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The British Transport Police has tabled explosive evidence ahead of appearing before MSPs tomorrow about the risks of merging the respected organisation with Police Scotland.

Ahead of the planned SNP move for the single force to take on BTP responsibilities north of the border, both the organisation itself and its authority will detail what the Scottish Conservatives have described as "extraordinary risks".

In its evidence, the BTP will say that dealing with fatalities could take 50 per cent longer under the new plans, and that "there is well-defined evidence that a non-specialist force is less able to provide the consistent levels of service that a dedicated policing commitment can offer".

Decades of experience in dealing with IRA threats would be lost, the evidence stated, meaning future terror incidents may cause significantly more disruption than previously.

There is also a "potential risk" of staff deciding to retire from the BTP or leave altogether, rather than joining Police Scotland under the new set-up, meaning considerable experience would be lost overnight.

A number of legal difficulties will also emerge.

The evidence states: "Officers would not have any legal jurisdiction to operate as constables in Scotland.

This would obviously create difficulties in policing any railway service that crosses the border, particularly as officers from other divisions will still need to carry personal protective equipment such as TASER type devices or incapacitant sprays, both of which are defined as weapons."

The submission goes on: "There is also a real risk that the investigation of crime will become more complicated, and possibly more costly."

The views, which will be heard at tomorrow's Holyrood justice committee, also refer to "specialist train services including nuclear trains, MOD trains and the Royal Train" which are currently operated on an "end-to-end" route basis by the BTP.

And on top of the BTP evidence, the BTP Authority will also weigh in on the SNP's plans. It will point out the skills of BTP officers "differentiate from their counterparts elsewhere", and that "transferring railway policing is not the same as merging eight police forces with the same function".

Later in the meeting, Police Scotland is expected to point out it has merger experience following the creation of the single force in 2013.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

"The arguments set out here are extraordinary, and should leave the SNP in no doubt about why it should not pursue this merger.

"It is an utterly needless move, which is inspired by nationalism rather than national security.

"We completely agree that the British Transport Police should be more accountable to the Scottish Parliament, and the BTP itself has set out how that can be done.

"Instead, the SNP is using that reason to swallow up the organisation as a whole.

"And as we see from this evidence, that could have a range of desperately negative consequences.

"From coping with terrorist threats to a delay in dealing with complex fatalities, it's clear this is the wrong move.

"The Scottish Government should heed these warnings and shelve these unnecessary and unpopular plans immediately."

To see the evidence from both the BTP and the BTP Authority to be presented tomorrow, visit:

http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S5_JusticeCommittee/Inquiries/British_Transport_Police1.pdf

http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S5_JusticeCommittee/Inquiries/BTP_Authority.pdf

[Press release: Failure to co-operate with liquidator leads to the](#)

disqualification

Mr Ireland has given an undertaking to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy that he won't act as a director of a company for a period of 7 years from 21 March 2017.

Scotboys Group Plc was a company set up for wired telecommunication and travel agency activities.

On 22 September 2015, Scotboys Group Plc, with liabilities of £52,106 was placed into compulsory liquidation following a winding up petition lodged by Direct Response Limited. Mr Ireland was the sole director of Scotboys Group Plc at that time.

Following the Liquidator's appointment, the investigation found as a consequence of Mr Ireland's failure to co-operate and deliver up the company's accounting records it was not possible to verify:

- why Scotboys Group Plc failed to meet the legal requirements of a Plc
- the true nature of the company's trading business and history
- the financial position of the company, at any given time, between incorporation on 07 August 2013 and 22 September 2015 when the company was placed into liquidation
- what became of unpaid goods supplied by creditors totalling £24,958

Robert Clarke, Head of Company Investigation at the Insolvency Service said:

Keeping proper records is a pivotal duty for directors and there is no place in the business environment for those who neglect their responsibilities in this area and thereby cover up the activities of the companies they manage. The lack of records in this case made it impossible to determine whether there was other, more serious, misconduct at Scotboys Group Plc and that is reflected in the lengthy period of disqualification.

