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The Scottish Conservatives have today asked the new Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf, to review and reconsider the planned British Transport Police (BTP) merger.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr will say that now is the ideal time to cast off the dogma of the previous justice secretary and rethink the beleaguered merger with Police Scotland.

The forced SNP merger of the two forces has been highly contentious with the British Transport Police Federation (BTPF) themselves expressing serious concerns for public safety and staff morale.

In addition, significant problems involved with merging the different IT systems have also been identified as well as spiralling costs, including a potential £100 million pension cost.

The Scottish Conservatives are therefore asking Humza Yousaf to abandon the dogma of his predecessor, review the merger and consider the other models for devolution that have been set out by the BTPF.

Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary said:

“As it currently stands the proposed merger of the British Transport Police and Police Scotland will not work, will cost more, and will leave us with a worse service than we have now.

“The Scottish Conservatives have been trying to be constructive from the start. It is time for the new justice secretary to show he is his own man, take a step back to review and speak to us about other models of devolution.

“The BTPF themselves have said it is ‘reckless’ not to study other options for devolution, in addition to the proposal set out by the SNP government.

“Given the cost escalations and the concerns over public safety and police morale, it is absolutely clear that the only justification for this merger is dogma.

“This is the perfect time for the SNP to rethink their approach and adopt one where we respect the decision to devolve BTP, but do so in a way that

protects the service.

“The Commissioned Service model being put forward by the BTP Federation does just that.

“The SNP must abandon this ill-judged merger for the sake of public safety.”