

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 2 MARCH 2022
REPORT OF: HEAD OF PREVENTION AND PROTECTION
AUTHOR: ANDREW GRAY

SUBJECT: ANNUAL BONFIRE REPORT 2021

Purpose of Report

1. The annual Bonfire Report 2021 summarises the preventative and operational activities carried out by the Service and partners during the bonfire period, 24th October 2020 to 7th November 2021, inclusive (the Bonfire Period).

Recommended: That Members

- [1] note the Bonfire Report 2021, in particular the recommendations contained in the document.

Background

2. The Service, local authorities, Cheshire Police and other partners are committed to reducing incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) which affect the communities we serve. The deliberate fire-setting which constitutes a large part of the ASB during the Bonfire Period has a significant effect on the services Small Deliberate Fire figures. It can also have a significant financial impact on the local community and cause significant damage to the environment and amenities.

Information

3. The Bonfire Report 2021 is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
4. The Service attended 55 Small Deliberate Fires during the Bonfire Period, in comparison to 41 Small Deliberate Fires during the 2020 bonfire period (which occurred when Covid-19 restrictions were in place). During the 2019 bonfire period the Service attended 66 Small Deliberate Fires.
5. Whilst this year saw an increase in attendances compared to 2020, the effect of Covid restrictions during 2020 make this an unreliable year to compare against. By comparison with 2019 the 2021 performance was 17% better and was 46.6% lower than figures from 2016 when there were 103 Small Deliberate Fires.

6. The Bonfire Report 2021 contains a number of recommendations at Section 11. The Prevention team will ensure that the recommendations are communicated to Service Delivery Managers and good practice is shared when planning initiatives for the 2022 bonfire period.

Financial Implications

7. The recommendations of the report identify areas with financial implications for future years, such as the use of additional appliances, and details what are believed to be cost-effective, efficient deployment of staff and resources that will be considered for 2022.

Legal Implications

8. The bonfire initiatives are seen as a core function of the Service and there are no known legal implications in carrying out this work.

Equality and Diversity Implications

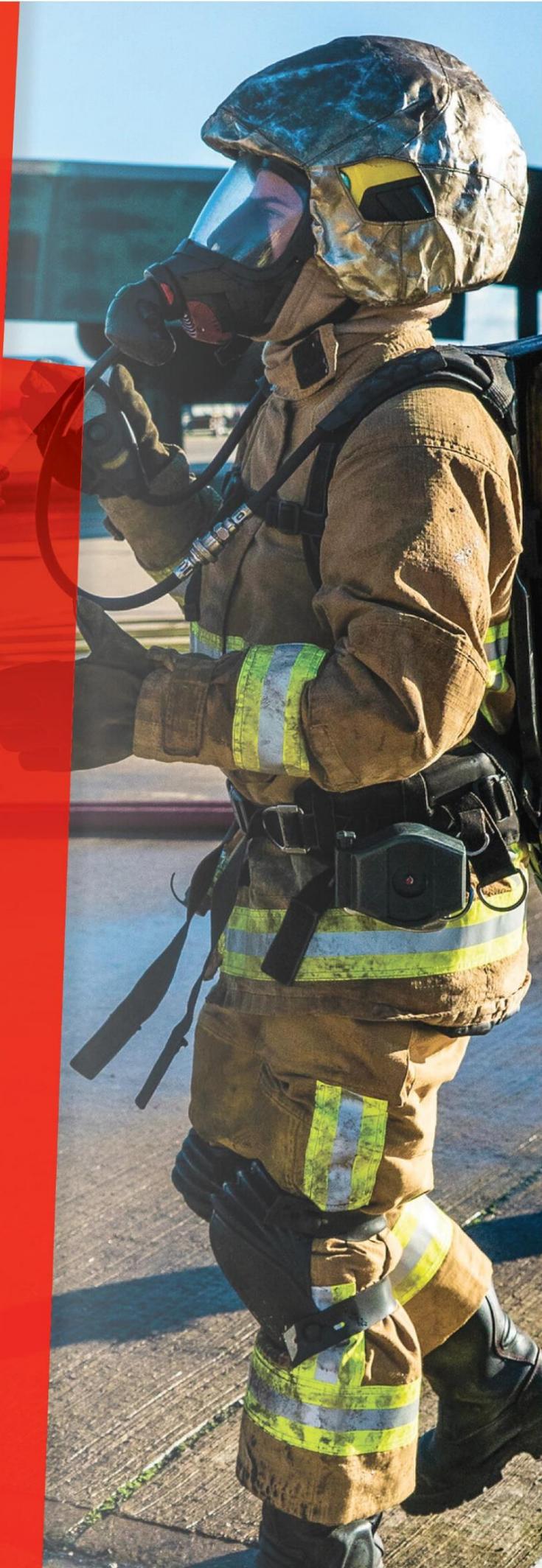
9. The bonfire initiatives are seen as a core function of the Service and there are no known Equality and Diversity implications in carrying out this work.

Environmental Implications

10. It should be recognised that the activities conducted during the Bonfire Period provide a positive contribution to reducing pollution and reducing carbon emissions from deliberate fires. The preventative work also supports a reduction of the number of movements of fire engines which also reduces emissions our vehicles.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: BONFIRE REPORT 2020



Bonfire Period Report 2021

Produced by: SM Andy Gray

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1. Introduction

The annual bonfire season represents a period of increased activity for Police and Fire & Rescue Services (FRS) in the UK. As such, plans for limiting deliberate fire activity and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) are put in place during this time.

