



## **British Transport Police Federation Conference 2021**

### **Speech: Nigel Goodband, BTP Federation Chair**

Conference, after a rather long gap, may I welcome you all to Conference in this our 100th anniversary year.

Thank you all for coming. We hope this is just one of the signs, that finally we are getting back to some kind of normality.

A particular welcome to our new Chief Constable Luci D'Orsi, attending her first Federation conference. Ma'am we hope you enjoy your visit and we look forward to hearing from you later today.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for your recognition in the Queens Honours this year resulting in you being awarded a Queens Police Medal. Congratulations.

To all our guests and colleagues, welcome. We hope that you enjoy the conference and our 100th anniversary celebrations.

We certainly live in extraordinary times. Who could have predicted that as we left our last conference in 2019, it would be some 30 months before we could meet again?

Thankfully, we appear to be emerging from the worst of the pandemic and we hope and pray the worst is over and the vaccination programme can offer everyone optimism for the future.

It would be very remiss of me not to take this opportunity to mention the officers and staff of the British Transport Police. Throughout the pandemic, they have:

- continued to report for work,
- continued to keep people safe and
- continued to help the vulnerable and those in need.

It was essential that vital services were kept open and the country was kept moving and without the dedication of BTP officers, this would not have been possible. Thank you.

These same officers continued to work and deal with the public and keep their communities safe, despite being unvaccinated. They worked despite knowing that they could personally contract the virus, but also in the fear that they could take it back home to their loved ones. For that we owe them a massive debt of gratitude.

I would also like to thank our colleagues in the Special Constabulary. 302 officers who clocked up over 100,000 hours of service in 2020, unpaid and often un-thanked.

They stood shoulder to shoulder with regular officers and delivered outstanding service to the public in such difficult circumstances.

Thank you to each and every one of them – we are proud to represent you all.

## **FORWARD**

The theme for this year's conference is FORWARD. We want to look to the future.

The pandemic has been a life changing event, so perhaps it is appropriate to use this time to take a good hard look at ourselves as individuals, as a Force and as a Federation.

Let's see what we can improve upon and what we can do to deliver a better service.

BUT in order to go forward, we do need to look back a little first.

## **COVID-19, THE PANDEMIC, CORONAVIRUS**

Call it what you will - it has been the single biggest event in the lives of every person in the UK and across the globe. How often did we hear the word unprecedented?

In what was a fast-moving situation, it is not surprising that government policy had to change over the course of the pandemic, sometimes on a weekly basis.

As we learned more about COVID, policy and legislation changed. The public did get confused. It's not surprising.

Some policies seemed contradictory with the need to balance controlling the spread of the virus, the economy and basic freedoms. This was understandable, especially to those of us who regularly have to deal with dynamic and changing situations.

Nonetheless, what the government seemed to forget or chose to ignore, was that there was no clear direction given to those tasked with enforcing this surge of "guidance" "rules" or "legislation". Policing was left to flounder and to try and make the best of a bad job.

That is just not good enough!

Minister after Minister went on TV spouting different interpretations of the rules. It is a testament to the common sense and professionalism of police officers that we did not create an unbridgeable gulf with the public.

Looking forward, we would ask the National Police Chief's Council to work with government to make plans to ensure that this does not occur again. They must press the government to do better.

Police officers tasked with enforcing this kind of instant regulations must be given clear guidance. Perhaps most importantly, they must be given the support of politicians.

To be fair, the NPCC did speak up for the troops, but politicians were all too often silent or quick to blame officers for trying to implement their rules.

The position of the BTP was further complicated by devolved powers. There were different rules in different parts of the UK as a result of devolution. This created another layer of confusion.

Surely in a national crisis, there should be a co-ordinated response and not political point scoring between the UK government and the devolved parliaments?

I also cannot remain uncritical of the British media who at times seemed intent on questioning and undermining every decision and adding to the confusion.

I don't seek to censor the press or politicians, but in a time of national emergency, then going forward, it is vital the government and the media make public safety their priority.

Our officers did exactly that.

## **Vaccination**

The debate about who should be vaccinated first is largely over now, but some bitterness remains.

Police officers were at the frontline of trying to control the pandemic; expected to turn up for work every day; interacting with the public not just in normal situations but implementing the disarray of COVID regulations.

