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The integration of British Transport Police with Police Scotland should be put on hold given the leadership vacuum in the national force, the Scottish Conservatives have said

It comes after the Chief Constable of Police Scotland, Phil Gormley, stepped aside on Friday while he contests allegations of gross misconduct.

The Scottish Police Authority is also without a permanent chair following the resignation of Andrew Flanagan in June.

Scottish Government Ministers previously rejected a call by opposition parties to push back the date for implementing the BTP merger with Police Scotland from spring 2019.

The Scottish Conservatives are now calling on the Scottish Government to think again, given the crisis in the force, and the leadership vacuum at the SPA.

Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative justice spokesman said:

“Even before the latest crisis at Police Scotland, there were major question marks over why the takeover of British Transport Police was taking place. Now that the national force is facing such disruption, it would seem to be the height of recklessness to go ahead.

“The SNP Government has refused to listen to anyone over the BTP takeover. Nor has it ever given a good reason for it to go ahead. Surely now it must take heed. With Police Scotland in crisis, the sensible thing to do would be to put the entire business on hold.

“A failure to do so would only confirm that this SNP Government puts its own political ends before good decision-making.”

Police Scotland’s chief constable announced yesterday he was stepping aside <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-41201281>

The Scottish Conservatives have made repeated warnings about the BTP/Police Scotland merger

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/transport/plan-to-merge-btp-and-police-scotland-criticised-1-4224867>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/03/btp-outlines-extraordinary-risks-of-merging-force-with-police-scotland/>