This year's planning activity (2021-22) has had to again reflect the changing conditions placed on all organisations from the current and ongoing Covid 19 pandemic.

ASB includes the setting of deliberate, and nuisance fires. This places pressure on the resources of Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS) due to an increase in call levels to incidents classed as small deliberate fires (SDF).

Likewise, these uncontrolled SDF, can in turn spread to other property such as residences, commercial buildings or vehicles, which cause significant damage and financial loss as well as emotional distress for the owners.

The Service and its partners recognise the damage inflicted on communities by ASB during the bonfire season. Significant amounts of time, effort, resources and money are expended in an attempt to ensure the safety and well-being of communities, whilst allowing and encouraging people to celebrate the season safely.

It is also recognised, that the 'Bonfire Period dates coincide with Halloween, and it is common that these dates are opportunities for ASB of all types, not just fire related ASB. There is also a period referred to as 'Mischief night' on the 30th October which also presents both Fire and Police staff with increased levels of ASB.

The Service's Bonfire Period recording dates align with dates also used by Cheshire Constabulary to record ASB so it is a more accurate method of comparing all types of ASB together. The data section in this report will explain this more fully.

In summary, the alignment of Police and CFRS dates (this started in 2017) changes the overall perceived trends when we align the data retrospectively. Although the Service Wide annual SDF trend continues downward year on year (2020 C19 excluded as figures were exceptionally low), there are some year on year increases in SDF activity in some station areas during the reporting period.

2. Recording of Incidents

The bonfire reporting period 2021 captured data from 0800hrs 24th October 2021 to 0800hrs 7th November 2021. Data from these dates has also been examined for the preceding 4 years for all types of ASB.

As there is no specific bonfire reporting category within the Home Office regulated Incident Recording System (IRS) (this is the national method used to complete a fire report) this report relates to all small deliberate fires (SDF). The reason for this is that the difference between a bonfire and rubbish set on fire is a very subjective one for crews attending, so the inclusion of all SDF in this report will continue.

The following guidance was promulgated to operational crews, as in previous years, to outline reporting parameters during the bonfire period for use on the IRS system.

- If a Bonfire is lit prior to a planned celebration, i.e. as an act of Anti Social Behaviour, and needs to be extinguished because it is a nuisance or dangerous, then this must be recorded as a **small deliberate fire**.
- If a Bonfire is lit for celebratory purposes and needs to be extinguished because it is dangerous, out of control or deemed a nuisance, then this will be recorded as an **accidental small fire**.
- If a Bonfire is lit for celebratory purposes and is allowed to burn, and we do not need to take any action other than give advice then this should be recorded as a **false alarm good intent**. Add to the stop message that a Dynamic Risk Assessment has been completed and advice has been given. When completing the IRS please note that there is a specific category for a Good Intent false alarm >> Fire >> Bonfire.
- Other small deliberate or accidental fires e.g. wheelie bins, refuse, hedgerows, must be recorded as normal, and the investigation recorded fully on the Police Notification Report.

3. Pre Planning, Partnership and Internal Activity

CFRS again promoted organised displays as the safest option for the public in this period due to the risks associated with people holding displays and bonfires in their gardens which could easily become out of control, causing possible injuries and damage to property.

The Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager and the Business Intelligence team produced and distributed a comprehensive intelligence document relating to deliberate fires and ASB activity pan Cheshire occurring within the preceding months and previous periods to support intelligence led targeted activity.

CFRS, Cheshire Police and the Joint Communications team continued to work in partnership with daily contact to address any emerging risk. Strategies and messages were developed and amended as national guidance altered so that we could attempt to change the public's knowledge, attitude and behaviour regarding the holding of firework displays and bonfires.

For CFRS an intranet page was established again prior to the start of the campaign and was updated as and when new information became available. Staff were encouraged in further weekly Green articles to use this tool as a means of keeping up-to-date with key information from both the Service and the Government.

Stations and departments across the Service continue to support safety messages with some producing their own videos for social media. The Communications team supplied social media post wording and links that they could use throughout the period. The Digital team supported this, where needed, so that all station and department social media pages featured bonfire advice and information, prior to and during the bonfire period.

Service Delivery Teams were briefed to visit and create Site Specific Risk Information for any derelict buildings in their station areas and to liaise with partners to secure the premises where possible.

4. Bonfire Removal Schemes and Waste Management

All Areas – Arson routes are completed by all Service Delivery teams. Local authorities Street Scene programs are then informed of issues. There are some subtle differences across areas but essentially the public and fire service can access a free service to report the location of the waste and have it removed when on public land. The Street-scene details and contact numbers were promoted internally and externally via the Service's social media platforms.

Service teams dependent on their location also had an email reporting system or web based system to ensure an efficient reporting system was available should the Local Authority's phone reporting systems face high numbers of calls.

5. Educational Events and Activities

A targeted approach to education is utilised by the Service, and this continued across all areas in 2021. Using local intelligence, educational events were planned and delivered in specific locations based on fire related ASB and school catchment areas. Educational events were delivered by the Service's Prevention team and operational staff in partnership with Cheshire Police at a number of schools, community centres and other locations. A consistent message promoting organised displays, ASB, and firework safety was delivered by our own staff using a presentation developed by Prevention staff.

