



BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE TAKES TO THE SKIES

For the first time in Scotland, British Transport Police and Network Rail have teamed up to patrol the railway network from the sky.

A helicopter is being used to detect anyone committing offences on the lines, whether it's acts of vandalism or gang fighting.

Operation Clarinet took place for the first time on Sunday 23 July 2006 and saw the force's Scottish area air observer acting as a 'spotter' from Network Rail's AS355 Twin Squirrel helicopter.

During the operation, Constable Nicky Ritchie – the first Scottish officer to be trained in this specialist role for BTP - was in communication with colleagues on the ground. He directed a team of uniformed and plain-clothes officers in both marked and unmarked cars to where trespassing, stone throwing, vandalism or any other incidents were occurring around the railway.

Although there were no arrests, BTP say they are pleased with how the operation went.

In the first of what could become regular operations, the helicopter was deployed to areas in the west and central belt of Scotland where route crime offences are common - including 'hot spots' in Glasgow and Lanarkshire.

Superintendent Ronnie Mellis, Scottish area commander of British Transport Police, said:

"Intelligence shows that the lighter nights tend to lead to an increase in route crime offences such as vandalism, trespassing and stone throwing. Misusing the railway can be extremely dangerous and British Transport Police will work closely with Network Rail and use innovative resources such as the helicopter to detect those who put themselves and rail passengers in danger."

David Simpson, Network Rail's Route Director in Scotland added:

"Network Rail's helicopter has been successfully used in other parts of the UK to catch people who commit railway crime, and we are hopeful that this British Transport Police operation will have a real impact in Scotland. Now that the BTP has a dedicated air observer, we will be delighted to offer the services of our helicopter to combat railway crime, which is a particular problem at this time of year, when schools are on holiday and the weather is warm."