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Dear Millie

British Transport Police: 2012/13 Budgets and draft Policing Plan

Thank you for your letter, dated 23 December 2011, providing Passenger Focus with an opportunity to comment on BTP's Policing Plan for the next financial year (2012/13). It seems entirely sensible for BTP to continue with its two tier approach of having national targets with locally developed plans for each BTP area, as there will always be local issues that require attention, but do not fit in with national priorities.

Research, commissioned by Passenger Focus, in October 2009 revealed that passengers consider personal security across the rail network to be a relatively high priority for improvement. Out of 30 service attributes, passengers placed personal security on trains and at stations, twelfth and fourteenth respectively¹.

Whilst the general trend, over the last five years, has seen an increase in passenger satisfaction with personal security, the most recent wave of the National Passenger Survey Spring 2011, demonstrates that satisfaction scores for security are still relatively low. When asked about their satisfaction with security on stations only 66% of passengers said that they were satisfied². Despite satisfaction with personal security on trains scoring higher, 76%, this is still below the overall satisfaction score which stands at 84%³.

The National Passenger Survey also tells us that those who travel most frequently, i.e. commuters, are the least satisfied with security on the train (70%) and at the station (61%); particularly those travelling with London and the South East TOCs⁴. The low levels of satisfaction with personal security, both on trains and stations, would therefore

¹ Passenger priorities for improvements in rail services, Passenger Focus, March 2010

² National Passenger Survey Spring 2011, Passenger Focus

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid



suggest that there is still much the industry could do to make passengers feel that their personal security is safeguarded.

Picking out some of the themes referred to in your letter Passenger Focus would offer the following comments:

Improving confidence

Anti-social behaviour

Whilst continuing to address priority crimes such as robbery and assault remains important, previous research by Passenger Focus indicates visible staffing and anti-social behaviour (in particular the problem of dealing with those that are under the influence of drugs/alcohol) as the key issues that rail passengers want addressed. It is therefore encouraging that BTP are looking to increase the number of detections for anti-social behaviour offences in some of its local plans.

Last year Passenger Focus highlighted the fact that, given the economic climate, several train operating companies were looking to reduce front-line staff and that in some cases this meant proposals to reduce booking office opening hours. The economic climate continues to exert such pressures on train operators and it is likely that additional weight will be placed on BTP to provide a more visible presence at stations where the number of staff hours is reduced. Particularly so, after dark, when passenger concerns over personal security are heightened. Proposed efforts to reduce staff sickness, and promote confidence and visibility by increasing the number of hours worked by Special Constables will no doubt go part way to improving the visible presence that passenger's desire.

We are aware through our involvement in the Rail Football Task Force, sponsored by the Rail Safety Standards Board, that whilst high impact crimes of violence, committed by fans travelling on the railway are in decline the number of lower level anti-social behaviour offences is increasing. Regardless of who's committing the offences, be that football fans, groups of youths etc, passengers are clear that it is this type of disorder that concerns them most. It is therefore not only important to detect, but deter as well. Perhaps national efforts can be made to target those groups most likely to be committing the offences in order to get the message across, that particular types of behaviour will not be tolerated on the railway.

Neighbourhood/Response policing

In light of the passenger response to specific questions on neighbourhood policing in NPS (Spring 2009) Passenger Focus previously suggested that BTP look at raising passengers' awareness of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams. Whilst the vast majority of passengers are aware of BTP as a whole (86%), 70% didn't know whether there was



a BTP neighbourhood policing team at the station where they were given the questionnaire. Increasing the awareness of the neighbourhood teams could be particularly important when addressing some of the concerns that passengers have expressed over their personal security when in the vicinity of the station. When asked why they were concerned for their personal security 38% said it was due to anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood, whilst 21% said it was due to poor lighting in the area around the station. This indicates that looking beyond the station boundary when trying to reassure passengers over personal security concerns should continue to be an important consideration for BTP.

Reducing disruption

Metal Theft

Passenger Focus's research shows that passengers want a punctual and reliable railway. Punctuality is one of the top priorities for improvement and is the main driver of overall passenger satisfaction. Delays through cable theft clearly have an impact on passengers. This impact is further compounded by the way that the industry manages delays – something that is the main cause/driver of dissatisfaction amongst passengers. It is clear that the incidence of cable theft is increasing – a 52% increase from 2009/10. It is equally clear that cable theft is causing an increasing level of delay to passenger services. Network Rail estimates that this costs the industry around £15m a year. There are also consequential costs to consider – i.e. the fact that signalling maintenance staff are often hauled off what they are actually supposed to be doing in order to 'fight fires'.

It is important that cable theft is not just seen as a problem for the railway – copper theft being something that affects society in general. Any solutions, therefore, need to be seen in a similar 'global' sense rather than being rail initiatives. For instance, we are aware of one proposal to implement a more robust licensing regime on scrap metal dealers. BTP therefore has an important role in driving these type of changes forward, as well as detecting offences and catching the perpetrators.

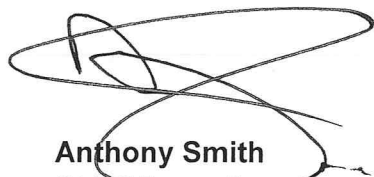
Olympics

Clearly this is a major world event, and with at least 500 000 spectators, 14 000 'Games workers' and 55 000 members of the 'Games family' attending, the transport system is likely to experience serious disruption. Passenger Focus is aware that the Department for Transport and the relevant Police authorities have been working to identify additional risks to the transport network during the Olympics and that they have been attempting to co-ordinate mitigating measures. Whilst ensuring that people will be able to travel to the Games in a safe and secure environment will naturally be the priority any mitigating measures need to be proportionate and have a minimal impact on those who are using the transport system to make their regular journeys.



I trust that the above comments will be helpful; should you have any queries, please feel free to get in touch.

Yours sincerely



Anthony Smith
Chief Executive