The Service continues to use "Matt's story" created internally in 2020. This media is utilised via our social media platforms and was also shared with all Cheshire schools.



The Service had serious concerns relating to fires going out of control at events held by the public which would put people and property at risk. Bespoke media was created including key safety messaging for the general public, aimed at those who may have considered holding an event, with a video of the Service's Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager advising the public not to hold a "home displays". For those insistent on holding a display, relevant safety information required for a safe event at home was also shared. Information relating to waste containers and their safe storage was also included.



Reach on Twitter 241535 persons.

6. Diversionary Events, Activities and Enforcement

The term Diversionary Events and Activities refers to any activity intended to reduce opportunities for fire related ASB and which encourages residents to enjoy the celebrations in a safe manner. These include organised bonfire and firework displays, youth work and other events.

There are many organised displays held by local pubs, community groups, parish councils, PTAs etc. Encouraging people to attend organised displays continues to be Service policy, and these events are publicised on the Service website when we are notified of them.

Diversionary events and outputs vary across the local authority areas dependent on the needs of the area, a summary of some of the efforts undertaken are below.

Cheshire East

Fire related ASB and deliberate fire activity in Cheshire East is still at a relatively low level in comparison to other unitary areas. All teams continue to also utilise social media effectively.

Crewe continue to monitor and adapt their arson routes from local knowledge and incident information.

Wilmslow continue to monitor and adapt their arson routes and a bespoke engagement session was completed at Wilmslow High school due to deliberate fire activity in the local area.

Macclesfield alerted the local policing unit to an increase in activity in the area, gaining feedback that Police believed the young persons involved had now been engaged with and now had antisocial behaviour alerts aligned to them, also receiving acceptable behavioural contracts to adhere to.

Cheshire West and Chester

Winsford continue efforts to reduce deliberate fire setting throughout the year and have a monthly meeting with partners to both review Police Notification Reports of deliberate fires and identify hotspot areas to for a joint targeted approach.

A key part of the activity is working with Winsford youth and Community forum. £2000 of Unitary Performance Group (UPG) funding was approved to support a variety of events held at the venue to engage with the local community. This will encourage a continual attendance, reducing ASB and deliberate fires throughout the summer months and the forthcoming bonfire period. Further promotion work of these activities was completed at local ASB hotspot locations - Winsford Town Park, Winsford Cross Shopping Centre and Weaver Park Way resulting in greater numbers now attending the sessions.

Following this success Winsford Youth and Community Forum have successfully applied to the Police and Crime Commissioners Community Fund for £5,000 so that they are able to continue to run the project through the winter and beyond.

Winsford Service Delivery teams and Prevention teams along with Cheshire Police also completed targeted Ward Walks. Areas included Dart Walk, Esk Road, Wharton, Vauxhall Way, Bedford Rise, Austin Close, Finsbury Walk, Dee Way and Severn Walk utilising approximately 500 leaflets on Dangerous and Nuisance bonfires. Advice was also given to local residents on the safe storage of refuse containers.

A joint session with Cheshire Police was held at Darnhall Primary School to a young group of children (180 in total) as part of a bonfire assembly.



Ellesmere Port saw an increase in ASB activity in the run up to the bonfire period, resulting in Cheshire Police implementing Operation Rhumbas which included dispersal zones in certain areas of Ellesmere Port with enhanced Police patrols.

Press releases were utilised by the Ellesmere Port Station Manager advising local residents on relevant safety advice.

Close working with the Police led to intelligence suggesting that many of the issues in the area are being caused by a group of 5-6 individuals. Fire crews were briefed and were able to support Cheshire Police, resulting in the arrest of two of the individuals.

Following several call outs to Whitby Park, teams were met by the same individual who was heavily intoxicated. On one such call out, the male became aggressive, so crews mounted the fire appliance and requested the police. The male attempted to open the appliance door and finding it locked, began to kick the appliance. Police arrested the individual, and he has been charged with attempted criminal damage and misuse of the 999 system.

Chester secured £2000 of UPG funding to support the firework display at the Roodee Race Course. This was a not for profit event with proceeds being donated to the following local charities, Chapter, Deafness Support Network, Hospice of the Good Shephard the Chester Lions and Share.

Northwich continued to utilise social media over the period, also working closely with a local school and Cheshire Police due to a spate of incidents at the same time each weekday on a route that is predominantly used by pupils to attend school. Education and awareness sessions were then held at the school to educate and inform.

Halton

Widnes and **Runcorn** crews continued to monitor activity levels in their respective areas, completing Arson Routes, reporting waste to the local authority partners and ensuring Police Notification Reports were completed for all incidents to a high standard.

Social media outputs continue to be utilised by the crews to engage with the public.

Crews also liaised with Halton Borough Council to request security measures be introduced in the Albert Square area.

Warrington

Warrington teams completed targeted work with Cheshire Police in areas where increased incidents of ASB and small fires had occurred. Specifically the Bewsey Park and Orford Park Areas of Warrington.

