



Transport Committee

Oral evidence: Security on the railway, HC 428

Monday 23 June 2014

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Members present: Mrs Louise Ellman (Chair), Sarah Champion, Jim Fitzpatrick, Karl McCartney, Mr Adrian Sanders, Graham Stringer, Martin Vickers

Questions 80-172

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Baroness Kramer**, Minister of State, Department for Transport, and **Steve Marshall-Camm**, Head of Rail Sponsorship and Stakeholders, Department for Transport, gave evidence.

Q80 Chair: Good afternoon and welcome to the Transport Committee. Minister, could you tell us who you are for the record, and could your colleague introduce himself, please?

Baroness Kramer: I am Susan Kramer—Baroness Kramer—Minister of State for Transport. I will let Steve introduce himself, because I couldn't remember his title a moment ago, which is very embarrassing.

Steve Marshall-Camm: Steve Marshall-Camm, Head of Rail Sponsorship and Stakeholders from the Department's Rail Executive.

Baroness Kramer: You can see why I struggled.

Q81 Chair: I see what you mean. Thank you very much.

Could you tell us, Minister, how the Department liaises with the Home Office on security issues?

Baroness Kramer: Obviously we try to have a good working relationship—and we do—with the Home Office. As you know, we have direct reporting responsibility through to the BTPA and the BTP, so it is important that we do that. It is a positive relationship. There are conversations at ministerial and officer level. I am just trying to look quickly for some of the recent areas on which we co-operated as that might be helpful to you in describing it. For example, we have liaised on railway security and policing issues, such as making legislative changes that would be of benefit to

the BTP. There was extensive contact between both Departments about a clause in the Home Office's Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill, which has now come into effect, so it is an Act, to put BTP officers on the same footing as officers from other police forces in relation to the possession of firearms.

We liaise generally about other legislative anomalies, and there are some—an example being getting greater alignment between the BTP powers and those of the Home Office forces. We are looking for opportunities as we go forward to pick up some of those anomalies. Generally, the Department keeps an eye on what the Home Office is doing and what is happening within the broader police service to make sure that it picks up any read-across for the BTP.

Q82 Chair: Until 2010, or perhaps up to 2011, the Department had a specialist unit called TRANSEC that dealt with security issues. That was then disbanded. How have those functions now been allocated, or have we lost that expertise within the Transport Department?

Baroness Kramer: I will ask Steve to come in and help on that because he will have the history of remembering TRANSEC. I was not there at the time.

Steve Marshall-Camm: Not least because I was part of TRANSEC several years ago.

Q83 Chair: TRANSEC was an important unit. This Committee at the time received briefings from TRANSEC. We went to talk to them and they came to the Committee. We found them to be an invaluable source of information about what was happening in relation to security. They were a focus and a centre of expertise, but they do not exist any more. Can you tell us what has happened to that expertise?

Steve Marshall-Camm: The expertise still exists; it is just that it exists in different places. Rather than there being a single unit known as the Transport Security Directorate, a number of different units now look after different aspects for the different modes. The most significant change is that responsibility for aviation security on compliance and regulation has moved to the Civil Aviation Authority, but the overall policy responsibility remains with the central Department. There is also a central unit within the Department that looks after transport security strategy, which remains in place.

In relation to the other parts of the family overall, looking after the other modes, maritime security remains within the Department, as does land transport security. In fact, land transport security, which looks after counter-terrorist security in relation to the railway system, the London underground and the channel tunnel, sits within what is now the Department's Rail Executive. It has been brought within the rail family rather than it being in a specialist unit looking solely at security issues.

Q84 Chair: Minister, are you satisfied that the expertise that was there, and particularly the links to information on terrorism and terrorist threats, has not been lost with the dissolution of the unit?

Baroness Kramer: Yes. As somebody who came into the Department last October, it has struck me that there is regular conversation around these issues. I get briefed from time to time. Ministers as a group get briefed on a reasonably regular basis, with updates on any issues to which the relevant areas think it is important to draw our attention. It is an issue that is on the agenda on a regular basis in various different meetings. I would say that typically, certainly for the period I have been there, that conversation has been a very satisfactory one. It has not been hugely extensive. When people have had questions—for example, when the Malaysian aircraft disappeared—it has led to a series of conversations. Those have been satisfactory conversations.

Q85 Chair: Who gives you the briefings?

Baroness Kramer: They usually come from the specialist unit. For example, if it is rail, it will either be Clare Moriarty within the Rail Executive, or she may bring someone as a specialist from the Rail Executive—it will tend to be that particular group. We try to break silo thinking a lot in Transport, so there are regular meetings with the heads of the various different directorates around the table. As I say, where there is a relevant agenda item, we bring in that specialist knowledge.

Q86 Jim Fitzpatrick: When I was in Transport there was a ministerial lead for TRANSEC as the point of contact within the Department. Is there such ministerial responsibility now, or is it, as you say, less defined?

Baroness Kramer: Everybody shares in the process, but to an extent I think I am a focal point for most of these discussions, which is why I have come here today. I have particularly focused, for example, on building my relationship with the BTP and the BTPA.

Q87 Jim Fitzpatrick: Is liaison with Home Office counter-terrorism, the Foreign Office and the Cabinet Office via a Cabinet Sub-Committee that you would attend on behalf of the Department, or is it less formal than that?

Baroness Kramer: I do not go to such formal meetings. I think Patrick has been to some. It is primarily at Secretary of State level. That is where we would have those meetings; it has that kind of focus.

Q88 Graham Stringer: The coalition Government went to some trouble to bring in police commissioners. Why is there no democratically elected control for the Transport Police?

Baroness Kramer: I think it is hard to look at what the constituency would be in that particular case, if that makes any sense to you.

Graham Stringer: It does.

Baroness Kramer: The great strength of the BTP is that it operates right across the rail industry, rather than just being attached to an individual geographic area. As you know, it is also funded by the industry itself, so that gives it rather a different locus. It is obviously an entity that is very conscious of the importance of its role to protect the public, but it also has particular responsibilities with regard to the character of the rail industry. For example, where a crime is committed, obviously protecting the public is always paramount, but it is important to limit disruption and to get the rail system up and working again. The impact and knock-on effect that happens if there is rail disruption anywhere in the nation, because of the way the timetables work and other factors, could be on people from anywhere in the country and on any region of the country as the knock-on impact of the disruption plays itself through the system. For those kinds of reasons, the authority has worked very well, and it is hard to see how you would structure an effective elected commissioner for this.

Steve Marshall-Camm: The key point is the constituency. It is also important to recognise that the British Transport Police Authority itself is very prescribed in the sense of the membership of that authority needing to include people who have experience and expertise in the particular areas the police will be interested in. You have English, Welsh and Scottish interests covered. You have police staff and passenger interests covered. You also have the industry with full representation. The people who engage with the police force have an input in the overall oversight of that force by the authority.

Q89 Graham Stringer: The points that you and the Minister make are fair, but don't you think there is still a democratic deficit? I do not think anybody would suggest a national election for a

police commissioner for the Transport Police, but don't you think there should be a nexus for the electorate in some way to have some say in the Transport Police?

Baroness Kramer: I am struggling to think how that would improve the service. I do not think one should ever be closed-minded to thoughts of doing things differently, but I am struggling to see how that would create improvement. We also have the reality that it is an industry-funded body. It is important to recognise that. It has the responsibility definitely to protect the public, but also to make sure that within that context there is as efficient as possible delivery of rail services. There would be no other force that would carry that particular kind of responsibility. It strikes me that what we have works pretty effectively. Listening to the various stakeholders, who obviously I meet from time to time, I would have to say that the feedback is overwhelmingly positive.

