Justice Committee

Railway Policing (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1 Report

Response from Police Scotland

I refer to the Stage 1 Report on the Railway Policing (Scotland) Bill published by the Justice Committee on 28 April 2017 and to the subsequent request from the Committee on 9 May. By way of response, as it relates to Police Scotland, I would offer the following:

Recommendation: The Committee requests that Police Scotland provide details on its training needs analysis and the cost prior to Stage 2 deliberations. Any additional costs as a result of integration should not be met by the railway operators. The Committee asks the Scottish Government to clarify who will pay any additional training costs incurred by Police Scotland.

On 27 March and 30 March I provided additional written responses to the Justice Committee following requests for follow up information on this matter. As previously indicated, once the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) has been completed, we will be in a better position to understand the requirements of the training programme for Police Scotland Officers after 1 April 2019 and the costs associated with that. The TNA will encompass the current Police Scotland 11 week training programme as well as all training currently undertaken by BTP Officers, including refresher training.

The aspiration of Police Scotland is that the new training programme will see the BTP elements woven through it. Existing Police Scotland Officers will be up-skilled by means of awareness training, with those transferring to the dedicated Railway Policing specialism being provided with the necessary additional specialist training, including Track Safety Certification and ongoing refresher training.

This model is similar to the one currently adopted by Police Scotland in relation to all specialisms (e.g. Road Policing), with the majority of the specialist training only being provided to Officers on transfer to that specialism. As such, it is not the intention for Police Scotland to provide 17,234 Officers with a Track Safety Certificate. Only those within the Railway Policing specialism will be exposed to that training, in similar numbers to that provided currently to BTP Officers in Scotland.

It is expected therefore, that the training will be delivered within existing structures and at a relatively low cost.

Recommendation: The Committee heard that the proposal to integrate BTP Scotland into Police Scotland could provide an opportunity to enhance the police service provided across the rail network in Scotland. The Committee asks the Scottish Government to provide more information about the deployment of resources on the railway by the British Transport Police and Police Scotland, in the light of evidence that Police Scotland is the first responder to 1.8% of incidents on the railways.

At present, due to variations in legacy arrangements, Police Scotland does not routinely collate data on its engagement with BTP specifically as regards who was first to respond to an incident on the railway. Also, it is not clear from the question as
to whether the 1.8% of incidents captured required any Police attendance, BTP or otherwise, in the first instance. Interrogation of our systems for 2016 however revealed that there were 1749 incidents classified under ‘External Force Request’. BTP would fall within this classification. This represents 0.12% of all incidents recorded during 2016 on Police Scotland systems. In addition to that, 4500 calls were received from the BTP Contact Centre at one of the Police Scotland Service Centres. This represents 0.13% of all calls received by Police Scotland during this period. Police Scotland will continue to play a significant supporting role in attendance at rail incidents across Scotland, particularly in the more rural areas of the country and where BTP are not currently able to provide 24hr coverage.

Recommendation: Providing railway policing training for all police officers provides an opportunity to make Police Scotland more resilient and effective in policing the railways. There are areas of the railways that police officers should not enter without a Personal Track Safety Certificate. The Committee requests further information from Police Scotland as to how this currently plays out in practice when Police Scotland officers respond to incidents on the railway estate.

The Police Scotland ‘Safety and Policing of the Railways’ Standard Operating Procedures document which is currently under review, in conjunction with BTP, explicitly states that Police Officers should not go onto the tracks. Should there be a requirement to do so then the nationally agreed process demands that a competent and trained member of the rail industry is available and present at the scene to advise. These operating procedures are supplemented with a number of rail industry documents (Network Rail etc.) to assist in ensuring the safety of the emergency services who may have to work within the rail environment, on any number of incidents where there is a requirement for them to attend. In practice, this guidance is re-enforced by Control Room staff, prior to attendance of the Officers.

Recommendation: The Committee notes on-going concerns around Police Scotland’s IT systems. The Committee further notes Police Scotland’s view that there may be a requirement to invest in ICT systems to ensure operational compatibility with the British Transport Police and asks the Scottish Government for confirmation that it is their view that there will be no detriment to information sharing, should an incident occur.

Police Scotland continues to engage with BTP in relation to pursuing appropriate ICT solutions for a devolved railway policing model. Work also progresses internally within Police Scotland to improve the interoperability between legacy systems. Regardless of the final approved model, Police Scotland can provide the Committee with an assurance that there will be no detriment to information sharing should an incident occur, through a lack of ICT compatibility. Police Scotland and BTP currently share information on intelligence and incidents on a daily basis and this interaction is expected to improve, following integration on 1 April 2019.

I trust the above information assists. Please contact me should you require any further information.

Assistant Chief Constable Bernard Higgins
Operations & Justice
23 May 2017