As part of the Warrington Partnerships Group, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has obtained Unitary funding to support the purchase and implementation of two deployable CCTV cameras. These cameras can be used in high ASB and deliberate fire areas, the cameras were relocated for the bonfire period to ensure Woolston Park, Orford Park and Chapelford were monitored.

Working together in the Troutbeck Avenue area of Bewsey, our Prevention and Service Delivery teams, along with Cheshire Police and Torus Housing completed 70 safe and well engagements. The aim was to offer advice and reassurance to residents on the approach to the Halloween & Bonfire season. A similar event was also completed in the Latchford and Howley areas of Warrington saw completion of 80 Safe and well engagements.

Close partnership working with the local PCSO for the Orford Area, resulted in the identification of one of the offenders for deliberate fires in the area. Blue Watch then organised a 'risk around deliberate fire setting' talk at Beaumont collegiate, which is where the identified offender studies. The offender has also been invited to a session with his parents, for further efforts to educate and inform the individual on the dangers relating to his activity.

Penketh identified issues in the Chapelford area and the reference holder for deliberate fires at Penketh Fire station began closely monitoring the area. Crews have been working collaboratively working with Cheshire Police to reduce incidents in the area. The 'On the Streets' team also supported this area over the bonfire period.

Lymm and **Birchwood** continued with social media awareness campaigns to engage with public. The station reference holders monitored events in the lead up to and during the period and ensured content was relevant to the local issues.

6. Operational Response

Small Incident Units (SIU) have been deployed in the busier areas during the bonfire period for several years. The appliances used for these additional resources in 2021 were the on-call appliances from Penketh, Runcorn, Winsford and Birchwood.

These SIU were deployed over key evenings, on the 30th and 31st October and the 4th, 5th and 6th of November between 16:00-22:00 hrs. Bonfire night and Halloween/Mischief night fell on weekends, bringing two weekends into contention for possible increased activity.

These SIU were programmed at NWFC so that they were prioritised for small incidents. There was an automatic override built into the mobilising system that they would also be sent to life risk incidents if they were the closest asset.

The Service's Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager attended North West Fire Control (NWFC) on the busiest evenings, 30th, 31st October the 5th, 6th of November to enable risk based mobilisation to take place to support and maintain operational cover levels across the county. Direct communication links with the relevant Police partners were established to enable direct and immediate discussion between CFRS and Cheshire Police for operational support.

7. North West Fire Control

Extensive planning took place for the 2021 bonfire period in North West Fire Control (NWFC).

Many of the practices adopted across all 4 Services are based on procedures previously used only in Cheshire. Of particular note is the call challenging procedure adopted by NWFC in 2014; this originated in Cheshire and has resulted in risk based non attendance to incidents in all NWFC FRS areas. This call challenge has also been adopted by Cheshire Police Control so that bonfire incidents are assessed before referral to NWFC. The call challenge and 'tolerance' procedure was also communicated to all operational police staff in order to reduce the number of calls from patrols.

A call handling and mobilising procedure was operated during the period. NWFC staff were permitted to over-ride resources offered by the mobilising system and to leave certain calls unattended for a short period if appropriate. The mobilising decisions in each pod were the responsibility of a Station Manager (or higher) from each FRS.

8. Media and Corporate Communications

The Communications team actively promoted a number of key messages for the Service over the bonfire period.

Communications for the campaign were promoted internally and externally via local press and by using our social media platforms. Radio interviews were completed and "Facebook live" interviews were carried out by our officers to re-enforce the key safety messages.

Social media was used daily during the period to promote a range of messages and stations were encouraged to use their own accounts to promote to the public the dangers of lighting bonfires in their own gardens this year.

The Service issued 58 messages between Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook throughout the Bonfire period. 24 of these were issued on Bonfire Night itself. On the night a member of the Communications team attended NWFC and supported the Service's Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager by updating the website and social media platforms giving specific safety advice as incidents occurred from 18:00pm - 22:00pm.

The social media post that received the most likes was on Bonfire Night itself where it was revealed how many calls had been taken in Control. This was liked 83 times on Facebook.

Some examples of the media released on the Service's Twitter account are shown below.