Q90 Karl McCartney: My question follows on from Mr Stringer's point. Although I would urge that if it's not broken, don't fix it, I understand why—because ACPO is perhaps undemocratic and unelected—we have ended up with police commissioners, which is where we get to my question. You are telling us that it works really well with the British Transport Police as to how they react to stakeholders; I think that was the word you mentioned—a word I don't particularly like. Mr Marshall-Camm, I think you mentioned a board. I would like to know who sets strategic priorities for the British Transport Police. Ultimately, if something went majorly wrong, who would the people at the top of the British Transport Police be answerable to? Would it be those who pay their money, or Ministers and the Secretary of State for Transport?

Baroness Kramer: It would be directly to the authority, which is absolutely crucial, and which in a sense then answers to the Secretary of State. There is a democratic chain through that route. The industry does not make the choice of who gets to go on the board of the BTPA; that is up to the Secretary of State.

Q91 Karl McCartney: Who sets strategy for the British Transport Police? Is that the board as well, or do Ministers have any role in it at all?

Baroness Kramer: It will be the board. The Secretary of State certainly has powers within this area, and an opportunity to use those powers. To this point in time the powers have not been used in any extensive way because the current system is working effectively and well. There is always the potential to use the powers to intervene particularly, as you said, around strategic priorities, targets and performance indicators, but there really has not been a need to use them.

Karl McCartney: My third question was going to be whether those powers have been exercised, but it has been answered.

Q92 Chair: There is to be a triennial review of the BTP. When is that going to be produced and which issues is it looking at?

Baroness Kramer: There are two parts to the triennial review. Part one is basically the core triennial review, and that will be published before the recess. Obviously I cannot pre-empt its conclusions, but having seen it in draft, I think it is a very good piece of work and a very thorough analysis of the BTPA and its governance arrangements. That review looks at things such as the continuing need for the BTPA's functions, the case for it to remain a non-departmental public body, and control and governance arrangements to ensure that the BTPA is complying with recognised principles of good corporate governance.

Part two is rather different. It considers a wider ranging set of issues that have been raised by the industry about the effectiveness of the BTPA, the discharge of its functions and the industry's ability to influence outcomes. It is one of those reports that we will publish in due course. I am afraid I cannot give a more accurate date than that, because work is still going on.

Q93 Chair: Are you looking at changing the constitution for representation on the British Transport Police board?

Baroness Kramer: At this point in time we have not come to that conclusion. We obviously want to take a look at the triennial review when it comes forward. We will take on board the issues and comments that it raises. We will take that as a very serious process.

Q94 Martin Vickers: Minister, when discussions have taken place regarding budgets, has the specific question been asked, “Would there be savings if the Transport Police were taken into the Home Office and became part of the main police force?”

Baroness Kramer: This is a body that is largely paid for by the industry. The industry—at least in all the discussions that I have had with its members—feels that it is much stronger arranged and structured in the way it is now. There are not direct budget discussions from a taxpayer perspective. One presumes it would be a greater cost to the taxpayer rather than a lesser, were a change to be made, if I am answering your question as I think you are posing it.

The focus has been very much on how we can make this an effective body. It has been on meeting those standards in a significant way, as I think you will have seen from the broader reports on crime decreases on the rail line and reports on its performance. We will have the triennial review to feed into that conversation.

Q95 Chair: In 2004, the then Mayor of London and the chief of the Met wanted to absorb the British Transport Police into the Met Police. Is that idea still around or has it gone?

Baroness Kramer: I have not seen that idea raise its head again. I very much hope that the Mayor and the head of the London Met are convinced of the effectiveness of the BTP in how it is currently arranged. One of its great strengths is that it has reach all across the rail system. While London is obviously a very key part of the rail network within the UK, it is not the only part of the rail network within the UK. The knock-on impact when disruption happens and when there are issues and problems with public confidence in the railways is on the whole country, not just one geography.

Q96 Chair: Are there any plans to extend the remit of the British Transport Police across the whole network? They do not cover everything, do they? They do not cover Manchester metro and part of Tyne and Wear?

Baroness Kramer: There are obviously exceptions within the system. At this point in time, I have not been approached with any suggestions to change that.

Steve Marshall-Camm: The way the British Transport Police was established is that it has responsibility for policing the national rail network. The train operating companies and Network Rail have to use the services of the British Transport Police. Other transport operators have an option in terms of whether they would want to approach the British Transport Police for specific policing purposes, but they do not have to use it in the same way.

Q97 Mr Sanders: Do you think there is a gap between actual levels of crime and the perception of crime among passengers?

Baroness Kramer: I suspect there is always a gap between actual levels of crime and perceptions of crime. Frankly, both matter, so it is just inevitable. You hope that over time public confidence starts to recognise when there has been significant improvement and the two come closer together.

Of course there is the BTP, but there is a much broader programme tackling both crime and perceptions of crime; for example, the work that goes on to create cleaner and safer station

environments, to get better lighting, to create well-presented infrastructure; and to try to deal with things like information and communication. Those are really important for people to feel that they know what is going on. Good signage and information help them to feel much more secure, as does the presence of uniformed staff. It does not have to be from the BTP; it could be PCSOs, railway staff or a number of people. That will change perception. CCTV plays an important role. That ties more into the work of the BTP, but there are a lot of ways to tackle it. As you know, we have had a very extensive programme on Secure Stations, and that, I think, plays a very important role in perception. If you would like more on Secure Stations, I am happy to talk about them.

Q98 Mr Sanders: Do you think the train operating companies themselves are doing enough to reassure potential customers that the railway is safe?

Baroness Kramer: There is always room for improvement. This is an area where we need to have partnership between train operators, Network Rail, BTP and the Department to make sure that it remains a very high priority. One of the things we have been doing is making sure that it is more and more incorporated in rail franchises. That is an important way to bring these concepts to the fore and improve that sense of security. As an example, the new East Coast intercity express franchise has incorporated many of these issues, so I expect to see them rolled out in many of the other franchises that are now under debate. That is more and more important. I can probably fish out some more examples if it would be useful in this process.

Q99 Mr Sanders: Is that part of the Secure Stations scheme?

Baroness Kramer: It is part of the Secure Stations scheme, but it goes beyond that; there is the car park scheme as well. All that plays a significant role. One of the reasons why the franchise is quite a useful tool to do this is that it really cannot be a one size fits all. It has to be a reasonably well targeted programme.

Q100 Mr Sanders: But shouldn't all stations be secure stations?

Baroness Kramer: Let me give you an example. I live fairly near Barnes Bridge station, which is not manned, but is well lit and open, so because of its location and the conditions around it, people feel very secure using it. That is a station that does not particularly need a Secure Stations programme. There will be other stations where it is really important. There will be some stations where perhaps one of the most important things you can do is to have the BTP working with local police forces—for example, to build up a programme to tackle a hotspot of anti-social behaviour. It is horses for courses, but there certainly are stations that people feel very secure using that do not particularly have the Secure Station designation.

Q101 Mr Sanders: You mentioned PCSOs earlier. Does the British Transport Police have its own network—the equivalent of PCSOs—or are these actually community police officers who come into the British Transport Police environment and work alongside them?

Steve Marshall-Camm: They have their own PCSOs, but I think the point you are raising is whether there is a non-policing contribution to the overall security of the network.

Q102 Mr Sanders: I am actually interested in PCSOs. If the British Transport Police has its own PCSOs, does it have its full complement? Does it recruit within the railway industry itself or outside?

Steve Marshall-Camm: On the detail, it would probably be better to speak to the chief constable, who will know the processes that are followed. There are certainly a significant number of PCSOs forming part of the overall complement of BTP officers.