The government properly chose to protect the elderly and the vulnerable first. Absolutely right, no question.

However, when the more general roll-out began, we were told that age was more relevant than job. We were told that to try and identify people by job type would just slow down the vaccination programme.

Clearly the government are unaware of warrant cards. The admin assistant working in a GP's surgery got their vaccine almost immediately.

The frontline officers who were spat at had to wait!

The refusal to prioritise all police officers, and the fact that BTP officers in particular were largely excluded from access to unused jabs, was very demoralising for our officers and the impact of that cannot be overstated.

So, the next time you hear a politician spouting about how wonderful the police are, just remember actions speak louder than words.

## **Pay**

Talk about another kick in the teeth! What about pay?

We join the Police Federation of England and Wales in condemning the pay freeze for police officers. The BTP Federation echoes their sentiment that “the government have shown disdain and disrespect for police officers; made all the more galling after their personal efforts and sacrifices during the pandemic”

“As police officers, we do not have the same employment rights; we have restrictions placed upon us unlike the vast majority of other public sector workers.

Rather than recognise this, the Government has taken advantage of it. This is the contempt with which our colleagues are treated by a Government who claims to ‘have our backs’.

The BTP Federation backs the PFEW in its decision to withdraw its support and engagement from the Police Remuneration Review Body, labelling the current police officer pay mechanism as ‘not fit for purpose’

Whether it is vaccinations or a pay rise - “Police officers have given everything. Yet again, the Government has given us nothing.”

## **Safety**

What do we understand by safety?

The dictionary definition of security is ‘freedom from danger and the measures taken to guard against crime or attack’.

The right to feel safe is important to us all, both the public and its servants including police officers.

## **SAFETY MATTERS!**

### **Officer Safety**

Let’s talk about officer safety. Assaults on officers are increasing! More than two BTP officers are assaulted every day. This is a disgrace.

The “Protect the Protectors” campaign finally led in 2018 to much-needed legislation, with increased sentences for assaults on emergency service workers. We sponsored and supported that campaign, BUT we have serious concerns that the courts are NOT using those powers.

Violent assaults on police officers are increasing. There is simply no deterrent to those in society who feel they can spit, punch and kick police officers with impunity. Offenders are walking away with no more than a “slap on the wrist.”

The courts are just not protecting our officers, and this must change.

It is not an occupational hazard or part of the job. Officers deserve to be able to go about their duty, keeping the public safe, without being the victim of an assault. Because, yes, police officers are victims too. They are there to enforce the law and protect the rest of society, they are not there to be used as punch bags.

We are doing our job, the legislation is there.

Now it’s time for the CPS and the courts to do their job! At the moment, they are the weakest link!

The courts are there to protect police officers as well as members of the public and they need to send out a strong message that assaulting a police officer or any emergency service worker is simply NOT acceptable in society.

It’s not too much to ask for, is it?

## **Taser**

We have continually said that Taser is a vital tool in keeping both the public and officers safe. We strongly believe that an increase in the deployment of Taser will reduce assaults. It is disappointing to see others trying to discredit this tool, using data that does not show the full picture.

We welcome the new Chief’s views on Taser and her stance in challenging some of the misinformation being shared about it. We welcome her enabling BTP officers who wish to carry Taser to be trained.

We also welcome her initiative in being the first force in the UK to include Specials in Taser training. This fair and justifiable decision is only because of the representation we provide to BTP’s Specials. Special Constables provide a

crucial service on the frontline, facing the same challenges and dangers as their regular colleagues. Since January of this year, they have been afforded the same protections as their regular colleagues. This is no less than they deserve and we are proud to be the first Federation in England and Wales to represent Special Constables.

## **Police Covenant**

The Home Office are currently considering a Police Covenant to look at important issues like physical protection, health, wellbeing and support for officers and their families. Police officers deserve the best equipment, the best protective kit and the best possible welfare support.

BTP Federation made a submission during the consultation period. We are pleased that the government acknowledges the increase in assaults on police and that they need to look at prosecutions and sentences to provide a real deterrent.

We eagerly await the government's proposals to confirm how they will ensure officer safety is a priority.

You put yourselves in danger to protect others in society.

