Rail crime down

Recorded crime falls 2.9 per cent in 2010/11

Camera vans help fight crossing abuse

High tech CCTV vans to make level crossings safer
Technology in focus
You come into the office, switch on the computer and nothing happens – we’ve all been there and it really brings home to you how much we depend on technology.

Whilst criminals increasingly use technology to commit their crimes, modern policing just couldn’t survive without it, and we rely more and more on many types of computer and other systems to help track down wrongdoers and provide the evidence to convict them.

But however critical technology is in doing our job, policing is still essentially about people, both as providers and receivers of the service. The horrific rape reported in this issue (see page 8) illustrates that only too clearly.

Without the courage of that victim in coming forward and helping us bring her attacker to justice, a very dangerous man would still be a serious threat to the community. At the same time, the use of technology to gather evidence from a crime scene he had tried to destroy by fire helped seal his fate.

That courageous woman’s testimonial in thanking BTP officers for their professionalism and support is for me the highest accolade a police officer can achieve.

Even in our human interactions, we increasingly rely on technology. The world of social media is expanding and changing rapidly and we’re all learning to use it for two and a half years after

A Harrow man has been jailed for two and a half years after

pleading guilty to an attack at Carpenders Park station near Watford. Twenty-year-old Najibullah Jannati was convicted of grievous bodily harm for the attack on a 29-year-old woman last summer. As she left the station, he grabbed her and punched her in the face, causing her to fall down the stairs and sustain a broken nose and a fractured cheekbone.

“Was a shocking and vicious assault that appalled the public when the CCTV footage was released in the media,” said Detective Constable Tony Gittins.

In many areas, we have taken a lead in the police service in technological innovation, for instance by rolling out the use of Personal Digital Assistants across the country to help save officers’ time and increase their visibility, and in the handling of CCTV.

We are also looking for new ways to use technology to work more efficiently and reduce costs, and this is an important part of our strategy to manage a reduced budget without affecting frontline delivery.

Technology is no substitute for trained and experienced police officers and staff, but it can enhance their effectiveness immeasurably.

Chief Constable Andy Trotter

News in Brief

Video conferencing to reduce meeting costs
Video conferencing at 21 locations across Britain will cut BTP’s travel and accommodation costs.
Installation is being completed this month as part of BTP’s Futures programme. As well as reducing meeting costs, the Polycom system will give departments such as Professional Standards and Learning and Development the ability to conduct remote interviews and training sessions.

Carpenders Park attacker jailed
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pleading guilty to an attack at Carpenders Park station near Watford. Twenty-year-old Najibullah Jannati was convicted of grievous bodily harm for the attack on a 29-year-old woman last summer. As she left the station, he grabbed her and punched her in the face, causing her to fall down the stairs and sustain a broken nose and a fractured cheekbone.

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In 2010/11, the headline figure for crime fell by 3.9 per cent.
That included a 2.8 per cent fall in violent crime, a 1.6 per cent reduction in robberies, criminal damage down by 12.6 per cent and route crime by 12.3 per cent.

Thief, however, increased significantly, largely due to a 70 per cent increase in cable crime. Commenting on the latest figures, Chief Constable Andy Trotter said: “The continued reduction in crime is very good news, but economics is having its effect.

“We know that during difficult economic times acquisitive crime is likely to increase, and these figures show that.

“Cable theft is a real challenge for us, the rail industry and other utilities. The record price of metals on world markets has made this type of crime seem increasingly attractive, although the actual returns to the thieves are pretty modest.

“We have increased the resources we are devoting to this issue and are working closely with Network Rail to find more effective ways of reversing this trend.”

Increased cable crime meant that theft of railway property rose 15.6 per cent. There were 2,712 cable thefts in 2010/11 compared to 1,593 in 2009/10. Cable theft is almost 40 per cent of this crime category.

Other acquisitive crime also increased, with theft of passenger property up just over 2 per cent and fraud up 4.5 per cent.