Q103 Mr Sanders: A lot of safety at stations depends on more than policing in stations and on the rail network. I wondered what discussions you have had with the Home Office and others on policing areas around and leading to stations. Are there any examples of good practice that you could highlight?

Baroness Kramer: That is certainly a very important thrust. There is typically a strong relationship with the BTP. The chief constable will be able to give you a great deal more detail on how that can work.

We have used things like the local sustainable transport fund to help to provide routes to stations, for example. Other parts of the Department for Transport have been engaged in that process, as well as co-operating with local police forces. When you look at things like the door-to-door strategy, which talks about making whole journeys greener and cleaner, that also tends to address concerns about safety as part of it, because it is looking at things like lighting, the presentation of a station and whether or not the routes work effectively. There is a broader programme that recognises that the railway doesn't just end with a barrier and then you go out into the community at large. You have to work across what might seem to be boundaries and treat them as though they are not boundaries, and recognise that it is a door-to-door journey for any passenger trying to use the system and they need to be safe throughout the whole journey.

Q104 Chair: Are you satisfied that the arrangements are there to make that happen?

Baroness Kramer: Yes. Back in the days when I was on the board of Transport for London, I remember a lot of the work that we did very directly around that, and the BTP was extremely effective. Where we had particular issues and crises—this is direct experience—there was an immediate combined response that worked extremely well. There was not a hiatus, and frankly there was not a difficulty in communication. All that was exceedingly positive. It has to be strengthened, but I think the BTPA recognises that, as does the chief constable.

Q105 Sarah Champion: Baroness, we have received some powerful oral and written evidence from Railway Children about vulnerable children and young people who end up at the railways, use the railways or are being trafficked through them. Are you aware of the issue?

Baroness Kramer: I am aware of the issue. I am a good friend of Baroness Doocey, who has been pushing very hard around many of these issues, and they are exceedingly complex. The BTP can respond about the situation, but what I think is very positive is that it has been developing workstreams to protect young people; for example, by training staff who access data involving children and young people, and reviewing how they handle school liaison, because obviously truants and runaways are unfortunately an important part of the particular body that you are talking about. It is making sure that the police within their work understand that this is much more holistic. It is not just a case of removing a noisy and difficult child; you have to step in and recognise that there is a child in need.

There is good work in liaising with things like mental health services, which is an underlying problem for many of these youngsters. We had a recent example of a child who was removed from the railway lines by the BTP. When they were able to talk with the youngster it became apparent that there was a bullying problem at school. It was referred to school safeguarding officers and to the head teacher; it was not just a case of moving them off and leaving the situation. They stay with it and follow through to make sure that youngsters get some of the support they need. Again, I am sure that the chief constable will be able to give you many more examples of how that can work. We recognise that that is important.

You have to recognise that the BTP deals with people who are highly vulnerable. Unfortunately, suicides on the railway are not unknown, to put it mildly. It is obviously a very significant issue. That

brings a real consciousness to a lot of the BTP around the vulnerability of people and it carries through into a lot of their work.

Q106 Sarah Champion: I want to ask you a couple of specific questions. You mentioned gathering data and statistics. We have heard that there are no reliable statistics on the number of children and young people picked up at railways and how they are subsequently handled. Do you think it would be worth while measuring that, and would you put the money forward to allow it to happen?

Baroness Kramer: As I say, this is an industry-funded project. I will always be interested in looking at anything that deals with the safety of children. Could I pass that on to the chief constable? He will be able to give you a much better idea of how all that is put together. Again, there are a lot of issues where the Department may not be the right person but the health services might, or that might be the Department for Education. There are a lot of players in all this. What we have to do is to make sure that we see it as far as vulnerable people are concerned, particularly youngsters.

Q107 Sarah Champion: Are you aware that those conversations are going on between the different Departments?

Baroness Kramer: I have not personally engaged in discussions around those issues. I am becoming more involved, particularly on the issue of suicide. I have agreed to become a champion in that area, because it is a crucial one. That will involve getting engaged in conversations with the Department of Health. We have yet to tee those up and get them moving, but I am conscious of the work that has been done to date, which very much reflects that cross-departmental engagement.

Q108 Sarah Champion: Unlike other police forces, the BTP does not have targets around child protection. Do you think that is something for the British Transport Police Authority to put in place for the BTP?

Baroness Kramer: That is an issue I would ask the BTPA to take a look at. I cannot pretend to have sufficient expertise to respond in a sensible way to your question.

Q109 Sarah Champion: If you could ask it that question, it would be appreciated.

Finally, should a requirement to safeguard vulnerable children and young people be included in the tendering process for train operating companies going forward?

Baroness Kramer: That is an interesting question. I don't know what is the best way to make sure that it gets done—whether or not it is something that needs to come as part of a requirement, or if it is something we deal with in a less regulatory way. For example, I am very interested in the area of disability. While regulation matters, what actually matters a whole lot more is culture and training, which cannot be captured within regulation. It is the changes there that make a difference. The underlying issue that you highlight is absolutely crucial. What I can't respond to you with—not having thought enough about it—is how you could strengthen and embed those particular issues.

Sarah Champion: I agree that my points cover all vulnerable people, but unless the data is being collected and the targets are in place, you are absolutely right. How do you measure if it is being put in place?

Q110 Chair: Was the issue of vulnerable children something that was flagged up to you before we discussed it today?

Baroness Kramer: I think it was mentioned as an area where you might have an interest.

Q111 Chair: But was it an area that you, as a Minister, were particularly aware of?

Baroness Kramer: No; I focused much more on the broader issue of vulnerable people, without particularly identifying vulnerable children. As a consequence of this meeting, I will make sure that I am getting as briefed on vulnerable children as I have been on vulnerable people in the more generic sense. As I say, the impact of people with mental health issues resorting to suicide and using the railway as their means is something very stark, and you become very aware of it as soon as you get involved with the world of the railways.

Q112 Chair: I have one or two more questions to do with crime on the railway more generally. On the figures that we have seen, theft of passenger property reduced by 53% from 2003-04 to 2013-14, but we are told that the detection rate for these crimes is only 7%. Is that acceptable? It sounds a remarkably low figure—a detection of 7%.

Baroness Kramer: Prevention is always the best route. I really think this is something that could be better answered by the chief constable, who will have a much closer understanding of the detection rates. Our focus has very much been on the prevention side, which is absolutely crucial. I suspect that things like the Secure Stations programme must improve that ability, as it rolls out across the country. Even simple things like gating at stations, which we are doing as part of revenue protection programmes, should be able to help us across some of those issues.

Q113 Chair: Cable theft is another issue the Committee has taken a particular interest in. We recommended the amendment of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964, and that recommendation has now been implemented. Could you tell us what the impact of that change has been on cable theft on the railways?

Baroness Kramer: It has been an absolutely crucial measure. Before that, there were legislative changes in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, but the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, which banned the cash purchase of scrap metal and tightened up regulation of that industry, has been absolutely crucial in the fall of cable theft. Obviously a key role in all of this was picked up by the National Metal Theft Taskforce, which will continue its work until October, one year after the Act came in. Looking over the two-year period on which it has been focused, it resulted in a 67% reduction in offences. That is a significant number.

I also have to say, having been out on the tracks a lot, that it works its way through the whole industry. For example, when you see new track being laid or repaired now, quite frequently cable is enclosed in much more secure boxes so that it is not as open to vandalism. Cable is being laid inside piping set much deeper than it might have been historically. There is a difference in managing cable. Rolls of cable used to sit in a pile to the side of a site where it was going to be installed six weeks later. That whole approach and attitude has changed very dramatically. Industry practices around the issue have improved very significantly. I have to say to the Committee that the proposal to tackle the issues with scrap metal dealers has been very effective.

