



ASLEF's response to the Integration of the British Transport Police in Scotland into Police Scotland Consultation – August 2016

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 20,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems. ASLEF has just under 1,800 members in Scotland.
2. ASLEF continues to have major concerns over the integration of the British Transport Police in Scotland into Police Scotland. The railway is a unique environment. Due to its very nature, crimes are not localised and can take place over many regions. Additionally, the matters police have to deal with such as suicides and trespass onto track are specific to the railway and therefore require expertise and knowledge perhaps not shared by officers in other forces.
3. ASLEF believes the transport network in Scotland would have remained safer under the supervision of the BTP because of its unique characteristics. If this is recognised within the rest of the United Kingdom, the union fails to see why it should be different in Scotland. This matter should not become a political football. Ensuring the safety of those traveling within Scotland must be the primary concern.
4. Apart from the general concerns ASLEF has around these changes, our members have specific concerns around how suicides are dealt with. This is unfortunately one of the most common interactions that trains drivers have with police authorities. The British Transport Police have developed,

alongside unions and operators, specific procedures to help reduce the trauma caused for drivers in these situations and to help reduce disruption to the services. For example, the creation of the BTP Fatality Hotline. This is a voluntary contact for drivers in the immediate aftermath of a fatality which can take the necessary information from the relevant staff. The hope is that as well as enabling the restoration of services to happen quicker, it may also cut down on the bureaucratic procedures that the driver will have to go through. ASLEF is concerned that without a specialist transport police, there is a danger that initiatives like this may not be developed.

5. Additionally, the knowledge of law regarding the railway may also be lacking. For example, unlike a road fatality, following a railway suicide, the driver does not need to automatically give a breath test (unless there is reason to suspect he/she has been drinking). The driver also does not need to be arrested and the scene does not have to be treated as a crime scene. ASLEF appreciates that the plan is to create a specialist railway policing function, however by being part of the general police force in Scotland, it is difficult for the function to have quite the specific knowledge and skills set of a dedicated railway police force.
6. During these times of heightened security concerns, ASLEF also has concerns over the loss of specialism accumulated by BTP over potential terrorist incidents. Most of the training to deal with terrorist incidents happens in London as that is where the expertise is. It is essential that any changes to transport policing do not hinder this essential training.
7. As the BTP have noted, "BTP is able to monetarise the value that is provided to the railway industry through both the reduction of crime and also the unique risk-based approach to incident management. For example, when dealing with bomb threats and unattended items, BTP has dealt with over 10,000 threats to railway network over last ten years and not once recommended closure. Analysis carried out between April 2012 and March 2013 showed that other police forces had attended suspect

packages on the railway 13 times and had recommended closure on each occasion (subsequent BTP intervention reversed those decisions). Analysis of past station closures estimate an impact of around 33,320 delay minutes (£931k) for each Central London closure. A sample of 1,000 incidents shows that other police forces also recommended closure of stations during 70% of the suspect package incidents when they attended before BTP, potentially creating expensive and highly inconvenient disruption to passengers. Other examples of how the transport policing ethos is highly effective in keeping the railway running are fatality incidents where there are typically 50% more delay minutes on average when BTP are not the first responders.” This demonstrates the benefits of an experience and dedicated transport police force. Everything must be done to ensure that these benefits continue.

8. As well as terrorism, the government itself has acknowledged the specialist skills that the Force has established in dealing with travelling football supporters.
9. In addition, our network is a national network. Whilst efforts to ensure cross border co-operation may well be made, once again it will be less efficient than simply having a single national police force for the railway.
10. Therefore whilst ASLEF fundamentally disagrees with the merging BTP with Police Scotland, if this is to happen, the railway function in Transport Scotland must be as distinct and specialist as possible. The SPA must frequently engage with stakeholders including the railway unions who represent the vast majority of workers on the network.
11. As a trade union, we also call on the transfer of staff to be done in co-ordination with relevant staff associations and for support staff, trade unions. This process must not have any detrimental effect on the workforce.

12. It is essential that existing knowledge and practices which have been created through co-operation with the rail unions and other stakeholders are maintained. The new merger must not lead to a blank sheet rewrite of current processes and procedures. Whilst ASLEF is always happy to assist in improving how the railway is policed, we hope this will be through evolution, not revolution.

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