On the London Underground and Docklands Light Railway overall crime fell by 7.3 per cent, with violent crime down 1.3 per cent.

“Cable theft is a real challenge for us, the rail industry and other utilities”
SARAH BLAZES THE TRAIL WITH SMARTWATER

Scientific Support Unit (SSU) staff member Sarah King has been given an award by the SmartWater Foundation for her expertise in forensic handling of their high-tech crime reduction system.

SmartWater is used to mark property with a unique chemical code, rather like DNA. The chemical can only be seen under ultra-violet light and offers more than a billion different chemical code combinations.

Nominated by scientists from SmartWater’s own lab, Sarah won the award for helping BTP achieve a 95 per cent hit rate for samples submitted – around 30 per cent more than the national average.

Sarah, who has a degree in forensic science from London South Bank University, works in Laboratory Services within BTP’s Scientific Support Unit. “This is part of our screening process,” she says, “and that is designed not only to detect SmartWater, but to maximise forensic recovery from the evidence. Ensuring that we only submit items for analysis when banknotes are often stained with dye from anti-theft systems. Some are also SmartWater marked, which means they can be traced back to a particular crime.

Sarah’s expertise in the forensic handling of banknotes was recognised by Banknote Watch, when she recently gave a presentation at one of their best practice sharing seminars. Banknote Watch is a partnership between the manufacturers and users of cash staining systems, government and police. It aims to prevent criminals profiting from the proceeds of crime and reduce commercial robbery.

Having taken the lead for BTP in developing a detailed standard operating procedure for handling SmartWater-marked cash, SSU is now developing detailed procedures for recovered cable, as Network Rail is using SmartWater on parts of the network to mark lineside cable.

SmartWater is present saves submit items for analysis when evidence. Ensuring that we only achieve a 95 per cent hit rate for samples submitted – around 30 per cent more than the national average.

We’ve given over this month’s guest column to some of our tweeters. In June, we initiated a conversation in cyberspace – it’s known as crowdsourcing – to get some feedback on the big issue of anti-social behaviour on the rail network.

As well as the above, we sent direct messages to others and tried to answer some of their specific questions. Twitter is random, unmediated and sometimes unconsidered. People can abuse you and be offensive, as they can in face-to-face communications, but it is also another way in which they can tell you what they think and what their concerns are.

We asked them:

btp.uk
Whilst crime on the railway is low, we know anti-social behaviour can be a problem for passengers. What sort of ASB affects you? #ASB

They said:

@lollycos @btp.uk I work on the railway. Alcohol consumption is the biggest problem esp when related to football supporters

@h0m54r @btp.uk Drunks who make noise, don’t shut up when asked, get aggressive when asked to shut up, refuse to mind their own business...

@peter.mount @btp.uk worst I’ve seen is 2 dads allowing their underage boys drink & dance/shout on the tables on a #southeastern train

We responded:

@btp.uk Thanks, alcohol-fuelled ASB is clearly a problem, how comfortable do you feel intervening in these situations?

They said:

@lollycos @btp.uk Indeed. And we always appreciate your presence on board! Everyone is so much better behaved when there are officers aboard!

@h0m54r @btp.uk Not at all, I almost did a couple of months ago - when some men were becoming aggressive with girls who asked them to quiet down...but thankfully one of the more sober ones saw some sense dragged the rest of them away.

We responded:

@btp.uk Thanks for all of your replies and suggestions today - some great ideas and feedback
Technology Helps Drive Down Level Crossing Incidents

State-of-the-art camera vans and satnav technology are the latest weapons in the industry campaign to drive down level crossing incidents.

Funded by Network Rail and operated by BTP, the purpose-built marked police vans, equipped with video recording and licence plate recognition equipment, are set to patrol hot spot crossings across Britain. The first has been on pilot operations in the south east since early this year.

The van comes equipped with nine cameras, one of which is attached to a pole that extends up to ten metres into the air, enabling the van to operate without being right next to the level crossing – particularly important when space is constrained.

