

# PUBLICSERVANT

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ABC THE PUBLICATION FOR TODAY'S PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERS

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Civil service industrial relations are in a shambles – it's time to start afresh, says Jonathan Baume. Meanwhile Management Clinic examines the efficacy of capability reviews

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British Transport Police is recovering from a 'crumbling infrastructure' to meet the sternest of tests with distinction. Should it run the risk of battling for funds with private sector paymasters or find a state solution? DCC Andy Trotter talks straight to Lynda King Taylor about getting policing on the right lines



TROTTER: sees private profit and public safety as uneasy bedfellows

## Policing on the right lines

Andy Trotter appreciates that no man leaps into deep water without knowing how to swim. He is buoyed by hard won experience from long battles over funding, heated debate about the quality and direction of policing, and lessons absorbed from countless major incidents in 36 years with the Metropolitan police, Kent constabulary and, since 2004, as deputy chief constable of British Transport Police (BTP).

Since Her Majesty's Inspectorate identified a "crumbling infrastructure" in the railways force, the arrival of a new Police Authority with a three-year strategic plan, funding up from £100m to £170m a year, and recognition of rising performance levels have marked a period of exceptional expansion. Trotter believes it is an investment that has paid off "particularly in performance where BTP has not only met its targets over the past two years but exceeded them in many areas".

From Truro to Inverness, 2,800 officers patrol a formidable beat to secure communities and railways as diverse as the Croydon Tramlink and the West Coast main line, and all at the mercy of the government's user pays principle. The train companies pay for BTP. This, he says, "means we are in an antagonistic relationship with train operators at strategic level over funding, whereas these people should be our partners and not just BTP paymasters".

At another level, he says it is a "robust, vibrant and productive relationship, because people at the middle and line management want to enforce all the work we do". He appreciates that train operators can find themselves facing mid-franchise cost increases and he stirs a solution saying that "funds should be deducted at source from the considerable public subsidies that are paid into the rail industry".

He offers parallels where the British Airports Authority also pays for policing. However, Trotter believes it causes tensions as you have a commercial body that again wants to minimise costs. "We have the uneasy bedfellows of private profit and public safety," he says. "I don't think that is the recipe for correct funding or management of any police force".

He looks to Europe where railways policing "is a matter for the state, and in my opinion that should be the way forward for BTP. We are more than content to be held to account for our performance by the operators, but the big headache is the constant battle over budgets and the distraction that can divert us from delivering an effective police force into a budget row".

Another solution would be to incorporate BTP into a national service. He remains firmly at odds with the previous Home Secretary Charles Clarke on his view of reform. "I do not agree with tinkering and looking at regional forces," says Trotter. "That had none of the benefits of a national police service or the advantages of local policing, in tune with communities. Putting four under-funded forces together does not give you a well-funded larger force."

"The argument for BTP is that we have no boundaries. We can provide an end-to-end exclusive service to the rail and underground communities."

Trotter is seen as serious and social, a copper's cop, a keen rugby player who does not duck a head-on challenge. "We will never have sufficient officers to respond to every call," he says, "and we need the assistance of other forces. What we do provide is the expertise to deal with specialist railway matters and in particular fatalities, bomb threats, suspicious packages – where we balance the risk against the need to keep the trains moving."

He is clear on the benefits of increased investment and planning when it came to London's 7 July atrocities. The first wave "blue light" responses

were "excellent". However, as the official reports have found, the handling of people who suffered from shock and minor injuries should be improved.

Criticism of communications, he insists, was misleading. "The command structure does not require frontline people to talk with one another," he says. "People should be talking up and down their command structure. There are few occasions when you want interoperability between frontline firefighters, ambulance crews and police officers. We had integrated communication and command from top to bottom."

The above-ground Airwave radio worked well, and BTP's underground radio is designed to work in all but the deepest of tunnels. While a temporary pipe for extra radio connection was a great benefit, the O2 Connect system using Airwave throughout the underground will be put in place by Transport for London within two years.

Screening technology is being tested, but airport-style security will not work on the railways. "Who's going to turn up two hours early to catch the train to Surbiton?" he asks. "If you were to introduce it at Oxford Circus there would be queues back to Bond Street. One of the strengths of our BTP response has been to ensure that people continue about their business and terrorists will not bring it to a halt."

Andy Trotter is proud of the "exceptional talent" at BTP. He shows a rugby player's nature and it reflects something of the world's best side, the All Blacks. There's just one star out there – that's the team.

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