



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

5 January 2024

Bonfire Report 2023

Report of the Director Community Risk Management

Purpose of Report

1. To provide members with a summary of the outcomes of the Joint Bonfire Delivery Plan 2023 and give an overview of the activities conducted by County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) and their partners as part of a deliberate fire reduction strategy over the Bonfire Period 25 October to the 7 November 2023.

Background

2. The original version of the Joint Bonfire Delivery Plan was developed in 2021 with the aim of providing a formal process to follow for Emergency Response, the Community Safety and Arson Reduction Team, Communications Team together with key partners, with specified activities, designated outcomes, and target dates for completion of tasks and data returns.
3. The original Joint Delivery Plan was reviewed and recirculated for consultation in July this year with partners asked to provide feedback and comment on their experiences of the 2022 Delivery Plan.
4. Much of the original plan was found to be valid and operable, with some minor changes made to aid better interoperability amongst a diverse range of partners, such as Tesco.com, Housing Associations, Schools, Trading

Standards and Environmental Service teams in Durham County Council (DCC) and Darlington Borough Council (DBC) and Durham University.

5. One of the key benefits of working in collaboration is the opportunity for partners to spread the various bonfire safety messages with the wider community, and into specific sections of the community, (such as young people and families), focusing on the benefits of attending organised displays and the potential danger of bonfires.

Key Points from the 2023 Bonfire Period

6. **Incidents over the Bonfire Period:**
There was a small, 1.2% reduction in fires this year compared to 2022. Although in comparison to 2021 there has been a 17% reduction in incidents. Since the change in Bonfire Delivery Strategy and rise in educational provision there has been a downward trend in fire incidents.
7. **Incidents Attended on 5 November:**
On 5 November, there was a total of 142 calls made to the Control Room with Emergency Response crews attending 78 incidents. This is a 20% increase on incidents on this day in 2022.
8. **Deliberate and Not Known Fires on 5 November:**
There were 37 deliberate and not know fire incidents on 5 November this year This is an increase of by 27.6% compared to the 29 incidents in 2022.
9. **Impact of weather over the Bonfire Period:**
In the run up to and during the Bonfire Period, there was a high level of rainfall. During October there were 21 days of significant rainfall, delivering an average of 6cm of rain falling on County Durham and the Borough of Darlington.
10. This weather continued into November with high winds and a downturn in temperatures (from 13°C down to 9°C). The rainfall in the first week of November created on average 5.5cm of rain falling on County Durham and Darlington, ensuring that a lot of the accessible flammable materials that could be used for bonfire material was wet.
11. **Organised Fireworks Displays:**
Due to the high winds and heavy rainfall many organised displays were cancelled. It is possible this reduction of displays affected the increase in incident numbers on 5 November.

12. **Emergency Response Planning**
In preparation for the expected peak during the bonfire period additional resources were utilised. Additional Targeted Response Vehicles (TRV) were staffed at Crook and Wheatley Hill, to protect appliances for life risk incidents.
13. Police operators attended CDDFRS's Control Room to coordinate response effectively across police and fire. Additionally, one of our trained National Incident Liaison Officers attended police Silver Command at Aykley Heads to further assist effective coordination at incidents.
14. **Violence Against Staff**
Unfortunately, during the bonfire period there were eight incidences of violence against our staff. At all incidents projectiles, mainly fireworks were thrown at the operational crews. At an incident at Sunnybrow, as well as projectiles being thrown, the operational crews were verbally racially abused.
15. There were no injuries to staff or damage to appliances or equipment at these incidents. Police were informed of all incidents. Three incidents occurred in the same area of Great Lumley. As a result, the local Police Inspector issued a dispersal order and no further incidents occurred in that location.
16. **Environmental Visual Audits (EVA):**
The Emergency Response crews conducted a significant amount of EVA's in their local station areas in partnership with Environmental Services from DCC and DBC. In total 257 EVA's were conducted.
17. **Blue Route Patrols:**
Blue route patrols increase visibility in high-risk areas, provide an opportunity to assess areas for fly tipping or fire setting indicators and utilise known intelligence as a deterrent to prospective fire setters. In total 150 blue route patrols were conducted.
18. **Leaflets:**
Tesco.com are the current market leader on fireworks sales in the UK. They delivered 5,000+ of the Service's fireworks safety leaflets across the bonfire period. Additionally, DCC Trading Standards Team delivered 2,000+ fireworks safety leaflets to retailers officially registered to sell fireworks.
19. **Joint Arson Initiatives:**
In partnership with other agencies, Emergency Response crews conduct targeted arson prevention initiatives to mitigate the potential for fire setting, target hardening and site assessments of insecure / at risk premises and high-

profile joint patrols with local authority staff and Police Officers. In total 48 Arson Initiatives were undertaken.

20. **Education (Prevention Activities):**

Over the bonfire period, Emergency Response crews undertook 30 school educational sessions at Key Stage 2, to educate the young people on the dangers of fireworks and deliberate fires.

21. **Social Media campaign:**

Our social media campaign is divided between the formal media provision by the Communications Team and Emergency Response crews who disseminate social media content 'as live' on platforms such as TikTok. Views for the different platforms were:

- TikTok - 90,513 views
- X (formally known as Twitter) - 12,234 views
- Facebook - 46,532 views

Summary

22. The 2023 Joint Bonfire Delivery Plan has brought together a diverse range of partners, agencies, and delivery methods to seek to drive down the effect of arson and deliberate fires on County Durham and Darlington. The delivery plan built on the success of the 2022 plan, to further reduced incidents.

23. Emergency Response crews worked within their station areas to seek out flammable materials and reported this through various pathways to Environmental Service teams to remove the materials before it could be set alight. Joint patrols and targeted activities, similarly highlighted materials for recovery.

24. The Community Safety and Arson Reduction Manager will conduct a review of the Joint Bonfire Delivery Plan, across the various agencies and partners, to understand what worked well and what could be improved upon for future campaigns.

Recommendations

25. Members are requested to **note** the contents of the report.

Director Community Risk Management Keith Carruthers, Ext. 5564