Inside, officers have access to all the systems needed to process prosecutions instantly. In its first three months in operation, officers prosecuted 1,131 people – and that despite the van having a very visible presence close to the crossings to act as a deterrent (see right).

“The camera van has proved what we always believed,” says Dyson Crowther, Network Rail Director of Operational Services. “Far too many people are misusing level crossings, which has to stop. It’s a little too early to see a confirmed trend but we have seen some initial reductions at some crossings, which is encouraging.

“Hopefully those caught will change their behaviour and, along with other activities we’re running, we can see a reduced impact on passenger services and the cost of these crimes on the running of the railway.”

The free downloadable satnav application has been developed by Network Rail with satellite navigation company Garmin. It uses a train whistle sound to alert motorists as they approach a level crossing, and an ‘X’ appears on the screen with the name of the level crossing to encourage drivers to cross with care.

Garmin is also exploring the possibility of an intelligent version, allowing drivers to choose a journey setting that avoids level crossings altogether or crossings where the barriers are down for a significant period of time.

Level crossing misuse remains a big issue for the railway, with daily reports of motorists putting lives at risk, causing major delays for passengers and motorists, and costing the industry thousands of pounds.

“The roll-out of the camera equipped level crossing vans provides an ideal opportunity to affect driver behaviour and attitudes,” said Chief Superintendent Miles Flood.

Both the van and the innovative satnav technology are useful tools in helping reduce level crossing misuse across the country. “Our officers remain committed to not only detecting offenders but working closely with Network Rail to reinforce the safety message and continue our educational approach in order to change driver behaviour.”

Over 100 Charged on International Awareness Day

One hundred and thirteen people were charged with level crossing misuse during operations across Britain to mark International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD).

ILCAD 2011 involved more than 40 countries on five continents, as well as international organisations such as the, Latin American Railway Association, the Australasian Railway Association and the Association of American Railroads.

“Officers and community safety staff handed out thousands of advisory leaflets at crossings across the country and, without exception, drivers were extremely supportive,” said Chief Superintendent Miles Flood.

“Sadly, there remains a hard core of drivers that think it is clever to risk not only their own life, but those of others, to save a few seconds.”

Motorists Who Cross the Line

In the first four months of 2011, the level crossing camera van carried out operations at 43 hotspot crossings in the south east.

Failing to comply with a red light accounted for 61 per cent of recorded offences, with box junction offences making up a further 27 per cent. Pedestrians committed four per cent of offences. As a result of operations, 1,131 people were prosecuted.

Initial findings from the van’s operations also revealed that female motorists aged between 50–65 years old committed the most offences, accounting for 27 per cent of the total. Forty-eight per cent of all offences were committed by women.

Men in the same age group accounted for the second highest number of offences – 19 per cent. That means that 50-65 year-olds are responsible for 47 per cent of the misuse caught on camera. By contrast, men between 17 and 25 – often thought of as the highest risk drivers – accounted for eight per cent of offences.

Covert surveillance carried out at three crossings before the van was introduced and again after numerous operations showed a 31–45 per cent decrease in incidents.
RAPIST MAY NEVER BE RELEASED

A rapist may spend the rest of his life in prison after being given an indefinite sentence at Teesside Crown Court in June

Michael Preston, 31, from Hartlepool, pleaded guilty to rape, attempted rape, and grievous bodily harm after leaving the 29-year-old victim for dead with a fractured skull, nose, cheek and jaw.

The woman was attacked at Thornaby rail depot, Middlesbrough, in March in what Judge Michael Taylor described as “the worst kind of rape I have ever seen.” He said he had no choice but to impose an indefinite sentence. “It may be that you are never released from this.”

Following sentencing, Detective Inspector Stuart Matchett, who led the investigation, commented: “The brutality of this attack was shocking and Preston is now thankfully where he belongs – behind bars.