Q114 Chair: Do you have any figures you can give us about the nature or scale of the reduction in theft?

Baroness Kramer: I have the number of 67%. During 2011-12, there were 845 cable theft incidents. That cost the industry around £12 million and caused 344,000 delay minutes, which is obviously significant. Moving to 2013-14, we had 179 cable theft incidents costing the industry about £2.5 million with about 68,000 delay minutes. That is really significant. Obviously we want to keep working to get that number lower, but what a difference in a very short period of time.

Q115 Martin Vickers: Minister, can I take you back to the question about the 7% detection rate for passenger theft? You referred us to the chief constable, and I am sure we will want to question

him about it, but are the Government satisfied with that? It seems exceptionally low. Have you, as the Department, discussed this with the chief?

Baroness Kramer: I have not personally discussed it with the chief. This is an issue, though, where the focus has been very much on prevention. That is where the focus of energy has gone—the whole Secure Stations programme, lighting, presence at stations and a wide range of issues. I think it takes somebody more specialist than me to be able to talk through some of the issues around detection.

In terms of detection of crime, I have been incredibly impressed by the way the BTP has developed its use of CCTV. As you know, there has been something of a coming together of Network Rail, rail operators and the various different parties; they now have access to about 55,000 cameras. If you go to the Ebury Bridge site—perhaps the Committee has been there—you can see the level of intelligence that now surrounds analysis of CCTV to achieve convictions. The ones I have seen play out have been convictions for injury to the person rather than property theft. If there is a point where there is any constraint, I would rather make sure that people are absolutely safe. That is why I am slightly hesitant. The focus of CCTV should be on making sure that people are safe and that if somebody attacks someone at a station, you definitely get them. That has to be among the highest of priorities, but it is very impressive.

Q116 Martin Vickers: We would all acknowledge that prevention is better than cure, but harking back to the previous questions about accountability, do you think there might be more pressure on the force to improve that detection rate if there was greater democratic accountability?

Baroness Kramer: I saw when I went to Ebury Road and looked at how CCTV was being used that a lot of this is significantly developing. I am quite hopeful that it is going to lead to better outcomes generally, with the ability to be able to recognise an individual or cross-match to identify who they are, and make sure that you have evidence that can stand up in court. It is extremely difficult to get court-quality evidence, particularly when you have somebody just from the back with a hoodie on. It is difficult to track back to the point where you can find identifying features that link to someone of whom you have a clear picture.

It is absolutely cutting-edge use of CCTV and technology. It seems to me very important and can help with property theft, but very significantly with violence against the person, which is absolutely crucial. I have seen a lot of evidence that real thought is going into how we accomplish something that is very difficult to do. Again, at least from what I have seen, that is genuinely breaking some new ground and adding to safety at key locations.

Q117 Chair: But 7% detection is a very low figure. You sound as if you are not too worried about it. Am I wrong in thinking that?

Baroness Kramer: In a sense, one is worried about any case. I will go away and have these conversations. I will see if Steve can add something to this as well. What I am unclear on is to what extent that is a number that will begin to yield to the technology improvements that are going to be in place. It is very significant. The ability to recognise and identify perpetrators and get evidence to a level that a court will accept for a conviction is going to be absolutely crucial. It seems to me that that is an important breakthrough in terms of how we deal with crime more generally in the system.

Q118 Chair: The British Transport Police is a specialist force. Do you think it should also be applied to the airports? Should BTP work in the airports as well as on rail?

Baroness Kramer: I am going to turn to Steve. I am less familiar, quite frankly, with the issues around airport security, which are dealt with more directly by Robert Goodwill.

Steve Marshall-Camm: The issue around the policing of airports is that much of the work around securing airports and ensuring that they are safe, particularly from terrorism and from serious

crime, which is more likely to be organised serious crime, takes place beyond the airport perimeter. There is more logic to say that it should be for the local forces who are policing outside the airport perimeter also to be responsible for policing the airport itself. It is unlike the rail network, where you obviously have policing by a single force across the entire country. It is a network that is completely connected; it does not consist of a series of isolated spaces. There is also the responsibility for policing the track, as well as the stations.

Q119 Jim Fitzpatrick: Except that the policing of airports is done by a specialist section of the Met; it is not done by local police officers.

Steve Marshall-Camm: But the overall responsibility remains with—

Q120 Jim Fitzpatrick: It lies with the commissioner.

Steve Marshall-Camm: Yes. I believe that it lies with the local forces. The armed policing in place at, for example, Gatwick airport would be the responsibility of Sussex police.

Q121 Jim Fitzpatrick: That is not my understanding but we can ask the commissioner when we get him.

I want to clarify another point from earlier on, going back to the counter-terrorism aspects and the triennial review, which has been carried out by the Home Office rather than the BTP, one assumes because of the policing dimension rather than the transport dimension. In response to a question, you said that routine security matters for counter-terrorism might go to yourself, Baroness, as Minister, but that the Secretary of State is the nominated Minister for accountability and for the Cabinet-level meetings. Does he deal with it on a day-to-day basis when decisions have to be taken? Many terrorism incidents, whether 9/11, 7/7, Madrid or Mumbai, have been transport orientated. Is it a Home Office counter-terrorism lead and Transport follows, or does Transport have a central role?

Baroness Kramer: I am going to turn to Steve on that one. The Secretary of State engages himself very closely with those issues. I am entirely confident of that and, as I say, the briefings reflect that.

Steve Marshall-Camm: Certainly when it comes to decisions being taken, if there are live incidents, the Secretary of State would be involved around the COBRA table alongside his Cabinet colleagues. It would be the Secretary of State who would be taking the lead on that.

Could I pick up on one point you raised about the triennial review process? It is not so much deliberate—in fact, it was purely accidental—that the identity of the reviewer for the triennial review was a person from the Home Office. We needed somebody independent to undertake that. I would not want you to go away with the impression that it was a review undertaken by a specialist in counter-terrorism or policing matters. It was actually a senior official from the Passport Office.

Q122 Chair: When you are issuing regulations on counter-terrorism issues, what informs those regulations? Do you discuss them with the Home Office? Is it the British Transport Police who is talking to you? What influences those regulations?

Steve Marshall-Camm: The regulations will primarily be developed by the Department, but they will draw from intelligence material gathered by the intelligence services. They will take account of the threat picture as identified by JTAC—the Joint Threat Assessment Centre—sitting within the Security Service. There will be information, but the measures that are put in place—the regulations—are designed by the people who understand how the airports operate and the sorts of measures that can be put in place as counter-measures to the threat of terrorist attacks.

Q123 Chair: And on the rail.

Steve Marshall-Camm: On the rail side, a similar situation arises. As I say, historically it would have been the Transport Security Directorate that did this; now it is the individual modal units who look after it. They will be informed of the intelligence background and then they will design regulations that are appropriate to counter the specific threat that has been identified.

Q124 Chair: Where does the British Transport Police come into that?

Steve Marshall-Camm: The British Transport Police will be engaged in that process as well, but the regulations, of course, are instructions or directions issued by the Secretary of State. They come from the Department, not from the police, because they essentially carry the weight of law.

Q125 Chair: Finally, I want to ask for your general view on the British Transport Police. It is a specialist unit. Do you think that that brings any added value to policing, or could you envisage a time when it was not there and security was done by other means—other police?

