

## **Justice Committee**

### **Railway Policing (Scotland) Bill**

#### **Written submission from Raymond Martin**

Here is my response regarding the proposed merging of the British Transport Police (BTP) into Police Scotland (PS). I am a serving officer with 15 years' service in BTP Scottish area.

Firstly to be blunt, several officers have already left the BTP Scottish area, either transferring to other areas of the force or seeking employment elsewhere, citing the Police Scotland merger as the reason.

Further to this many are just seeing out their time with the force they enjoy currently working with and are planning to leave either just before or after the merger.

I forecast (possibly myself included) that after the merger and we are managed and treated in the fashion Police Scotland officers are with their inferior terms and conditions, that employment will be sought elsewhere.

Those who stay may seek to broaden their horizons in different departments of PS or indeed one of their hundreds of office jobs available to police officers. All ensuring that front line specialist knowledge and experience of policing what is a unique environment, will be at very best severely diluted if not completely lost in a short space of time.

There is no appetite for this merger, in fact the polar opposite is the feeling of officers working within the force.

There is supposed promise that core railway policing will be maintained. There is absolutely no chance of this happening whatsoever. If there is an officer working within Glasgow central or Edinburgh Waverley railway stations (or other station) and there is a shoplifting or similar nearby, and there are no PS officer to attend (with their already depleted numbers) then the station officers will be undoubtedly be sent. The argument being that they aren't doing anything. Well contrary to that the officers are there to respond immediately to any situations, they are specially trained in body language and behaviour/counteracting terrorism and preventing general crime in a busy commuter and retail environment.

Furthermore the special working relationship and understanding between BTP and the railway operators and tenants will be rapidly eroded away, further diminishing the effectiveness of policing. You ask a local shop keeper in Glasgow, Edinburgh or any major city who their local police officer is and they won't be able to tell you. Ask a member of railway station staff in the same city and they will be able to rhyme off the names on the different shifts. They can even tell you the names of the police dogs.

I see in no way that under current management methods that PS would ring fence railway policing. The extra officers will be utilised for their mainstay, which is issuing fixed penalty notices to generate revenue which helps fund the force.

Next the impact on officers.

Mr Mathieson sent out a letter to serving BTP officers to "reassure" us regarding the merger. In this letter he says that terms and conditions will remain the same. He then goes on to say even if they are changed over time! An oxymoron you will agree.

In this same letter he states that he will try to maintain the pensions as they are. He then goes on to say that if they can't get this matter sorted out or sorted in time, then pensions will be done in line with current government guidelines of being sustainable and affordable. Currently my pension is sustainable and affordable as it's a managed railway pension fund. In PS there is no such thing as a pension fund. There is no investment or managed fund. Serving officers pay in and the money goes out to retired officers. And there is always a shortfall which local government foot the bill for each month. This is why PS officers now have to pay more in over a longer period of time to get less out at the other end.

This is grossly unfair on every front. The letter basically says that conditions will change and that there is the distinct possibility that pensions will too. Surely all this should be ratified and written into any bill before anything is done, so as they will remain the same after the passing of any bill. After all this was part of the Smith Commission that states there would be no detriment. All that the future holds is uncertainty, and once this bill is passed they are free to do as they please. All we will find then is detriment to everyone employed in BTP Scotland and it will be irreversible.

Officers in specialist roles such as dog handler, CID, intelligence officers, covert source handlers and other specialist units have no idea if they will still be in those roles post merger. Dog handlers for instance receive dog handlers allowance for care and exercise of dogs off duty (as is the case in PS). However will this be the case post merger? What if they lose the role? They are then financially penalised through lost income. They currently use a force vehicle to travel to and from work and the same one for on duty, due to the geographical area covered and working in different towns, cities and locations each day. Will this be maintained, or will they then be penalised by having to buy another vehicle? A huge financial penalty. None of this has been addressed, nothing proposed and no assurances given never mind any guarantee of no detriment.

Will the existing benefits of privileged rail travel be maintained? Whereby officers receive discounted rail travel for travel to and from work and in cases of older service free travel boxes.

There remains on the table the option of the Chief Constable of BTP being accountable to the Scottish Parliament for the policing of the railways in Scotland by a still existing Scottish division of the BTP. Policing plans and objectives can be set out with the Parliament, railway stakeholders and the BTP, giving the Scottish government the powers and control they apparently want in a far simpler and far more cost effective way.

The question remains, why hasn't this far simpler option been taken up? It gives the Scottish Parliament everything it has said it wants and offers full accountability. It is far less complex, there would be no detriment to anyone and there would be little or no financial cost in it compared to the option they wish to pursue. Even if it were run as an initial pilot scheme for 5 years and then reviewed thereafter. The public and rail industry could then be asked if they saw the need for change. After all the public and rail industry will be greatly and irreversibly impacted by these proposed changes. Neither of whom want any of these changes to take place and are more than satisfied with the status quo.

In addition I would like to add the prospect of redundancy, which has been refuted already as nobody wishes to foot the cost of this. In BTP terms and conditions if our post no longer exists we are entitled to redundancy and resettlement. This move to PS makes our posts redundant. The very fact we will no longer be employees and transferred without our will to another force, coupled with the fact the posts we vacate will no longer exist fulfils the criteria of redundancy. This will no doubt be tested in court. The BTP or the BTP Authority are not likely to foot the cost as they have had no say in this matter. The Scottish government are the ones forcing the merger and should be the ones to enact and pay the redundancy and resettlement costs. This needs to be more closely examined before anything is taken forward.

Raymond Martin  
31 January 2017