Your safety matters

## **Welfare**

At past conferences, I have stood before you and rightly demanded more from the Chief and the Authority. Today I want to appeal for support so that we can all do more for our officers. In particular, members who are assaulted on duty and those who experience the impact of responding to traumatic incidents.

When an officer is assaulted the physical signs are obvious BUT the damage to mental health is often unseen. The long-term effects of an assault at work can go way beyond when the physical scars have mended. Mental scars can last for years.

PTSD is an insidious growing sore on policing. Our officers, not only face the threat of being assaulted, but they are repeatedly exposed to traumatic incidents, such as deaths on the railway. Ensuring officers obtain the right

support and advice at the earliest opportunity is the best way to minimise long term effects.

It is vitally important that the officer feels supported - so we would like to introduce a Federation Gold Standard, for those officers who have been repeatedly exposed to trauma, who are living with PTSD and those who have been assaulted.

What does that mean? We need to improve communication between the Force and the Federation. It is essential that the Federation is notified of an officer assault as soon as possible, so that we can put essential support in place for that officer. We welcome the renewal of the officer assault pledge, but believe we need to go much further.

We believe it is vital that the Federation makes and maintains contact with officers experiencing physical injuries and mental health challenges so they can receive support and reassurance.

We want to look at ways to assist officers in getting fit and well, both physically and mentally.

To achieve that Gold Standard, we have some great starting ideas, but we would like to hear from you.

Tell us what you need – within reason!

To move forward, we would like to invite the Chief and the Authority to join us in delivering that Gold Standard. Together we can support officers and show them that we do care and help them overcome the trauma of an assault.

## **Recuperation**

We must improve recuperation for our officers. We are very fortunate that officers can attend Harrogate, Goring and Auchterarder, where they can receive excellent treatment including physiotherapy and counselling. Remember though it is our members that contribute to the running costs of these centres.

However, these rehabilitation facilities do not offer treatments such as surgery, MRI or CT scans, often vital to the quick diagnosis and treatment of

injury. Most officers are reliant on the already overstretched and burdened NHS, leading to long waits for appointments. The pandemic has intensified that problem and the reality is that long waiting times mean delays in the officer returning to work.

Regrettably, that means it is not only the officers and their families who suffer, but also the travelling public as there are less officers on duty keeping them safe.

### **Private Health Insurance**

We are in a unique position to Home Office forces in that the Force can make its own policy.

So why, for once, don't you change it for the benefit of our members?

We are asking the Force and the Authority to explore with us the possibility of introducing a private health insurance for our officers. We are not asking for a policy that covers every condition, simply one that would cover officers assaulted or injured in the course of their duty. It should be possible to keep costs low for such a limited policy.

Anything that gets injured officers back to work quicker is a SAVING not an expense.

We are delighted that our new Chief has already said she will explore this option with us and we look forward to assisting her to deliver a new optimism to those officers who are injured whilst simply just doing their job.

### **Counter-Terrorism**

In 2019, I mentioned the inequality in the funding of counter terrorism. We have tried to carry out some research into other forces' CT capabilities and strategies, but there is a natural reluctance to share that information. What is clear is that there is a programme of regional funding for Counter Terrorism policing totalling some £800 million. A colleague in the Met told me that around 16% of the Met's budget is spent on counter-terrorism. As the national lead on CT that is only to be expected.

What I can tell you is that apart from the Met, no force in the country has been involved in dealing with more terrorist attacks than the BTP and its officers on and off duty.

Everyone knows that transport is a prime target for terrorists. Railway stations are no longer grey places with a newsagent tucked in a corner. They are vibrant communities with a permanent as well as transient population.

The people of the UK have the right to go about their business safely.

Commuters have the right to feel safe as they travel to and from work.

Families have the right to feel safe as they travel.

It is our job to keep them safe

If we are to achieve this, then BTP MUST have a counter terrorism capability, both in prevention and detection. It cannot be right that the Force responsible for policing Britain's critical infrastructure receives no additional government money for counter terrorism. This MUST change.

Funding must come from the government. They should not expect the rail companies to pay extra for our counter terrorism capability or to expect the Chief to make cuts in mainstream policing to cover the extra costs. It is totally unacceptable.

The government must recognise that BTP is at the front line of counter-terrorism. We are uniquely experienced at policing what is a likely target for terrorists and one which enables those intent on causing harm and destruction to travel across the country.

