

TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport

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House of Commons Transport Committee
 7th Floor
 14 Tothill Street
 House of Commons
 London SW1H 9NB

6th March 2014

Dear Committee,

SECURITY ON THE RAILWAY

1. TravelWatch NorthWest is an independent Community Interest Company representing all public transport users in NW England. We are pleased to give the following brief response to this consultation.

2. In general terms personal safety and security for passengers is strongly linked to perception. Passengers feel less secure where staff are not evident especially at stations which are totally unstaffed or which are unstaffed in the evenings. There is a perceived fear of anti-social behaviour which can be realised on occasions. CCTV is not comprehensive and this fear contributes to diminished use of services especially late in the evening.

3. On trains themselves conductors are not always seen to be moving through the train to carry out revenue protection duties and this is exacerbated by trains sometimes being made up of units with no interconnection. Lack of on train staff visibility has also been noted during some late night journeys on Northern trains, yet it is at such times as these that passengers particularly appreciate the need for support and reassurance regarding their safety. There is significant overcrowding of trains in the North West and this could well be to the advantage of pickpockets.

4. The relationship between the British Transport Police (BTP) and other police forces leaves much to be desired especially in areas where the BTP is thin on the ground. One of our Directors has supplied the following example in the NW – “There have been incidents on Blackburn station platforms when a police presence would have been appreciated. Although there is a Lancs Police office on the ground floor of the station building they have usually declined to assist and have expected BTP to come, normally from Preston. The lack of fairly immediate police presence has resulted in the

'offenders', ranging from blatant cases of fare evasion to drunken behaviour, being allowed to leave the station. In the case of a serious event one would expect that Lancs Police will get involved but normally this does not seem to be the case. In the more rural situation the removal of a local police presence, e.g. from Langho, has resulted in an increase of bad behaviour or at least just unacceptable 'non-passenger' presence on platforms late at night. The local Bobby used to call in whilst on his rounds but can no longer do so, and the local youths know it. The Langho example is likely to be replicated across the patch."

5. Given the relatively sparse distribution of the BTP, especially outside centres of high population, it would be logical and indeed essential to expect a higher degree of team work between BTP and the local forces than appears to be the case. We appreciate though that in these days of total accountability appropriate payments may have to be made for services rendered.

6. On a more positive note we note the value of work undertaken by Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings. An example in the North West that has been drawn to our attention is in the Manchester area. The PACT group there comprises BTP, Northern Rail representatives including RMT reps, Network Rail, County councillors and station friends groups such as Friends of Glossop Station. The Piccadilly RMT rep has been very proactive in instigating a network of contacts so that when a security incident arises, news of it is quickly disseminated around the area, so that Northern staff and BTP are aware. This has had a positive impact on reducing crime on railway property.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond

Yours faithfully

John A Moorhouse

John Moorhouse
Company Secretary