“I would like to pay tribute to the victim, who has shown great bravery and courage throughout this process. She was subjected to a horrific and life-changing process. She was subjected to a horrific and life-changing process.

“Thankfully where he belongs – behind bars.”

After his victim tried to escape, Preston dragged her back and hit her with a metal bar before setting fire to the carriage.

BTP and Cleveland police officers mounted an intensive manhunt and Preston was arrested on 12 March. He will serve a minimum of six and a half years.

The victim, who still suffers nightmares and flashbacks, said: “When I was first attacked I was initially scared to come forward but now that I have, I know I have made the right decision and I hope this gives other people in similar situations the courage to do the same.

“I would like to thank the ambulance crew who tended to me that day and ward 35 of the James Cook hospital where I was treated. I would also like to thank British Transport Police for their support and professionalism. I am very grateful for the hard work, commitment and sheer dedication they have shown me.”

The freight carriage that Preston set on fire

TEAM PROFILE

TECHNOLOGY AND THE ART OF INVESTIGATION

Digital forensics is one of the biggest growth areas in police investigations. Our lives are now so inextricably linked with and through digital media – desktops, laptops, mobile phones, personal digital assistants, satnavs, memory sticks and much more – that they are a rich source of evidence in many cases.

BTP’s Hi-Tech Crime Unit (HTCU), part of the Scientific Support Unit, is a small but very busy unit. The team currently consists of Steve Sandford, Andy Avison and Anthony Dearing. Although working in a high tech world, the members of the unit are still investigators.

“Tha’s important,” says Andy. “You need the technical knowledge, but you must also have the investigative skills – this is primarily an investigative task.”

From 2005 to 2006, submissions roughly doubled year-on-year. This year they are up about a third already.

With hard drive capacities continually getting larger, the unit has had to upgrade its server twice in the past eight months, and the more data there is, the longer it takes to examine.

“The bulk of the work we undertake is to examine computer storage media,” says HTCU examiner Steve Sandford.

To help with this process, the HTCU is introducing appendices to the current MG21 Submission form, specially designed to prompt officers to give more detailed information.

“We rely very much on the information we are given,” says Andy. “We need officers to tell us what they are looking for, for instance we can search for particular terms such as names, credit card numbers and addresses.”

Of course examiners must also report their findings, which takes time. To speed up the process, the team has introduced a new reporting form, which also doubles as a statement for court.

“The reports are easy for the officer in the case to understand,” says Steve.

“We also include negative findings in the report.”

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“This new way of reporting saves time as officers are not constantly coming back asking additional questions or seeking more information.”

The digital world is extremely fast moving and the team needs to keep abreast of developments. While they are waiting for the software to process exhibits, they take the opportunity to undertake research and keep up to date with new techniques.

“We are always striving to provide a better service and help BTP move forward,” says Steve.

A new briefing system, being piloted on four Areas, should dramatically affect focussed briefings and reduce demands on frontline officers.

The system delivers two types of briefings: a rolling briefing offers a five minute display that runs on a continuous loop showing the 10 highest priority items for each shift, a detailed briefing adds another 20 lower priority items.

“The new system is one product from a recently completed intelligence review aimed at improving how intelligence is managed throughout BTP.”

“I wanted the new system to deliver focussed, pre-prepared briefings, available at all times and flexible enough to meet each Area’s needs. The system also has to be capable of being quickly updated in real time,” said Detective Chief Inspector Iain Miller.

Each BTP Area has a variety of briefing destinations, from sectors to police posts, to which bespoke briefings are delivered.

Specific Olympics, Counter Terrorism and Metal Theft briefing sites are also available through the system.

“Briefing needs to be quick, timely, relevant and actionable,” says DCI Miller, “and this system has been developed specifically to meet those criteria.”

“The system is being piloted in Leeds, Carlisle, Hammersmith and Euston before being rolled out nationally.

