Can I ask that the below comments be passed to the justice committee in response to the future of the British Transport Police (BTP) in Scotland and the proposed merger with Police Scotland.

I can’t stress enough the worry that I have for Police officers in Scotland if this merger is allowed to go ahead. All BTP officers are highly skilled and trained in dealing with the railway infrastructure which is a very dangerous environment and potentially fatal if not trained properly. All BTP officers are in possession of a Personal Track Safety Certificate (PTS), no-one should be anywhere near the railway unless in possession of this certificate. This specifically sees them all trained in the dangers and rules of the railway allowing them to work safely and be protected whilst dealing with suicidal people and crime.

This training is given over a 2 day period and at a cost.

How will Police Scotland, who are already struggling financially, fund this training for every one of their officers along with covering the training days required?

The railway also runs on Railway legislation byelaws that Police Scotland officers will not be aware of. More training!! So more costs!!

It is also fair to say that when you are dealing with the railway on a regular basis then the training and dangers become second nature to you. If officers are not dealing with the railway environment then they can become lax with the dangers. This has been evident in at least one past incident which has seen a fatality that could have possibly been avoided had officers had training on dangers of the railway.

It is also evident on a regular basis when Police Scotland turn up at incidents and don’t think twice about walking on the railway line without any stop or caution and potentially risking their lives.

Who will take responsibility when a police officer is killed or injured on the railway through lack of proper training?

The Scottish Government seem to think that BTP will have access to more or better resources if they are part of Police Scotland. The only resource BTP do not have access to are horses ie. the mounted branch which I would say BTP wouldn’t normally require. BTP have access to a helicopter through Network Rail, Search teams, Public order units and they also have a large number of officers trained in using taser and carrying taser in the stations.

BTP also carry out regular cross border policing which sees seamless policing in Britain over the railway network. They have the ability to deal with crimes in Scotland, England and Wales without worrying about who has jurisdiction. This sees
the victims of crime being dealt with quickly and efficiently and also has more chance of ending with a positive outcome. This merger will see less or no officers on cross border services and if they are, then they will alight at the borders. This makes no sense and will have a major impact, especially the likes of travelling football support or cross border events which BTP police very effectively on a regular basis.

Public confidence and reassurance will be seriously at risk if BTP become part of Police Scotland as there is no way that BTP officers will be retained on the railway network. There is no doubt in my mind that BTP officers will be used to backfill resources outwith the railway and so eventually skills will be diluted, crimes will not be attended and terrorism will have a free reign on the network. This will inevitably lead to more disruption on the railway. Do the committee realise that an incident in Glasgow can have an impact on the running of the railway across the whole country. If there are no officers to attend, because they have been deployed elsewhere, this will lead to more passenger delay and thousands of pounds costs to the network.

I know of no BTP officers or members of the public who are behind this merger, this is being pushed through by the Scottish Government who have given no real justification for the merger or reason as to why this merger would be in the public interest or be good for Scotland or policing as a whole. Police Scotland are in a very bad way financially and seem to be having problems since becoming the single force, so it makes no sense to add a police force that is working very effectively and efficiently to something that is not working.

If this went ahead it would also mean a major breakdown in the relationship between BTP and the Rail Operators which BTP have worked hard to maintain and has been excellent for many, many years.

Terms and conditions along with pensions are different for BTP officers compared to Police Scotland. If these are lost then I can see a large number of officers leave the force rather than go across to the single force. This will see a large loss of experience and skills that I feel will never be recovered and the railway and public will suffer immensely.

There were other options made available to the Scottish Govt rather than full merger but these seem to have been totally ignored. Why??

For the sake of keeping the public and railway network safe this merger cannot be allowed to happen.

This merger seems set to be forced through for all the wrong reasons so I hope my comments can be noted and taken into consideration.

Lynsey Rankin
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