor.

Do you think the ‘user pays’ principle, which says the rail industry pays the full cost of BTP, is right?
I think there are some real challenges with that. I fully understand the principle that sits behind it. The advantages are that rail operators are conscious of cost, which means we are conscious of it too. It keeps us on our toes and means we are regularly engaged with them. The downside is it puts BTP and our partners into an antagonistic relationship. We should be working with them as partners but, when you put the bill in the way, it puts a different slant on the relationship. My personal preference would be for BTP to take a top slice of the funding that goes into the rail industry through a proper governance process, I have discussed this with them. It would require a legislation change so nothing will happen for a while, but this is something that clearly needs further discussion.

With the financial pressures ahead, how committed are you to the personal development of your staff?
I’m very committed to their development as appropriate to the needs of the organisation. We have an overall goal to protect and serve and whatever we spend must support those goals. Investing in staff is a very effective way of ensuring we are fit to achieve those targets.

What about recruitment? Do we need any big changes in this department?
Yes, we need a completely new approach to recruiting. I want one that is better and cheaper and improves the service for applicants. For example, to take 26 weeks to recruit someone is completely indefensible, and to have a system that takes the first 100 people through the door, rather than the best 100 is equally indefensible. This should be a premium organisation that offers an excellent career. Training needs to change too – it needs to be tailored specifically to our needs so the product that comes out of training school is the product that our Area Commanders want.

You have made some big savings already by restructuring, but can you say that you are doing this without damaging the HR function. Are there other departments you’re looking at in the same way?
All areas of the organisation have to come up with a range of options around saving money. Ideally, I want to preserve staff on Area – that’s where our major success is and where our service is delivered. Wherever possible, I want to preserve and enhance the front line. But while that’s the case, I need to make sure the front line is deployed properly, is fully briefed and is doing what we expect them to do. Wherever I can, the savings I make will be in the support functions. We are still second lowest in the country in terms of police officers to police staff ratio, so there are no easy options here. But I want to make sure the savings we make do not impact upon our performance.

What’s your view on BTP taking on airports policing?
People are looking for real efficiencies and real savings at the moment. So there is definitely an agenda around border policing, airports policing and amalgamations. And the hole in public finances is so huge we could see some pretty dramatic changes. I have no particular ambition in terms of BTP taking on a specific infrastructure. I think airport operators see us as an attractive option because we are an efficient force, very flexible and conscious of the commercial imperative, and we are used to working with big stakeholders from the private sector.

Having said that, the Home Office and Scottish police services that police airports bring with them a great infrastructure, particularly around firearm capabilities. It’s a compliment that we are regularly discussed in these arenas as we are around border policing. I’m not hunting for work but if there are some economies of scale to be had, we could be in a position to provide some solutions.

Finally, what would you say is your personal aim for the Force?
I want people to care passionately about what they do, to go that extra mile to support victims of crime, to operate with pride. That’s pride in themselves, the way they look, the way they behave, pride in their skills and the organisation, their colleagues, and what we can achieve. I want people to recognise they are under public scrutiny at all times, and welcome that. We are a sensitive organisation that is thoughtful. We need to have confidence and trust in each other and, if we can achieve that, officers and staff will be able to carry out their duties with a minimum of supervision. That way they can deliver an even better service to the rail industry and achieve even greater value for money.
SHOCKING WAY TO CONTAIN VIOLENCE

Specially trained officers are being equipped with Tasers as part of a pilot scheme to see if the ‘stun gun’ devices are a useful option within the railway environment.

Home Office research shows that in situations with a real possibility of someone being seriously injured or killed, Tasers contributed to resolving the incident without injury. In two thirds of cases, just drawing the Taser or ‘red-dottting’ the subject was enough to deter, and the Taser was never fired.

“They are another tactical option for officers,” explains trainer Sergeant Dave Sanders. “If you are facing violence or threats of violence of such severity that you need to use force, a Taser can be a less harmful alternative.”

Unlike batons or pepper spray, they do not rely on pain to ensure compliance. The electric shock causes temporary neuro-muscular incapacitation (NMI). That means the subject just can’t move, so can be safely restrained.

BTP is piloting 400 X26 Advanced Tasers, with selected officers from Cardiff, London and Manchester given three days’ training covering theory, practice and post incident procedures, as well as a refresher on the Conflict Management Model.

