



Transport Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 3266 Email: transcom@parliament.uk

The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

14 December 2022

Dear Mark,

In July 2022, prior to my recent election as Chair, the Transport Committee held a session focusing on the work of the British Transport Police. The session allowed the Committee to gain an insight into the incredibly valuable work the British Transport Police do in keeping both passengers and staff safe throughout the rail network.

During the session, Chief Constable Lucy D'Orsi spoke about some of the issues facing the force. The Committee also received a letter from the Chief Constable further detailing these issues and setting out ideas for how these could be alleviated. I have appended the Chief Constable's letter to this letter.

Members of the Committee were keen to highlight some of these issues, which I have detailed below, and seek your views and some further information about how your Department supports the force.

Recruitment and retention

We were told by the Chief Constable that the force had at that time a 10% total vacancy gap and a 19% vacancy gap for detectives.¹ The Chief Constable told us that one of the primary barriers to recruitment was the lack of travel concessions for BTP officers. She told us that the force is competing with other Home Office forces, such as the Metropolitan Police Service, for new recruits and these forces are able to offer travel concessions, putting BTP at significant disadvantage. This is especially relevant at present with the rising cost of living, and it seems illogical that the personnel charged with protecting the network are not afforded concessions to use it. The Chief Constable also stated that being able to offer travel concessions would allow the force to not only recruit new officers but help retain experienced officers, "many of whom are leaving for better remunerated roles across policing."²

The Chief Constable told us that BTP was also having trouble advertising its vacancies. She stated:

¹ Q83, Q78

² [Letter from BTP Chief Constable to TSC Chair](#), 13 September 2022, p 3.



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We are not part of the Home Office 20,000 uplift for policing. If you click, “I want to be a police officer,” and you go online, BTP is not an option because it is a national recruitment campaign for Home Office forces. I am competing against that. You will have seen that the Met offered a £5,000 onboarding, so I am competing against that.³

In her letter, the Chief Constable details the impact of the Home Office forces’ “rival [recruitment] campaign”.⁴ She states:

- Student officer applications are down to 90 per week from 185 in 2021. For PCSOs this is now 17 per week, down from 32 per week last year.
- Since 2018, the average turnover rate for police officers with less than two years’ service was 8%. Since 2021 this rate has increased to 12%.
- The estimated training and uniform cost for BTP police officer and PCSO leavers with less than two years’ service during 2021/22 was £1.1m.⁵

1. What is the Department currently doing to assist the British Transport Police in achieving its recruitment goals?

- **Does the Department plan to use the creation of Great British Railways to introduce concessionary travel for BTP officers?**
- **Is the Department currently working with train operators to establish a deal for travel concessions for BTP officers?**

A Safe and Secure Railway

During our evidence session, the Chief Constable told us that only one train operator (Great Western Railway) had achieved full Safeguarding on Rail Scheme (SRS) accreditation, despite the scheme having launched in late 2017.⁶ In her letter, she stated that, as of September 2022, four operators out of 28, had now achieved full accreditation.⁷ She noted that the responsibilities and requirements of train operators to be actively working towards full accreditation are mentioned in most operators’ contracts but that these tend to be “vague”, monitoring is “minimal” and there is currently “no consequence (financial or otherwise) for operators who do not actively work towards meeting these requirements.”⁸ The BTP has since updated us on this issue, and as of December 2022, we understand that all operators are currently working towards accreditation in some capacity.

In her letter, the Chief Constable described the current approach to the Secure Stations Scheme (SSS) as “inconsistent, poorly targeted, and ineffective” mainly due

³ Q80

⁴ [Letter from BTP Chief Constable to TSC Chair](#), p 2.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Q37

⁷ [Letter from BTP Chief Constable to TSC Chair](#), p 4.

⁸ Ibid



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to inconsistency in operators' contracts, with some being obligated to achieve accreditation at all stations and others having no accreditation requirements.⁹ She added that she believes some stations are selected due to having the least amount of work required to achieve accreditation rather than selected "on an evidence-based assessment of the extent to which each station presents threat, risk and harm."¹⁰ As of September 2022, only 201 of BTP's list of 400 high-risk stations had achieved SSS accreditation.¹¹

2. What is the Department currently doing to incentivise train operators to achieve Safeguarding on Rail Scheme accreditation?

- **Does the Department monitor train operators to ensure they are fulfilling their contractual obligations to achieve SRS accreditation?**

3. What is the Department currently doing to ensure the highest risk stations achieve Secure Stations Scheme accreditation as quickly as possible?

- **Does the Department plan to standardise the contractual obligations of train operators to ensure that all high-risk stations reach full SSS accreditation?**

Suicide Prevention Plan

In her letter, the Chief Constable stated that although currently there is a contractual requirement for each operator to develop a Suicide Prevention Plan, the industry "lacks a centrally-owned set of minimum standards for suicide prevention on the network."¹²

4. Is the Department currently working with train operators to develop a standardised, industry-wide Suicide Prevention Plan?

CCTV access

The Chief Constable told us that inconsistent CCTV access across the rail network is one of the key areas BTP is looking at for future development, particularly when examining potential areas for improvement with the creation of Great British Railways.¹³ BTP, as of September 2022, only have connection to approximately 38% of all stations.¹⁴ In her letter she states that fragmented CCTV access leads to:

- Decisions being made based on incomplete information and intelligence assessments;
- Delayed investigations;

⁹ [Letter from BTP Chief Constable to TSC Chair](#), p 4.

¹⁰ [Letter from BTP Chief Constable to TSC Chair](#), p 5.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ Q2

¹⁴ [Letter from BTP Chief Constable to TSC Chair](#), p 6.



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- An increased cost to industry through the use of multiple systems, combined with inconsistent investment;
- Unequal service. For example, a woman at a rural station late at night does not have the same protection as exists in a large London station.¹⁵

5. Does the Department plan to use the creation of Great British Railways to reassess BTP's CCTV access across the rail network?

The Committee is keen to understand more about how you and your Department are able to, and plan to, support the work of the British Transport Police in the vital task of keeping our rail network safe for those who travel and work on it, and we look forward to receiving your responses to these questions.

Many thanks,

Iain Stewart MP

Chair of the Transport Select Committee

¹⁵ Ibid