Baroness Kramer: It has always struck me that their specialist skills are extremely positive and I would hate to see them lost. That is not in any way meant to denigrate policing at large, however. When you look at the railways and consider the safety issues, you need to understand the railway itself. There are physically high-risk circumstances and it is important that you have a specialist policing force. Crime that occurs on the railway must be dealt with to protect the public. That is not unique; what is unique is that potentially, if it is not done efficiently, it disrupts a much wider system, creating safety issues for people who cannot get home, who find their journeys disrupted or who may be stranded. All those issues matter a great deal. There is a huge economic knock-on. If you seize up parts of the railway system, the consequences are very severe. It is unique in having that particular balance to cope with. It works well, and I rather pick up the phrase from earlier, which was, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” in this particular case, because it is rather successful.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Paul Crowther**, Chief Constable, British Transport Police, and **Millie Banerjee**, Chair, British Transport Police Authority, gave evidence.

Q126 Chair: Good afternoon and welcome to the Transport Select Committee. Could you give us your name and position for the record?

Millie Banerjee: I am Millie Banerjee. I am chair of the British Transport Police Authority.

Paul Crowther: I am Paul Crowther, the chief constable.

Q127 Chair: You are part of the Department for Transport rather than part of the Home Office. Does that put you at any disadvantage?

Paul Crowther: There are advantages and, I guess, some disadvantages. If I can speak from an operational point of view, in terms of advantages there is clearly a logic to us being positioned within the Department that oversees the industry itself. It provides a very close link between the operators, the franchise arrangements, the security arrangements you have heard about from the colleagues here before us, and the way we operate. That provides a great deal of synergy. The commercial side of the rail industry brings an additional focus to our operational response, which has in many ways sharpened how we operate.

If there are disadvantages, I guess there is the complexity of dealing with two Departments, one of which is particularly focused on policing and one on transport. Sometimes we need to make sure that we are speaking to both teams to ensure that that ties in. There are one or two issues where there have been some legislative anomalies. They arise primarily because, when legislators in the Home Office are looking at new Acts of Parliament, they may not necessarily directly link up how that applies to us. The Minister referred earlier to firearms legislation, and there are one or two others that we are still trying to iron out. Broadly I think the system works. We have very close links with the Home Office and the Department for Transport, and are able to bridge those gaps quite effectively.

Q128 Chair: What about your role in relation to counter-terrorism. Do you think that your skills are adequately deployed and used properly?

Paul Crowther: Yes. On the counter-terrorism front, we are linked to all the national and regional structures. We are very closely linked, for example, with the Metropolitan Police and the counter-terrorism command, as well as with regional counter-terrorism structures throughout the UK. We are very closely linked into the security services and various other sources of intelligence data. Then we link across to the Department for Transport around its more regulatory role, which we think ties in quite neatly with our operational role. I can give you one example looking at the issue of bomb threat assessments. It might surprise the Committee that even in this day and age we deal with perhaps 20 or 25 bomb threats a month, which we assess. We have arrangements that we have negotiated and agreed with the industry for how it acts, and then, through liaison with the Department, there are regulatory frameworks imposed around infrastructure that complement that. Those arrangements are well rehearsed and are pretty well in place.

Q129 Chair: Ms Banerjee, how does the British Transport Police Authority work? Are the different interests of the public properly represented on it? I suspect that if you asked members of the public about your authority, very few would have heard that it existed.

Millie Banerjee: First of all, as you know, we are constituted in a particular way. We have members who have experience and knowledge of the industry. We have another set of members who have experience and knowledge of passengers and general consumer services, and we have one member who has experience of railway staff in particular.

The way it works in terms of the operational side is that we work, first of all, very closely at a local level with passenger groups in deciding on their input, and getting their input on developing strategy and operational requirements. At the national level we work very closely with Passenger Focus, which is a key strategic partner for us. It collects data on passenger interests and brings that to us. We communicate with our passenger public through NPS—the national passenger survey—questionnaires. Passenger Focus runs those twice a year, and each time 50,000 questionnaires are sent out, so it is 100,000 passengers a year. We have a special section in it. This year we have added more to those questions. We learn a lot more from that from passengers who actually travel.

In this day and age we have a very active Twitter followership—it's true, we do. We have a special unit set up in Birmingham that is listening to this. It is very helpful because many crimes are reported via Twitter now. People are happy to pass a little message out rather than ring the police, and we always respond to those. Although passengers may not be aware of us as a body, that is partly because we do not put ourselves forward in that sense. We see the authority and the force as being one integrated entity, and we put ourselves forward jointly in local and national forums.

Q130 Jim Fitzpatrick: I want to follow up the question about the passenger survey—100,000, so 50,000 twice a year. Who constitutes the passengers? How do you select them and what percentage return do you get? If it is very high, how do you accomplish that? Do you pay them?

Millie Banerjee: No, we do not pay them. It is managed by Passenger Focus, which is the consumer representative of railway passengers. It does not pay the passengers. It is a very high rate of return—around 50% or 60%—and it is a long questionnaire. You have to follow through on the questionnaires and try to understand what passengers are saying. If I can give you an example—this goes back to safety and security, which you were talking about earlier—one of the things that is very obvious is that passengers feel insecure, and their perception of safety and security is greater later at night, because of loneliness and lack of lighting, and also when it is very crowded. They are quite different and polarised situations. Because we have control of our own terms and conditions for our staff, we are able to take that into account. Paul, for instance, has been able to change rotas in a number of hotspots, so there will be staff from five until 11, which other forces would have difficulty doing. We have rotas from five until 11, because that is the time when passengers feel particularly insecure, either because it is very crowded or because it is very lonely. We take that into account when it comes through from passenger surveys and the discussions that we have. We follow it through.

Q131 Jim Fitzpatrick: How do they select people to participate?

Millie Banerjee: It is random. The 100,000 is very randomised. That has been done for years. The other interesting thing is that quite a depth of data is published, and it goes back a long way, so you can trend long-term issues. It is a very sophisticated professional survey.

Q132 Martin Vickers: Mr Crowther, you spoke about close links with other forces in an operational sense. We often hear that large organisations in the public sector work in silos and that they are not sufficiently communicating with other Departments. Would there be savings to be made, and indeed improvements to operational capability, if there was sharing of IT systems with other forces, if indeed they are compatible?

Paul Crowther: Yes. We are constantly looking for opportunities to collaborate and outsource, whether that be with the private sector or the rail sector, for example, or with other police forces. There are one or two challenges around that. We are able to do so by virtue of the agreement set out by the Home Office, but there is something of a difference in our make-up, in that we have to pay VAT—we cannot reclaim VAT—whereas colleagues in other Home Office forces do not. That creates something of a challenge if you are looking to collaborate around cost. Notwithstanding that, there are many formal and informal arrangements in place whereby we collaborate with other forces. I can give you one example. In London, where we have deployed firearms officers, rather than set up our own infrastructure to deal with an investigation were there to be a firearms discharge, we have agreed with the Metropolitan Police that it will do that on our behalf. It saves money, it has the expertise and it will be more generally available. There are many of those sorts of examples across the country.

Millie Banerjee: Could I add something to that, Mr Vickers? At the institutional level we also collaborate. I sit on the board of the College of Policing. We are very integrated in the developments that are going on in the College of Policing, such as the development of ethics and good practice so that we can take good practice, and indeed give them our good practice where we are specialists. I also sit on the board of the police ICT company. Again, we are collaborating in developing the requirements for both the national systems that we use and any local systems that we can develop together. I am very closely involved in the APCC, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. At the institutional level, we also work together to learn from each other.

Q133 Martin Vickers: The VAT issue seems to be something of an anomaly. Have you had discussions with the Treasury about that?