It is the responsibility of government to keep its citizens safe.

I am not asking the government to fund the BTP Counter Terrorism capability. I am demanding it.

## **WILLIAMS-SHAPPS PLAN**

Staying with matters of this Government, many of us will be aware of the recent publication of the Williams-Shapps plan.

The proposals contained in the paper, if fully accepted, will mean the establishment of a new national integrated rail service to take rail travel into the future. Such developments will also mean new challenges for the BTP.

It is likely it will mean further development of rail stations. Many mainline stations occupy prime real estate. It is inevitable that any future rail company would want to maximise returns from this prime property.

Shopping centres, restaurants, entertainment venues and hotels are likely to be built, bringing their own policing needs - shoplifters, card fraud, a night-time economy and all the challenges that go with it.

As we look to the future, BTP will have to change, modernise and grow. We will have to be ready for the change, more passengers, perhaps less staff on trains and platforms. BTP will have to be prepared with sufficient numbers, training and expertise.

Dealing with one railway company rather than several should have its advantages, but we must be included in any consultation process.

We can only meet new challenges if there is a mechanism which guarantees sufficient funding so that there continues to be a professional, efficient and equipped police service.

So I say to the government, we are the Force to meet the future needs of the railway.

It is our knowledge, our experience, our specialism and our dedication that will make this happen.

## **BTP FEDERATION**

After 100 years it is perhaps an appropriate time not just to reflect back but most importantly to look forward.

### **Specials**

We have already introduced Specials' membership of our Federation because we acknowledge their dedication and felt it only right and proper that they should have access to Federation benefits alongside their full-time colleagues.

## **Rights and Regulations**

We have long been asking for a Compendium of Regulations to be available to all officers, so that they clearly know their rights and responsibilities.

We are pleased that at long last the Compendium is ready and will be available to all our officers very soon.

## **Review**

How do we move forward?

We must ensure we are in the best possible position to represent and support our officers. We have been working with the Force in support of their diversity, inclusion and equality goals and we must apply those same principles to our own organisation.

It is important that the Federation reflects the officers it represents. We want to give ALL of our members the best possible service which in turn will enable them to deliver the best possible service to the public.

We are listening to our membership to ensure that we can provide officers with the tools they need to do their job with the reassurance that, should they ever need our support, they are backed by an efficient professional Federation.

Therefore, today at conference we had a debate and our delegates have agreed that the way forward is to set up an independent panel to look at our practices; our communication; our policies and our legal services to ensure that we are accessible to all of you, the members.

The independent review panel will consist of people with a background in policing, federation work, diversity and IT.

We will ask them to look at several themes:

- Efficiency
- Equality and Diversity
- Productivity
- Resourcing
- Accountability
- Trust and Legitimacy

We hope the independent panel will make recommendations that will make us more efficient, more inclusive and better prepared to go forward into the future.

### **Fed Reps**

We also want to hear from you the Fed reps. You know the workings of the BTP Federation better than anybody. If you have any suggestions as to how we can improve the quality of our service, please let us know. We are very happy to listen to any constructive ideas.

### **Conclusion**

Looking to the future we do have a want list.

We want a Federation that can go forward into the next 100 years. It must be fit for purpose and ready to support our dedicated officers.

We want our officers to get the right equipment and protection.

We want fair but firm deterrents for those who flagrantly disregard the law and assault officers.

We want the appropriate support for officers who are assaulted and the reassurance that the Force and the Authority will care and help their recuperation.

And we want a government that supports those who run towards danger to protect society.

On behalf of our members, I simply say “Is that too much to ask for?”

## **Dinner**

Finally, I want to mention our Awards dinner tonight at the National Rail Museum.

Can there be a more fitting place to celebrate 100 years!

This celebration will be an opportunity to hear about some of the exceptional work of our colleagues. Unfortunately, we can only highlight and reward just a few officers, we know that they are just the tip of the iceberg.

Every day BTP officers carry out sterling work putting themselves in the line of danger to serve the travelling public.

One example you will hear about tonight is how one of our officers was involved in the Fishmongers Hall terrorist incident. This was an act of outstanding and brave police work and demonstrates that our officers are at the front line of counter-terrorism once again.

I am really looking forward to seeing you all tonight to mark 100 years of the Federation and look ahead to the next 100 years.

Thank you.