55760 - Reach on Twitter



236057- Reach on Twitter



61836 - Reach on Twitter



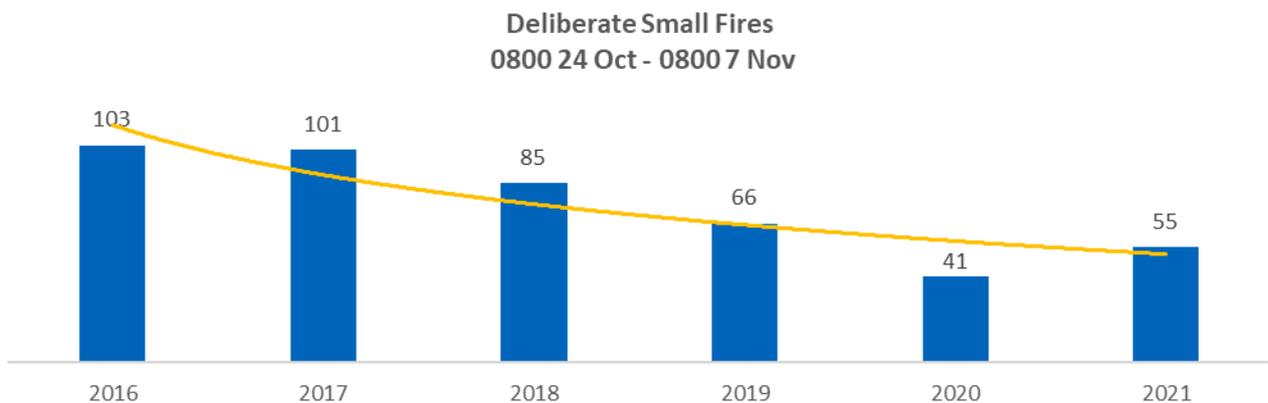
156568 - Reach on Twitter

9. Incident Data and Performance Summary

Incidents recorded during the bonfire period

The following graph (*Fig. 1*) illustrates the overall trend of Deliberate Small Fires in Cheshire over the last 5 years. The 2021 Bonfire Period saw one of the lowest number of Deliberate Small Fires on record, showing a 47% reduction from 5 years ago. There was however a slight increase from 1 year ago, but 2021 was still lower than in 2019 when Covid-19 lockdown measures were not in place and therefore more comparable.

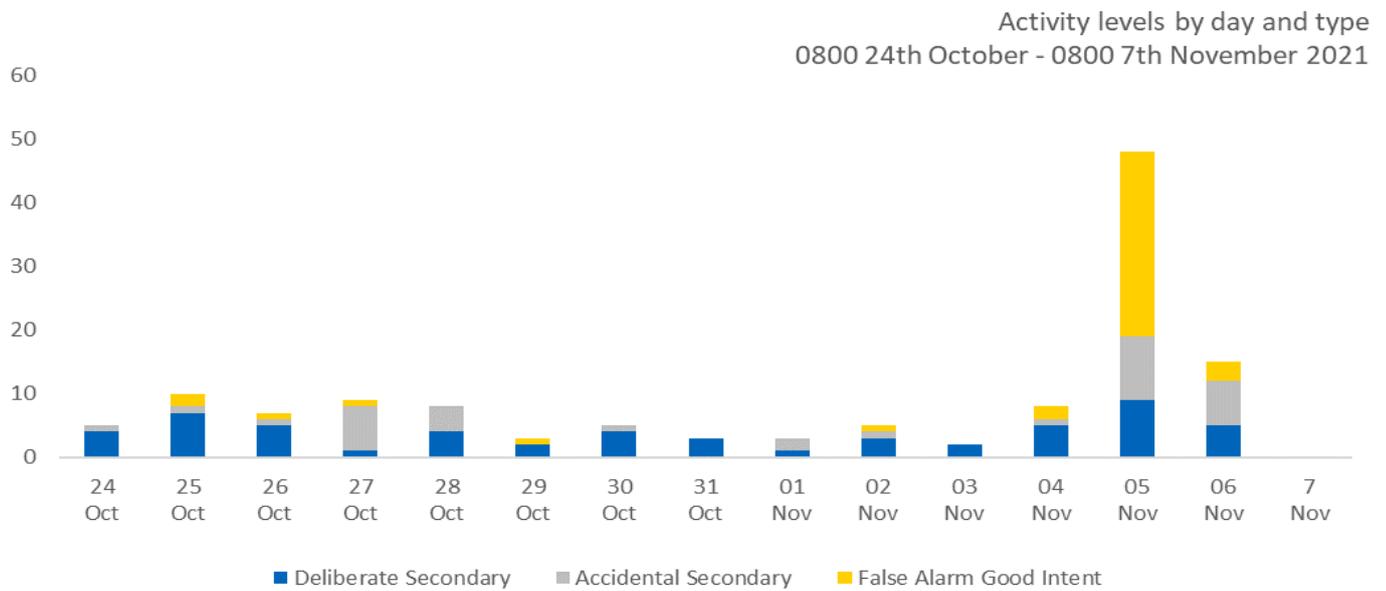
Fig. 1



A total of 9 Small Deliberate Fires were recorded on Bonfire Night (5th Nov), however a total of 47 bonfire related incidents were attended. 29 (62%) of these incidents were 'False Alarm Good Intent' and 10 incidents (21%) were 'Accidental Small Fires', with Zero Deliberate Primary Fires recorded.