“Conflict Management Model is a crucial part of the training,” says Sergeant Sanders. “It helps officers think through the situation in a structured way, and then decide if they need to use force and, if so, what is the best tactical option.”

How a Taser works

Tasers shoot two metal barbs attached to copper wires up to 21 feet. A 50,000 volt low current electric shock passes through the probes for five seconds. When a Taser cartridge is fired, it spreads a shower of small paper disks at the scene. These 'AFIDs' (Anti-Felon Identification Disks) have a unique reference number, which can be traced back to a particular officer. Part of the post-incident procedure is to collect one or more of these as evidence.

Did you know?

The name Taser was given by its creator, Jack Cover, as a homage to his childhood fictional hero Tom Swift. It is an acronym for ‘Tom Swift Electric Rifle.’

BTP’s network of more than 60 Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) will be out in force supporting the Home Office-led Not In My Neighbourhood Week.

Not in My Neighbourhood Week takes place in the first week of November and includes station advice surgeries, anti-knife operations, cycle tagging, train crew surgeries, truancy patrols and more. The event will showcase the diverse work being undertaken by local teams to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour while increasing public and staff confidence.

“This is a great opportunity for us to show people just how safe our railways are,” said Inspector Tony Lodge from the Neighbourhood Policing and Partnerships Unit.

NPT’s focus on locally identified issues and getting to know rail staff and regular rail users. They are at the heart of our efforts to build community confidence and develop community intelligence.”

In a separate national initiative on 12 October, NPTs supported The Suzy Lamplugh Trust’s National Personal Safety Day 2009.

The Trust is a leading charity in the field of personal safety and the theme of this year’s day was safety and getting to know rail staff and regular rail users. They are at the heart of our efforts to build community confidence and develop community intelligence.”

The aim was to improve confidence by raising awareness of simple, practical solutions everyone can use to help avoid aggression.

NPTs and Crime Reduction teams supported the day with Travel Wise and other initiatives, while the Trust promoted the safety messages to schools, colleges, workplaces and local authorities throughout the country.

BTP’s London North Area has been crowned London Team of the Year at the National Rail Awards 2009.

Bringing overall crime down by 14 per cent, cutting robberies by half and making efficiency savings of around £500,000 are just some of the achievements that helped the Area overcome stiff opposition to take the prestigious title at the awards dubbed the ‘railway Oscars.’

“I’m very proud of what we have achieved,” said Area Commander Chief Superintendent Mark Newton.

“Our success is down to the fantastic working partnerships we have developed and they have helped us achieve every one of our operational targets in 2008/09.”

“Crime is down and we have brought more criminals to justice — that is great news for rail businesses, their staff and customers, and a tribute to the hard work of the men and women on the Area.”

The judges noted the team’s imaginative array of initiatives to reduce staff assaults, anti-social behaviour, dealing with fatalities speedily and much more.

Of particular note was the successful rollout of a series of Neighbourhood Policing Teams at major transport hubs. A high detection rate for staff assaults, proactive front line football policing and successful partnerships to tackle crime, for instance with the ‘Making Travel Safer’ team based at Colchester.

“The teamwork of BTP London North Area goes a long way to try and keep the pressure off rail users and on those who want to disrupt the railways,” said the judges.

The National Rail Awards recognise excellence and achievement and celebrate their 10th anniversary this year.

Special guest Radio 4 Today presenter John Humphrys handed over the award to Superintendent David Roney at the ceremony held at London’s Grosvenor House Hotel in September.

BT Scoops Railway Oscar
CASE STUDY

WORKING WITH ARRIVA TRAINS WALES TO COMBAT ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

What was the problem?
Anti-social behaviour was blighting passengers’ journeys and the rail staff working environment in South Wales, particularly on the Valley lines. Large groups of young people were congregating at stations and were involved in underage drinking, drug abuse, vandalism, fare evasion, trespass and assaults against staff.

What did BTP do?
In a partnership linking BTP with Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) and the Welsh Assembly Government, 21 PCSOs were funded to operate neighbourhood-based policing patrols. Two teams, one based in Pontypridd, the other in Newport, provided a visible local presence on stations and trains. The Welsh Assembly Government provided £18,000 for 20 Body Worn Video devices. They are worn by all NPT officers and Arriva security staff and act as a deterrent as well as providing valuable evidence. Few offenders contest a case when faced with video of their behaviour. A ‘Code of Conduct’ prohibiting the possession and consumption of alcohol on trains was launched with a media campaign, signage at stations and trains.