This ban should serve as a reminder to any directors tempted to do the same: the Insolvency Service will vigorously investigate you and seek to remove you from the marketplace.

Notes to editors

Scotboys Group Plc (CR0 No. SC456211) went into compulsory liquidation on 22 September 2015 with a deficiency to creditors of £52,106. The company was incorporated to provide wired telecommunications and travel agency activities.

Christopher John Ireland is of Dundee and his date of birth is 7 December

1982.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

[News story: CMA proposes market investigation changes](#)

Market investigations are powerful tools that can bring in major changes to make markets work better for consumers and businesses.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) committed, in its Annual Plan, to review the way it conducts them. It took account of experience since they were introduced in the Enterprise Act 2002, and in particular of the CMA's major investigations into energy and banking, as well as legislative changes that came into force in 2014, reducing their time limit from 2 years to 18 months.

The CMA is proposing the following changes to streamline its existing processes and ensure it meets the shorter statutory timescale:

- Increasing interaction with stakeholders at an early stage in the investigation, including holding formal hearings sooner in the process.
- Assessing potential remedies to improve the market at an earlier stage in the investigation.
- Reducing the number of formal publication and consultation stages – removing the Updated Issues Statement, and combining provisional findings and provisional remedies into a single Provisional Decision Report.
- Allowing market studies (a shorter look at the market which can precede market investigations) to carry out preparatory work when they are likely to lead to a full investigation.
- Introducing the option for the CMA board to give an advisory steer on the scope of the market investigation, which is run by an independent group of CMA panel members.

The CMA considers that these proposed changes will enable it to carry out its market investigations more quickly, without reducing their effectiveness. It also believes they will preserve a fair and robust process and independence of decision-making throughout, which is central to the regime. And it thinks that earlier discussion of possible remedies to any competition problems uncovered should ensure a fuller discussion with all parties involved, ensuring the most effective remedies possible.

The document outlining the proposed changes and the resulting changes in the CMA's published guidance, is available on the [consultation page](#).

Interested parties are encouraged to respond to the consultation, which will run until 2 May 2017. Responses should be submitted by email to marketinvestigations-review@cma.gsi.gov.uk or by post to:

Market Investigations Review Team
7th Floor
Competition and Markets Authority
Victoria House
Southampton Row
London WC1B 4AD

[News story: Foreign Secretary at the Foreign Affairs Council](#)

Today [March 6] we are going to be having a discussion about the continued role of the EU in defence and security and clearly this is something that the UK supports. We are always going to be part of Europe's wider security architecture provided, of course, that it does not undermine NATO. NATO is the cornerstone of our Atlantic alliance and of our defence.

We'll be having discussions about Ukraine and what we can collectively do to shore up Ukraine in view of the various threats that it faces. I'll be briefing the Council along with my Polish colleague – Witold Waszczykowski – about our recent trip to Kiev and what we were able to discuss with President Poroshenko and Foreign Minister Klimkin about the struggles that they face, and the threats that they face, particularly in Eastern Ukraine.

We'll also have a discussion with Sameh Shoukry – the Egyptian Foreign Minister – and we'll be talking again about what we in Europe can do to shore up Egypt as it makes its important progress towards democracy and greater reform.

There are wider questions for the Government on just how this level of neglectful care was allowed to develop unchecked – Barbara Keeley

Barbara

Keeley MP, Labour's Shadow Cabinet Minister for Social Care and Mental Health, commenting on the

prosecution in relation to neglect at Mossley Manor Care Home in Liverpool, said:

“The neglect and poor care of the residents at this care home is shocking. With the CQC saying that there was ‘a continued and serious risk’ to the lives, health and wellbeing of residents, it is welcome that the owners have been prosecuted.”

“There are wider questions for the Government on just how this level of neglectful care was allowed to develop unchecked. The Government must ensure our care system does not allow standards to fall to the level found at this care home, leaving residents exposed to harm and neglect.”