Millie Banerjee: Endless, endless, endless. Six years ago when I arrived, I took it on as a personal project and failed. The issue is that we are set up as an NDPB, but an NDPB that is not funded through public funds. For instance, the NHS gets VAT off, even though it is effectively an NDPB, because it is funded through public funds. Because we are funded through private funds, we are not able to reclaim VAT, and that is a real issue for us. When we look at collaboration, you can imagine that we need to have a 20% variance before it is even worth talking. Very few collaboration projects will give you a 25% improvement—none, actually. We have tried to procure through Network Rail, but none of those ruses works because the Treasury comes after us and says, “You’ve got to pay VAT.”

Q134 Sarah Champion: I am glad that the witnesses heard the previous session because I would like to go back to the topic of vulnerable children and young people. Ms Banerjee, Baroness Kramer was open to the idea of gathering statistics, but she put it in your camp. What do you think about gathering data?

Millie Banerjee: Let me talk about the vulnerable community overall. We have always been very conscious of suicides on our network. I do not know if your briefers told you, but we have over 200 suicides a year, which is unbelievable. Every morning when I read the report, there are two or three people, and more attempted suicides.

When we started looking into this in some depth about two years ago, we realised that we needed to engage with the wider community in order to deal with prevention and with vulnerable people. We have invested of our own accord—our own money, as it were—to set up a very senior person responsible for the whole project on vulnerable people. On the suicide front, we have engaged with the RCN, which does triaging for us. We have engaged with local mental health institutions, because suicides have hotspots; people travel hundreds of miles to throw themselves in front of a train. It is unbelievably tragic. When we prevent somebody from committing suicide, it is not within our power to dispose of them other than to put them in custody, which is possibly the worst thing you can do with that person. We have this whole project set up, which we have funded, through RCN, and we are now rolling it out through communities. We started in London and we have now moved to Birmingham and so on.

We have collected data; we have enormous amounts of data on suicides now. I cannot answer on whether we can set a target or not. We have thought about it, but what sort of target would we set? We can set a target on prevention because we know the numbers. Every night we know how many people tried to commit suicide and we hauled them back. We even know if they are second “offenders”—if they are trying a second time on the railway. We could think about that but, of course, the solutions are not in our hands; they are in the hands of people who should be safeguarding adults. Paul might talk a little bit about safeguarding adults, and then children.

Q135 Sarah Champion: I was specifically talking about vulnerable children. They may well be running away from home or running away from abuse, or they may be being trafficked. Some of them may commit suicide. Does your data incorporate them as well?

Millie Banerjee: We do not have comprehensive data on vulnerable children yet.

Paul Crowther: If we take the subject of vulnerable children in totality, it presents itself in many different ways, one of which is runaways, but there are many others, as you would imagine. We have some very comprehensive work looking at young people involved in trespass and vandalism, for example, who put themselves at significant risk. We have a whole regime that kicks in every school holiday session to try to educate people and divert them from that sort of activity.

We sometimes get 30 or more missing person reports a day referred to us from other police forces. A proportion of those are children and young people. Our categorisation process, which determines how we react, takes into account their vulnerability, whether by virtue of mental health, age or other

factors. We often end up tracking those individuals by doing complex mobile phone triangulation to locate them.

In terms of the data, we are keen not to replicate processes that are in place locally. Children always come from somewhere and responsibility for dealing with their welfare rests with the local authority, and there are very effective local arrangements in place with the local police force. What we don't do is set up our own child services teams. We make sure we have very effective means to refer those cases back to local authorities.

Q136 Sarah Champion: Do you feel that those communication channels and partnerships are in place with other local authorities, or do you ever hit problems when you are trying to send a child back?

Paul Crowther: On the whole they are very good. Occasionally, when we take a child or young person into custody who is detained in a borough other than where they reside, we find there can be challenges around getting the local social services where they have been detained to take them on. There is a sort of push-me, pull-you situation. We have largely overcome that and have arrangements in place that allow us to provide appropriate adults in those sorts of cases. I am satisfied that broadly the arrangements are in place. We can always improve, and we are currently going through a process of looking at how we engage with child safeguarding boards across the country, of which there are many. You can imagine as a national force how challenging it is for us to engage with them. We are currently going through a review to look at how we engage with those boards to make sure that we are absolutely doing the best that we can.

Millie Banerjee: We have also just revamped our training programme for our own staff specifically for that.

Q137 Sarah Champion: Specifically on child protection?

Millie Banerjee: Yes.

Q138 Sarah Champion: I was quite surprised that, as an authority, you did not set targets around child protection for the BTP.

Millie Banerjee: No, we do not have any targets on that.

Q139 Sarah Champion: Is that something you could look into? It seems a bit of an anomaly.

Millie Banerjee: I could think about that.

Q140 Chair: You don't sound very enthusiastic. Why is that?

Millie Banerjee: I am just trying, on the hoof, to think what the targets would be. As Paul says, our issue is that the children have come from a force, and there will be targets for that force. What would be our targets? Would we have a different target, take on their target or be part of their target? They have come from somewhere. Their home county is where they have targets.

Q141 Sarah Champion: But while they are in your care you have responsibility—

Millie Banerjee: We could certainly think about how we should deal with them in custody and care. One of the things that we have been thinking about is how we communicate with their local forces, as Mr Crowther said, to send them back to where they will be long term. These are very often long-term issues.

Q142 Chair: Do you see this as an issue for you, at least in part, or do you see it as really somebody else's responsibility?

Paul Crowther: We are a very important part of a much broader picture. I absolutely take the comments on board. What I will do is go away and look at how we can make the data more visible. The data is undoubtedly there. For example, we track to make sure that we are compliant with the right type of referral every time a child comes into contact with our officers. We do that through our performance regimes. Have we got a target around it? No, we haven't, for the reasons Millie outlined, but I think we can take that away and look at it, and certainly make sure that we provide assurance to the authority, as the governing body, that we have all those measures in place.

Q143 Sarah Champion: What is your process when you get a call from whichever train company saying, "We've got a child. We think there is an issue here. Can you meet us at the station?" What is your process from that point on?

Paul Crowther: We would deploy officers to the incident, and they would deal with what is before them. If the child needed to be taken into care or protective custody, that is what we would do. Very quickly we would engage with the local authority, local child services and the local force to establish the most appropriate means to deal with that person, assuming they had not committed an offence. Another process would kick in if that were the case. We aim very quickly to pass the individual and the ongoing care to the people best equipped to deal with it, which are child services and the local authority. Then we would follow up with all the reports and conclusions.

I can give you one example to provide you with a little bit of reassurance that we have quite a comprehensive package of measures. We had a very recent fatality involving a child. We did extensive work to identify her peer group—I have to be very careful not to identify a particular case—and that led to us doing extensive work with a school, involving about 25 young females of the same age group and engaging with the local authorities and care services to ensure that there was preventative care going on so that we did not get any contagion, which is often a symptom of a suicide, and that those people were protected. There is an enormous amount of work that goes on behind this. Have we got any targets that you can hold us to account on? Probably not at this moment, but I am certainly willing, with the authority, to go away and look at that.

Q144 Chair: Do you have the facilities to look after vulnerable children at railway stations?

Paul Crowther: Not at railway stations. We would take them to local authority facilities or to our own police stations while we seek out that care. We would very quickly reach across into local services that were available to the local force.

Q145 Chair: You are going to conduct a pilot scheme at Euston station, aren't you?

Paul Crowther: There is a pilot being run at Euston station with the Railway Children charity. Euston station has for many years been a magnet for runaways, as are many central London stations. That pilot is ongoing and has enabled us to bring the voluntary sector together with the public sector and our officers to deal with that. We have done a lot of work together. We have just donated £10,000—from an award that we were given around theft of personal property—to the Railway Children charity to help to develop that. There is a lot of work going on around this particular area.