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What will happen next?
Following their success in the Valleys, one NPT has moved from Newport to Cardiff to provide a stronger presence there.

In the longer term, NPTs are continuing to work with youth clubs, Youth Offending Teams, local police and community safety partnerships to give youngsters an alternative to crime.

A passenger survey carried out by Arriva Trains Wales in 2008 showed:

- 65 per cent of passengers have seen fewer people congregating on stations at night
- 54 per cent of passengers have seen fewer people drinking on trains
- 56 per cent have witnessed a reduction in people drinking on stations
- 45 per cent find the atmosphere on board trains is less intimidating during the evening
- 72 per cent have noticed fewer people

GETTING MATCH FIT FOR THE OLYMPICS

With little more than 1,000 days to the start of the 2012 Olympics, BTP’s Olympics programme is in full swing. Having enough people with the right skills will be crucial to the success of BTP’s 64-day policing operation. Recruiting and training staff — and police dogs — involves a significant lead time. On the busiest days there will be more than 1,000 officers on duty on the rail network, about half of them brought in on ‘mutual aid’ from local police forces. ‘A full skills audit of our staff is under way and we are working to ensure we will have no gaps in our strength,’ said Declan McHenry from Human Resources.

“It is important that all our staff keep their skills profile up to date on our Origin system. ‘Specialist skills, such as search trained officers or carrier drivers, will be much in demand in 2012, and BTP officers with their specialist knowledge and experience of the rail network even more so. ‘We will need to plan carefully, not only to have the right skills in the right numbers, but also in planning deployments so we achieve maximum value from those specialist skills and use mutual aid officers, without that knowledge, in appropriate roles.’

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Your views...
This is your page, dedicated to your views and opinions. If you have something you’d like to share please get in touch. We’ll be pleased to publish your letters and emails on any subject, with or without your name, although please include it in your message.

With Andy Trotter newly installed in the role of Chief Constable, we asked:

If you were the new Chief Constable, what is the one thing you would do to improve BTP?

I would ensure that all our computer systems and communication channels are streamlined and integrated to enable reported crimes to be investigated more promptly than they are at the moment.

Constable Jack Mitchell, Glasgow Subway Neighbourhood Policing Team

I’d want a quicker response — it can take half an hour or more for police to arrive, so staff often don’t report incidents because it’s not worth it.

Jodie, Virgin Trains, Euston

BTP needs to get out of the office more, be more visible. I knocked on the door once and was told off because I should go through control.

Pius, Virgin Trains, Euston

We have a good rapport here. But we’d like to see more at peak times, particularly Friday and Saturday nights.

Simon, Network Rail, King’s Cross

I’d like to see more police at night.

Kaye, passenger from north London

I think they do a good job, but sometimes they look quite unfriendly.

Jason, regular traveller from Birmingham

For the next issue, we would like to get your views on staff assaults.

Is there anything you would like to share about staff assaults? Do you have a great idea on how to combat this problem? Or have you been directly affected by this issue?

To send us a comment or suggestion on staff assaults, or any other subject, write to us at: theline@btp.pnn.police.uk

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HOT topic

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The Force rugby team was in a winning mood on the pitch when they overwhelmed a charity team at East London Rugby Club in September. The 37—7 scoreline turned out to be a good result for the Child Victims of Crime (CVoC) team whose representative, Richard Bobbett, picked up a cheque for more than £700 in donations after the match. CVoC was set up in 1994 and provides support for any child victim under 17. Any serving police officer can nominate a child.

When overhead lines were brought down near Milton Keynes in January, Virgin Trains’ services ground to a halt. Frustrated crowds built up at stations. But the situation was brought quickly under control thanks to two BTP officers, who have recently been commended by Virgin Trains. London North PC Stuart Brown and L Area PC Russ Theobald were special guests at Virgin Trains’ annual awards ceremony. The reassuring presence of the two uniformed officers, who carried on working long after their booked shift end, earned the gratitude of Virgin Trains’ staff.

Chris Gibb, Virgin Trains’ Chief Operating Officer, said: “I have never experienced such a high level of support from BTP. I have no doubt that the situation would have unfolded very differently if not for the contribution of Russ and Stuart. It is an excellent example of how the industry can and should work together to make a difference.”