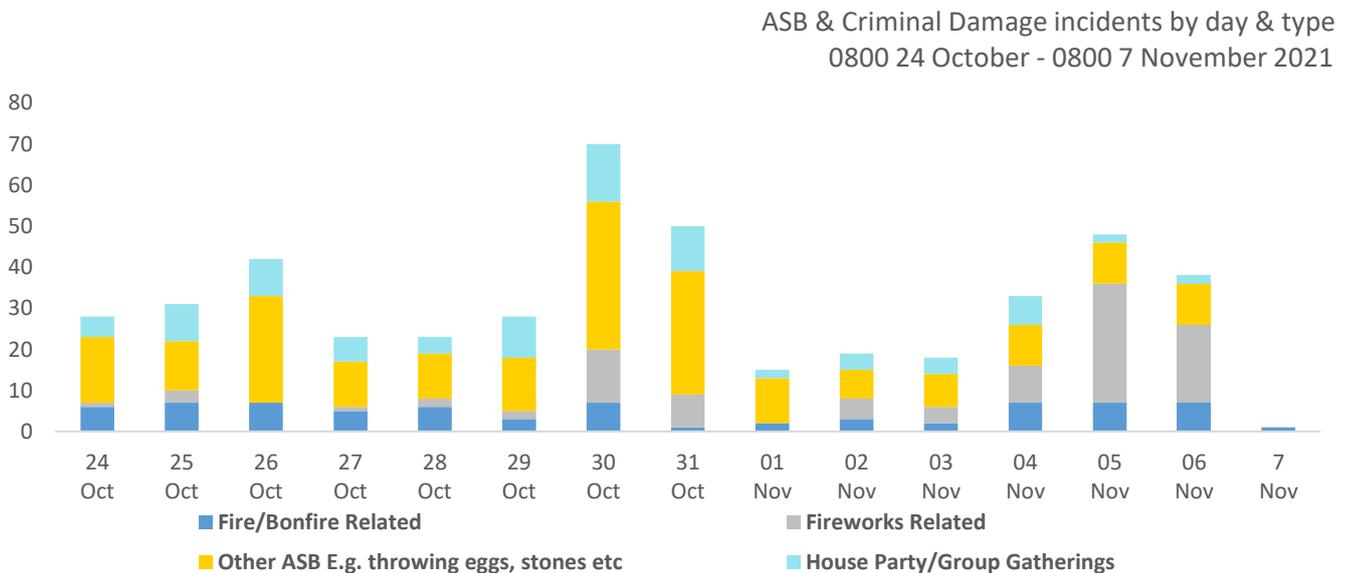
The graphs below (*Fig.2 & Fig.3*) display both Fire & Police activity levels by day and incident type, showing comparisons between small deliberate fire activity and ASB/Criminal Damage reported to the Police during this same time period. Unlike previous years, more incidents were attended by CFRS prior to both 'Mischief Night' (30/10) and 'Halloween' (31/10), but 'Bonfire Night' (05/11) remained the busiest day.

Fig.2 CFRS selected incident activity per day



For the Police, ‘Other ASB e.g. throwing eggs/stones’ was the most common type throughout this period (46%, 215), peaking on 30th Oct (‘Mischief Night’). As would be expected, ‘Fireworks related’ ASB/Criminal Damage was most prevalent on 5th Nov (Bonfire Night) and made up the highest proportion (60%) of the four ASB/Criminal Damage incident types highlighted below on this date.

Fig.3 Cheshire Constabulary selected incident activity per day



The following two charts show a comparison of the time and day of when high or low activity is occurring for both Small Deliberate Fires and ASB/Criminal Damage – again apart from differences in incident volumes they show very similar peak times and days.

Deliberate Fire Activity									ASB & Criminal Damage Activity								
Hour	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total	Hour	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
00	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	00	0.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%	0.2%	1.7%
01	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	01	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%	0.2%	0.2%	0.9%	0.2%	2.4%
02	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	02	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%	1.9%
03	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	03	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.9%
04	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	04	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.9%
05	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	05	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%
06	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	06	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
07	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	07	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.6%
08	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	08	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%	0.6%	2.1%
09	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	09	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
10	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	1.8%	10	0.6%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%	0.6%	2.4%
11	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
12	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	1.8%	12	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.9%
13	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	13	0.2%	0.2%	0.9%	0.2%	0.0%	1.3%	0.9%	3.6%
14	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	14	0.2%	0.2%	0.6%	0.4%	1.3%	0.4%	0.2%	3.4%
15	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	15	0.2%	0.9%	0.2%	1.1%	0.9%	0.6%	1.5%	5.4%
16	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	5.5%	16	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.6%	0.4%	0.9%	0.6%	3.4%
17	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	17	1.1%	0.9%	0.4%	0.4%	0.9%	0.9%	1.5%	6.0%
18	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	3.6%	3.6%	12.7%	18	0.9%	1.5%	1.1%	1.9%	2.1%	2.4%	1.1%	10.9%
19	5.5%	3.6%	3.6%	1.8%	3.6%	3.6%	5.5%	27.3%	19	2.1%	2.1%	1.7%	3.4%	2.1%	3.2%	2.6%	17.3%
20	5.5%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	1.8%	3.6%	18.2%	20	1.7%	2.8%	0.4%	0.4%	2.8%	2.4%	2.4%	12.8%
21	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	1.8%	5.5%	1.8%	0.0%	10.9%	21	0.9%	1.1%	0.2%	1.1%	2.4%	4.7%	1.3%	11.6%
22	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	22	0.2%	0.9%	0.6%	0.4%	0.6%	1.5%	1.3%	5.6%
23	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	23	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	1.1%	1.3%	0.6%	3.6%
Total	14.5%	14.5%	5.5%	16.4%	20.0%	16.4%	12.7%	100.0%	Total	9.9%	13.1%	8.8%	12.0%	16.3%	23.1%	16.9%	100.0%

n= 55

n= 467

The majority of Small Deliberate Fires occurred on a Friday (20.0%) which also coincided with the day that Bonfire Night (5th Nov) fell on this year. However, the majority of ASB & Criminal Damage occurred on a Saturday (23.1%) which coincided with 30th Oct this year, but also known as ‘Mischief Night’ – the night before Halloween. The majority of fires occurred between the hours of 6pm – 10pm (69.1%), which again mirrored the most common times of day for ASB (52.7%).