Q146 Sarah Champion: We have heard very good things about how you are liaising with other charities and trying to make the experience as tolerable for the child as possible, but I want to come back to my original point and challenge you, Ms Banerjee. You obviously have a model of good practice. You are saying there is going to be training in child protection going out, but unless that process is detailed somehow, whether through a care pathway or a target—whatever you want to call

it—I do not know how the authority can make sure that each child is having that good experience and can also be accountable—

Millie Banerjee: Let the record show that I give you my assurance that I will take it away and look at it.

Q147 Chair: You have spoken a lot about London. Is this just a London problem or does it exist in other cities—Manchester, Liverpool and other places?

Paul Crowther: No; it is across the country.

Millie Banerjee: It is a hub problem. It is big hubs. People congregate—suicides and vulnerable children—either in big hubs or in disused bits of the railway—sheds.

Q148 Chair: It is a city problem—for London and other cities.

Millie Banerjee: Some of the railway sheds are easy to access. Children congregate there to play. There are health and safety issues, and they get into trouble or make fires. There are hotspots.

Q149 Mr Sanders: My question is related to that. Most police forces do an awful lot of work with schools. Does the British Transport Police go into schools to warn children about the dangers of the railway where there might be warehouses or sidings?

Paul Crowther: Yes. It is part of our analysis, as we would look at any other crime or disorder issue. We target schools where there is either a history of behaviours from that school, or we think there is most risk.

Millie Banerjee: Some of it is when schools are near level crossings, which are particularly dangerous things for children to run across.

Mr Sanders: We are well aware of that from one of our inquiries, which was very tragic.

Q150 Chair: From the statistics we received it seems that you have a detection rate of 7% for property theft. That sounds incredibly low. Can you tell us why that figure is so low?

Paul Crowther: Yes. I was listening with interest from behind as that discussion was taking place. First of all, theft of personal property displays itself in a number of ways. Quite a high proportion of it is what you would call traditional pickpocketing on the London underground. In fact, something like 60% of the offences take place in that sort of environment. Another form of theft of personal property is handbag theft, where people steal things from cafes and bars. There is another particular breed of travelling railway criminal that specialises in stealing luggage from trains. The common theme in the majority of those offences is that, first of all, they are carried out by stealth, as you might imagine. In the vast majority of cases the victim is unaware that the crime has happened until they get to their destination and seek to take out their phone to make a call or take out their wallet or purse.

There are some challenges in the way that you record crime. If someone gets on a train at St Pancras and travels to Leeds, and somewhere on that journey they have their purse or luggage stolen, do you record it at the end destination or at the beginning? That makes it very hard to analyse. If you look particularly at the London underground, where there are 1.1 billion passenger journeys a year, and the congested nature of it, the vast majority of these offences occur inside the train when people are very crowded together. You can begin to see that there is not an awful lot of evidence to go on. First of all, we do not know where the crime was committed. Often the property is not recovered, so you can't narrow it down. Nobody knows it has even happened until some time afterwards; it might be

an hour afterwards. Although there is CCTV in a number of carriages, when you are talking about a very packed train, it is incredibly difficult to identify offenders. There are enormous challenges in dealing with this type of offence.

That said, many years ago when I was a lot younger and a lot more athletic, I used to be on the pickpocket squad and I know very well how this works. There are a group of organised criminals in the main who are involved in it. There are some opportunists, but it is an organised criminal network. We have a number of extensive long-term operations in place to look at those organised criminal groups, and to disrupt and dismantle them. The fact is that there is a high volume of crime in a very densely populated area. Even with our 55,000 CCTV cameras it is incredibly difficult to pick out the perpetrators. We have to resort to targeting and intelligence-led operations. BTP has been leading a pan-London operation, called Operation Magnum, which will be extended to a national operation. It has led to the significant reductions in crime that you have seen.

The primary object that is subject to these thefts in the majority of cases is the mobile phone. I have been involved in some work with the Home Office to look at ways to reduce the theft of mobile phones nationally. In the last crime survey, the only rising crime in the UK was theft of personal property, and 60% of that was mobile phones. This is a national phenomenon and BTP has been leading the way in terms of developing disruption and reduction tactics.

I would like it to be more than 7%. It is an improving picture, but the characteristics I have described probably put some context around why it is what it is.

Q151 Chair: Do you expect that figure of 7% to increase? You talk as if it won't change.

Paul Crowther: I would like it to increase. We are more likely to reduce crime by dealing with the organised criminals. When we catch these people they very rarely admit more than one offence, and you can convict them for only that offence. Despite providing impact statements to the court, the punishment is often not that severe, so there is a bit of a revolving door process, with people coming back.

I think we can reduce crime further by educating people more about how they pull out their mobile phone the minute they arrive at a tube station, for example. I would like to see us increase the detection rate, and I am sure we will, but my focus is primarily on reduction and trying to scoop up the offenders as part of the reduction strategy.

Q152 Chair: Do you get co-operation from the railway authorities, the stations and the train operating companies?

Paul Crowther: Yes. We get a far greater degree of co-operation now than we used to. There used to be a sense among some of the railway operators that if they made announcements telling people to look after their property, it somehow caused fear and alarm. I think we have overcome that issue, and there are now lots of announcements. You might have heard them yourself on the tube. There are lots of posters and there is preventive advice that we are able to give out to people.

Q153 Chair: If you had a conflict, which I am sure must happen, between looking at security issues—perhaps thinking that a journey should be slowed down or a start delayed because you are concerned about security—compared with the challenge of not making the train late, how do you deal with that?

Paul Crowther: We have established over many years a very mature relationship with the operators. I think they respect and understand that, if we ask for something to be done in the interests of security or preventing crime, we have taken into account the impact that it has. If we ask them to do it, there is a reason why we are asking them to do it. That has been built up over many years of relationships. It has been developed through all the terrorism threats through the '80s and '90s, and indeed on a day-to-day basis when we analyse bomb threats. We now very rarely recommend to the train operators that they should close if we get a bomb threat. On the rare occasions that we do, they take it very seriously because they know that we apply a lot of thought

and risk management to that decision before we make it. I think that is what comes from the strength of a specialised transport policing organisation that demonstrates on a day-to-day basis that it understands the context and is able to balance the public interest, which must always prevail, against the impact of our actions on the industry.

Q154 Chair: Are you satisfied that you have full co-operation on security issues?

Paul Crowther: Yes.

Q155 Chair: There is no area for improvement.

Paul Crowther: The industry, if I might say, not only values the security of its passengers, but is, of course, made up of very commercially-minded people. If the system is shut down for days because there has been a terrorist incident, it has a knock-on impact on their business. They see it in the round and they are willing to take advice and listen to us. They know that we take their views into account, notwithstanding that sometimes we recommend things that they would prefer not to do.

Q156 Chair: You do not police all the railway, do you? It is only a part of it. Would you like to police the whole railway?

Paul Crowther: There are one or two areas—the Tyne and Wear metro and the Manchester metro. For me, the importance is where there is an interface between the light rail system and the heavy rail system. On the Tyne and Wear metro, for example, there are six stations where there is an interface, and we provide the primary policing at that location. In Manchester, a number of the light transit systems come into Manchester Piccadilly and Victoria stations and we provide the primary response there.

If you ask for my personal view, I think transport policing is a specialist area and there are great advantages in a whole-system approach to policing, such that decisions made in one part of the network don't adversely impact unnecessarily on another part of the network.

Q157 Chair: Should you be involved in airports?

Paul Crowther: I think there are transferrable skills for managing risk in the railway and managing risk in any transport network. I often look at extensive road closures when there has been a fatal road traffic collision and wonder how our approach might be applied in those sorts of circumstances. There is definitely scope. It is for others than me to decide whether that is the right thing, but we would be very willing to look at it.