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BETTER BRIEFING, BETTER FOCUS

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**The wonderful world of Twitter**

**What is the issue?** Social media is a primary communication channel for many people. The micro-blogging site Twitter, in particular, is an instant communication forum that’s experienced phenomenal growth and is used increasingly by police, government, MPs and partner organisations, as well as millions of others.

It’s free to use and doesn’t require many resources but can impact both positively and negatively on the communities we serve.

**What did we do?** Marketing Manager Alison Lock is in charge of BTP’s web presence. “First of all we waited. ‘It’s easy to rush into something new, simply because it’s new, without considering the benefits. BTP was deliberately one of the later police forces to consider the presence: ‘First of all we waited. What did we do? We serve.’

We reviewed what forces had done – from using Twitter to tweet press releases to those taking a more considered approach and engaging with people online.

BTP also reviewed Twitter use by other organisations, for instance No 10, producing a strategy that emphasised the knowledge-sharing culture of social media, rather than crude self-promotion. The aim is to add value to Twitter by providing frequent, useful information and interacting with people in real time.

‘One of the most important considerations is our tone of voice,’ said Alison. ‘We need to be a credible information source, but a source with a human voice and also a listening organisation. As Twitter is unmediated and people can say what they like about you, you have to be ready for abuse without feeling you have to react every time, even if it’s unjustified.’

**What was the result?** Twitter was given a ‘soft launch’, but within two months, BTP had 1,000 followers. An average of three to five tweets a day are sent out on subjects ranging from local cycle surgeries to the latest antics of the chief constable and his colleagues.

“We monitor Twitter to see what’s going on,” says Alison. “Where we can add value, we will join the conversation.”

Three interesting examples of this occurred early on. When Lady Justice Hallett released her inquest verdict on the 7/7 bombings, Sky ran archive footage of the London bombings all day. This prompted many Twitter users to believe there was a renewed bombing campaign, a message that spread quickly to the media as journalists followed up the story. BTP immediately tweeted a correction to help control the rumour, continuously monitoring and messaging influential users until we saw the rumour change course.

A week or so later, another tweeter reported a bomb going off at King’s Cross. Again this was quickly scotched.

In the third example, a press photographer complained after being ejected from a station through which the Manchester United team was passing. BTP engaged with him and his followers through Twitter. An Inspector rang him shortly after to discuss his concerns and the business he had complained. Later the photographer publicly tweeted directly to influential photography journals that he was appreciative of the efficient and helpful response, if not happy about his experience.

“These examples show the advantage of Twitter, where you can engage with people instantly,” says Alison. “They may not always agree with you, but at least we’ve had a sensible interaction and showed that we listen and can react quickly.”

**What happens next?** “It’s early days for everyone and we will keep learning,” said Alison. “We’re developing a social media strategy, particularly for the Olympics – I think none of the above examples show you can stem speculation, get information out quickly and save everyone’s time, which will be essential when we are all stretched in 2012.”

Twitter has been incorporated into BTP’s crisis communications plan as part of the strategy of giving people credible information as soon as possible, so passengers can make informed decisions about their journeys and industry journalists have the latest updates.

At present BTP has a single, centralised corporate account, to which all areas and Neighbourhood Policing Teams can contribute. How this develops, maybe into multiple accounts, time will tell.

“We are determined not just to be part of the white noise of cyberspace,” says Alison. “We will not use Twitter or other social media for the sake of it, or as a substitute for face-to-face interaction with people. We will monitor the benefits to us and to those we serve.”

**What’s your biggest challenge at the moment?** Undoubtedly it is making sure that the IT infrastructure is in good shape for the Olympics. We have big projects to complete, for instance a new Wide Area Network and new telephones and numbers on just about every desk. We’re having a lockdown on new systems from next January, then using the run up to the Olympics to fine tune and problem solve. We have a nationwide network with over 140 sites, so it’s a big task.

**What is the best thing about your job?** There is never a dull moment, always multiple things going on, and I like that. The pace of change in IT has been accelerating for over 30 years and it is not showing any signs of slowing now.