Overall, small deliberate fires saw a 34% increase from the 2019 Bonfire Period, whereas the common code word search of ASB & Criminal Damage incidents saw a 41% decrease from the same period last year, down from 791 to 467. Similar to 2020, an extra category for ASB was captured in the dataset (House Party/Group Gatherings) which was significantly lower than the previous year. This was due to tighter Covid-19 restrictions during Oct/Nov 2020, caused by illegal gatherings being broken up.

Unitary Performance

Only Halton out of the four unitary areas recorded a year on year decrease in Deliberate Small Fires during this year’s bonfire period. Cheshire East was the only Unitary Area to have seen no change compared to 1 year ago, and both Cheshire West & Chester and Warrington saw slight increases from 2020. However, all four Unitary Areas have seen a reduction from 2019 (pre-Covid) and 5 years ago respectively. This can be seen as follows (Figs. 4 and 5):

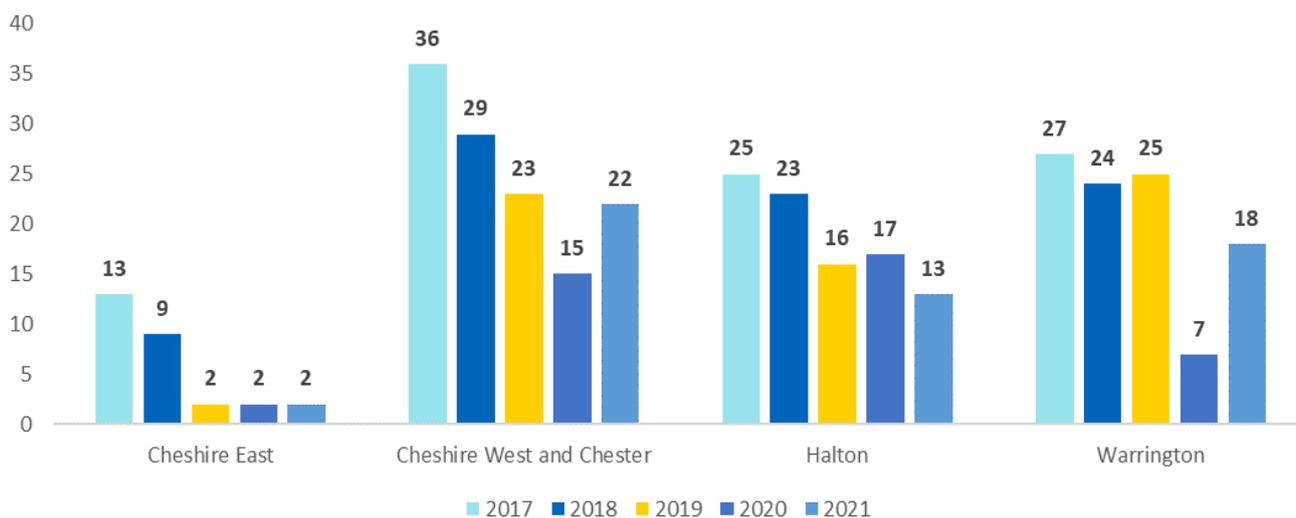
Fig.4

Unitary Area	2021	2020	Year on year	Pre-Covid (2019)	Pre-Covid Change	2016	5 Year change
Cheshire East	2	2	0	2	0	5	-3
Cheshire West and Chester	22	15	7	23	-1	55	-33
Halton	13	17	-4	16	-3	23	-10
Warrington	18	7	11	25	-7	20	-2

*Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in place during 2020 making comparable figures more difficult

Fig. 5

Activity levels by Unitary
0800 24th October - 0800 7th November



Station Performance

In total, there were just 10 station areas which recorded any Small Deliberate Fire activity during the Bonfire Period, with 4 of these only reporting 1 incident each.