Q158 Chair: Ms Banerjee, could you give us any examples of how your authority has changed the nature of British Transport policing?

Millie Banerjee: Indeed. Can I just go back to the detection rate?

Chair: Yes, but I would like you first to give me any examples of how the work of your authority has changed what the British Transport Police have done.

Millie Banerjee: We have taken a very strong view in developing our strategy consistently with the industry. We completely revamped our strategy, starting two years ago. The authority took the lead on that.

Q159 Chair: Is there an example of something that has changed?

Millie Banerjee: Coming out of the strategy, the big thing that changed was the targets. One of the targets we set was delay minutes. When passengers are delayed, it means real discomfort for them

and real money for the rail industry. We voluntarily set ourselves a target. The authority sets targets—

Q160 Chair: Does that mean you wanted fewer delays?

Millie Banerjee: Absolutely.

Q161 Chair: Wouldn't it concern you that that might conflict with security needs?

Millie Banerjee: No, it does not. What we explained to the industry was that this is a public police force; it is not G4S. We will work with them on what they think is important, but at the end of the day, this police force has its own accountability and responsibilities as a public police force, and they understand that. Together, we set the delay minutes, and because we set them, they understand what we have to do to manage the delay minutes. Sometimes the delay minutes are longer than they would like them to be, but it is because the police have taken a particular decision to help the security and comfort level of passengers. That is a big thing that the authority did that changed things.

The authority initially led the work on suicides. That has now come into effect. The authority encouraged the way we set budgets. That has changed completely because we now work very closely with the industry on how and when the budgets are set. We also defined our strategic time span, which is now the same as that of the industry. Our strategic time span is the same as CP5. We found before that our strategic time span was driven by the PSBR, which was not their strategic time span. When we came up with our funding requirements, it did not meet that.

Q162 Chair: Tell me what that means.

Millie Banerjee: It means that we can set a strategy for five years and we can give them a forward look at the nature of the funding that they would have to provide for us. Year to year we refine that, but we have given them a commitment on how that funding will pan out in terms of the trajectory. They can then build it into their budgets so that they are not surprised when we come and make individual requirements. They still have discussion and argument with us, but that is inevitable with the rail industry. They now know what we have set up.

We have also given them a five-year forecast on the way the organisation will be structured. Therefore, they know how we will deal with them at a local level and how they will deal with us. Coming out of the strategy we now have individual local initiatives; for the first time, this year we set the targets at the local level. The authority said to the force, "We do not want national targets which are then cascaded down; we actually want local targets to be arrived at on a local level, and then added together as a national target and discussed." The industry likes that because it can then reflect, for example, on whether Leeds station wants a particular kind of policing that is different from Birmingham station. We have given them that commitment and that's what we have changed as an authority.

We have also developed a passenger confidence measure. We have told them that we will improve passenger confidence by 10% in the time frame of CP5, using data from the surveys. We are now looking at how we would actually measure that with them. We have given them the commitment that we will do our bit to improve passenger confidence, which of course makes a difference to them in terms of more passengers, more confidence and more people travelling on the railway.

Overall, of course, we have implemented a very significant stakeholder relationship programme. I heard you question Baroness Kramer about accountability. Believe you me, my funders know exactly who is accountable to them, and my passenger groups know exactly who is accountable. The sort of scrutiny we get is much more than any police and crime panel ever gives. We meet them every six months on a face-to-face basis and on an individual TOC basis. We meet Network Rail and London

Underground and know exactly what their issues are. That is a new programme that we have launched in the last two to three years.

Q163 Jim Fitzpatrick: I want to go back to the question Mr Sanders asked earlier about PCSOs and the nature of the force. Chief constable, do you have any equipment issues? Do you have armed officers or tasered officers? Is the number of officers you have trained in different disciplines similar proportionately to territorial forces? Do you get enough funding for the equipment that your people need to be safe and to protect the public?

Paul Crowther: We would, of course, always like more funding. We have about 350 police community support officers.

Q164 Jim Fitzpatrick: What is the total establishment?

Paul Crowther: The total establishment is 2,900 police officers and 350 PCSOs. We have a number of special constables. Crucially, what makes us different from elsewhere is that we accredit security or other patrolling personnel employed by the railway companies with limited powers. I am able to accredit them under the police format. We have this wider police family that enables us to provide greater coverage on the network. In terms of our structures, we have all the things that you identified. Our firearms officers are primarily focused in London on the main hubs. We have a number of officers equipped with tasers across the country and we utilise the full range of police activities.

In terms of describing that coverage, and picking up on the point that the chairman of the authority just made, the difference the strategy has made is in setting out to the industry what it can expect financially and in terms of service delivery. We in turn have restructured how we are configured in the organisation. We have gone from seven to three geographic areas. As a result, we are able to save substantial amounts of money which, with the industry's support, we invested in 208 additional police officers. We are deploying them to ensure that we can deliver a 20% reduction in crime, a 20% reduction in disruption caused by crime, and a 10% increase in passenger confidence by 2019.

All this is very well integrated and supported by the staff the train operators deploy, who are jointly briefed by us. We share intelligence with them. Some of them are on our radio networks so that we make maximum use of all the resources that are available to tackle crime and disorder on the network.

Q165 Chair: Ms Banerjee, you kept talking about the industry, and I started to feel that there wasn't any public involved in this. You mentioned Passenger Focus earlier. How often are you dealing with requests that come from Passenger Focus rather than from the train operating companies?

Millie Banerjee: Regularly, and at the local level particularly, Passenger Focus representatives attend all our discussions with industry. They have absolutely the same status at that level, so they are always involved. At the board level, we have regular meetings with Passenger Focus. Currently I do not have anybody from Passenger Focus on the authority. We used to, but they retired, and we do not have anybody at the moment. We have some vacancies.

Q166 Chair: Is that a place for them?

Millie Banerjee: No, there is not a place for them.

Q167 Chair: Not a reserved place?

Millie Banerjee: No, there is no reserved place for them. We don't have reserved places for anybody as such. The Act says that we should get people who have experience and knowledge of industry, passengers and rail staff.

Q168 Chair: Is somebody else in the place that has been vacated by a Passenger Focus representative or is there a vacancy?

Millie Banerjee: We still have vacancies anyway.

Q169 Chair: But in that particular place? Has that been filled by someone else?

Millie Banerjee: No; they weren't filled by other people the last time round. It is a public appointment.

Q170 Chair: Who is there representing passengers?

Millie Banerjee: We have four people representing passenger interests.

Q171 Chair: Out of how many?

Millie Banerjee: We have 12 people on the authority now, and we have four people who carry the responsibility of bringing passenger issues to the authority. We have five people who come from the industry; they have responsibility for bringing industry issues. We have one person who brings staff issues. That is how it is constituted, and we have a deputy chairman and a chairman who are independent.

Q172 Chair: Is that the constitution or how you want to do it?

Millie Banerjee: Yes; that is the constitution. All our people are selected and appointed through a competitive process—appointed by the Secretary of State. There are no reserved places.

Chair, could I make one point about detection, because it has come up a number of times? It is the point about mobile phones, which are involved in a very significant proportion of the crimes. We are very aware that in order to get insurance payments when you have lost your mobile phone, you have to report it to a police force. We get reports of mobile phones that have been stolen because without a crime number from us, if they think they have lost it or that it has been stolen on the railway, individual citizens cannot claim insurance. I just put that in as context. The detection rate is a proportion of the numbers that are reported and detected. I am not making any aspersions, but it is quite important to bear in mind that the insurance companies don't pay up without a reference number.

Chair: I think we'll conclude on that point. Thank you both very much.