

What steps have been taken since Rugby World Cup 2015 to improve transport planning and delivery for major events in Cardiff?

There were clear lessons learnt from the event in 2015, but these were mainly contained to service planning and sufficient notice being given to service providers so that they can arrange and possibly re-arrange the limited rolling stock that is available to them. This of course is not the responsibility of BTP and neither is it within our gift to influence that. As far as Policing the railway station and the services away from these events, I always now consider the quality of the service provision, and recognise immediately when there are limited services, that it will have an influence on the crowd dynamics and behaviour. The bottom line measure is; poor services leads to poor behaviour. All I am able to do to respond to this is by increasing resources where possible, and of course this becomes a bigger challenge when I have short notice such as we had for the boxing event on the 28th of October. This also comes at a cost to our budgets, for which at this time, there is no possibility of recovering any costs.

The Champions league final by contrast gave us ample time to plan and prepare, there was a significant uplift in service provision and this in turn contributed to a problem free event for BTP. The constant however was that I could not recover any overhead costs as bids for that were rejected.

BTP does meet regularly with Arriva Trains Wales, Great Western and Network Rail to discuss events, and we are all also invited to a "Stadium Events Liaison Group" (SELG) which also includes South Wales Police and Cardiff City Council. This works well but is more of a briefing/update opportunity rather than a forum where we can formally raise concerns about a proposed event or more importantly- it's timing, and the knock on effect that will have.

What arrangements were in place to meet the needs of those travelling to and from Cardiff on 28 October?

As previously hinted, BTP are not responsible for any service planning, so we focused on providing a safe and secure environment for the train companies to operate. Our usual thorough planning and Command structures were in place, working alongside South Wales Police who were our immediate support and also stood ready to provide specialist support such as firearms officers, had we required them.

What particular challenges did this boxing event present and how were these considered in the planning process?

The 'different' challenge the boxing event provided was the shorter timescales available to us for the planning. For all other big events we become aware of them far earlier and for events such as Six nations, Autumn internationals and events like the Ed Sheeran series of concerts, we have had many months of notice. For obvious commercial reasons, these timescales were not possible for the boxing. This did not affect BTP's planning however, albeit I am sure this had an impact on service provision and maintenance work, which then (as previously mentioned) affects passenger behaviour in the queuing system.

How did development work on Capital Square affect operations?

The queuing system utilised at Cardiff Central railway station routinely makes use of all areas at the 'front' of the station which does affect where different services queue. Owing to the regular changes, this queue plan can be amended for each event, however, thanks to the excellent updates we get from Rightacres, we are always aware of any such changes and the impact this will have. It's fair to summarise by saying this work does not affect our Operation adversely.

What steps were taken to mitigate the impact of works on the Severn Tunnel and Brynglas tunnels?

This had no impact on the BTP operation.

What was your assessment of the effectiveness of travel planning arrangements for the event? How many people were negatively affected by delays?

This is not something BTP can contribute towards, however as I have previously mentioned, when service provision is either not possible, delayed or in doubt, this has a negative impact on the behaviour of the queues- even those who have not been drinking. Boxing events also bring a different crowd profile to Cardiff, many of whom have not been to the City let alone the station before and this too adds to their anxiety before they arrive with us, post event.

What lessons have been learnt from this event, and how will any lessons be applied to future events?

For each and every event that has an impact above “business as usual” at any station in Wales, I ask for a detailed review of what went well, what didn’t go so well, and ask the question what could or should we have done differently. That has been applied to this event.

There are always issues to raise around partnerships and how we communicate, but my experience over many years tells me that we will never have perfection, so some issues we have to accept. This doesn’t stop us seeking that perfection.

However I will keep this to BTP related issues.

I am still to be convinced that using Queen Street station post event is a good use of our resources. I can and will provide more detail on this when required, but I believe this is a view shared by the other key partners.

I will have to consider a different resource plan when a short notice event such as the boxing comes to the stadium. It is fair to say that we were stretched far more than our previous “busiest” event, namely a Wales v England rugby international, and that has always been our measurement for a high risk plan.

Road closure issues at the rear of the Central station post event are a concern, particularly as we need to protect the long line of queuing public at the road leading under the railway bridge, and this needs further discussion with both Cardiff City Council and South Wales Police.

I hope this is the type of information you were seeking as a committee in order to consider next steps. I believe Cardiff is a great City and more than capable of hosting all manner of events, but there is a clear need in my view for there to be a stronger joined up approach in agreeing which events are hosted, and that there should always be more than a commercial interest to take into account. That is not meant in any way as a criticism, but we can improve. We are all very proud of our City and what we all contribute to the events, and it does hurt when we see negative comments from visitors/passengers/spectators/media, who are rarely in possession of all the facts before they fire off their letters or social media posts.