**What is the worst thing?** People tend only to notice the technology when it goes wrong. That comes with the territory and you have to accept it, but I see the effort the staff put in, the hard work behind the scenes, which isn’t always appreciated. It’s a mammoth task providing an IT and communications infrastructure for a national police force and I think they do it really well and cost effectively.

**What does the future hold?** At the moment, planning and preparing for the Olympics is the big thing on the horizon. It’s going to be a big test for everyone and we are working hard to ensure that we play our part in BTP’s success.

**Are you a technophile outside work?** I do enjoy technology, but it’s not my life. We are restoring a Victorian house so there’s a lot of DIY, which I’m quite keen on. I was born in South Africa, so still have family there and like to travel. On the last trip I went to Africa, particularly the Victoria Falls bridge, which was probably the most frightening (but exhilarating) thing I’ve ever done. Now when I go into those difficult budget meetings, I think back on that and they don’t seem quite so bad.

**NEW CHIEF OFFICER FOR SPECIAL CONSTABULARY**

For the first time in its history, BTP has recruited a chief officer to oversee its force of over 200 special constables

From June, Colin Downman, a Service Controller for London Underground, will work alongside the Neighbourhood Policing and Partnership Unit at Force HQ in Camden.

Colin will join as an national ambassador for BTP’s Special Constabulary, working with the current Area Officers (coordinators), to drive development of Specials, increase their contribution and effectiveness in force operations and improve retention.

Previously Assistant Chief Special Officer with Surrey Police, Colin has over 25 years under his belt as a Special, along with detailed knowledge of the rail industry from his day job at Baker Street on the Circle and Hammersmith & City lines.

“I’m really looking forward to taking on this new role and the challenges of working with a team spread across the whole country,” said Colin.

In March this year, BTP’s Specials achieved a new record, undertaking 5,086 hours of duty, representing an average of over 26 hours per officer, up from 14 hours the previous year.

60 second interview

**60 seconds**

**What is the key to a good interview?**

“First of all we waited. What did we do? We serve.”

**What is the worst thing?**

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**What happens next?**

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DEATH OF BTPA MEMBER JAMES KING

James King, founder member of the British Transport Police Authority (BTPA) since 2004, died in June at the age of 60. James was also a member of the Passenger Focus board, having been a member of the Rail Passengers Committee for Scotland since 2002.

“I always admired James’ dedication and sense of duty,” said BTPA Chairman Millie Banerjee. “He had such a conscientious approach to his work, a trait all his colleagues will fondly remember, and he championed the interests of consumers in Scotland, particularly its rail passengers.”

“His contribution to BTPA was huge, and his death is a great loss.” Chief Constable Andy Trotter described James as “a highly respected and valued” member of the Authority.

“James used his passion for the rail industry, and in particular its passengers, to make a real impact. He set an effective strategy for how BTP and BTPA liaised with the industry and was committed to diversity, leading on BTP’s National Independent Advisory Group for many years.”

Having been Vice Chairman of the Rail Action Group East of Scotland, James’ extensive business and marketing expertise was greatly valued by the board and staff at Passenger Focus. “James was a founder board member, a valued colleague and friend,” said Colin Foxall, Passenger Focus Chairman. “He was an energetic and enthusiastic passenger champion, tireless in his commitment to passengers in Scotland and Great Britain. We shall miss James very much.”

A good service is operating on our lines

The numbers you use to contact BTP have changed. Please start using our new numbers now and take action to update your records.

Make sure you have changed the numbers in your mobile phones and other systems you use to contact us.

You should now call:
999 ➤ in an emergency
0300 123 2211 ➤ to report non-emergencies
0300 123 2277 ➤ to report a fatality
0300 123 2299 ➤ to contact a specific person or department at BTP

Our numbers have changed. Check our website www.btp.police.uk/allchangeplease

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the Line