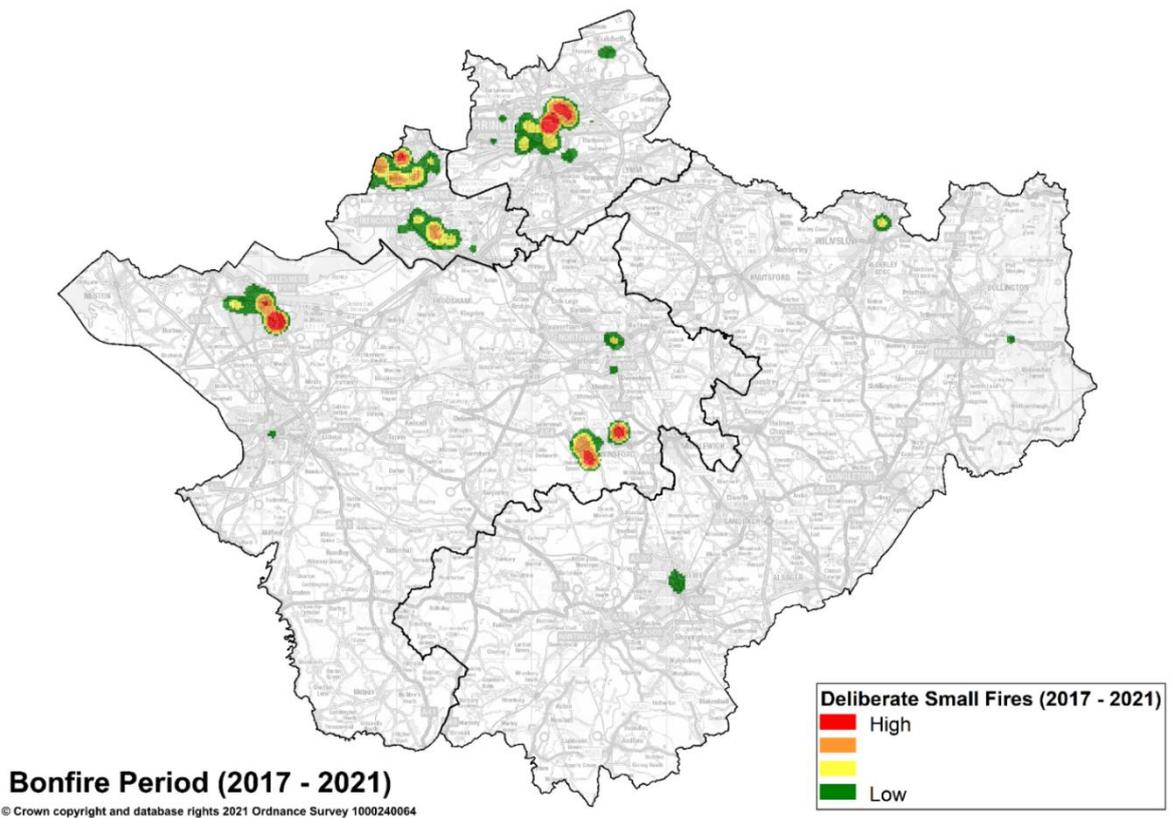
The following table (*Fig. 6*) summarises activity by the top 5 station areas with the highest volume of activity during the 2021 reporting period.

These 5 station areas accounted for 89% of all Small Deliberate Fire activity recorded during the period.

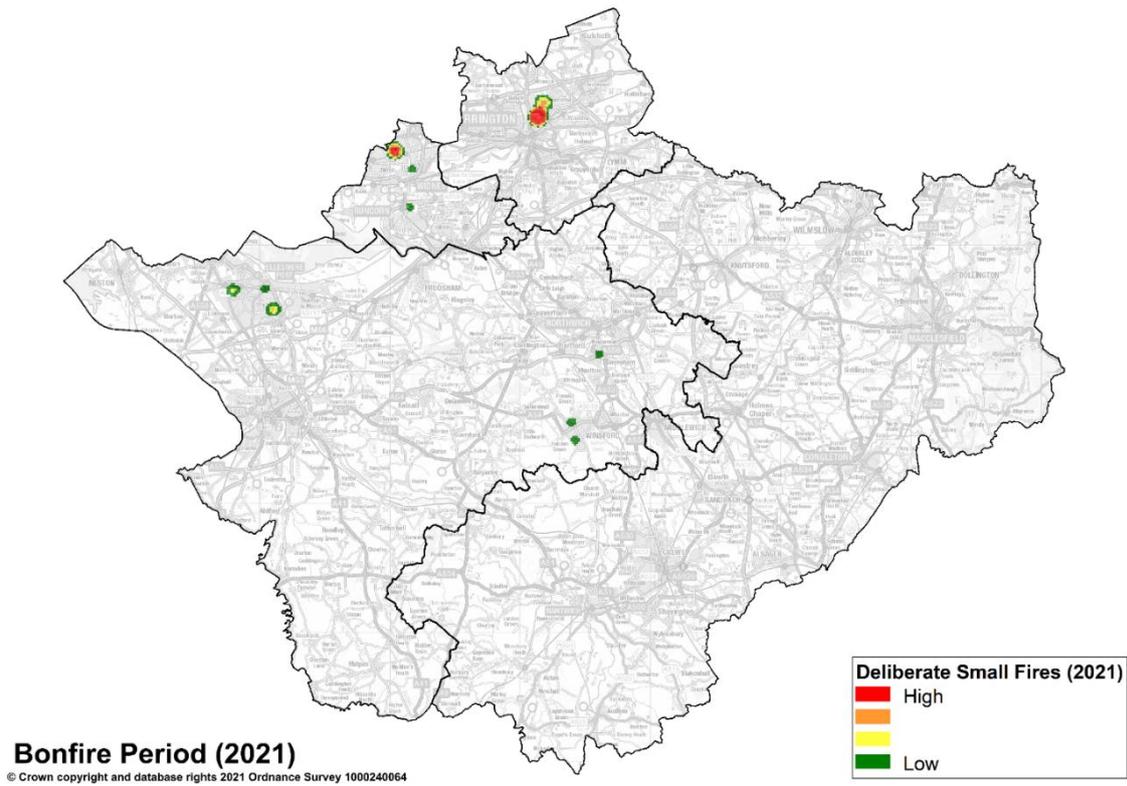
Fig. 6

Station Area	2021	2020	Year on year	Pre-Covid (2019)	Pre-Covid Change	2016	5 Year change
Warrington	18	5	13	21	-3	18	0
Ellesmere Port	12	10	2	7	5	9	3
Widnes	9	6	3	6	3	16	-7
Winsford	7	3	4	14	-7	31	-24
Runcorn	3	8	-5	9	-6	7	-4

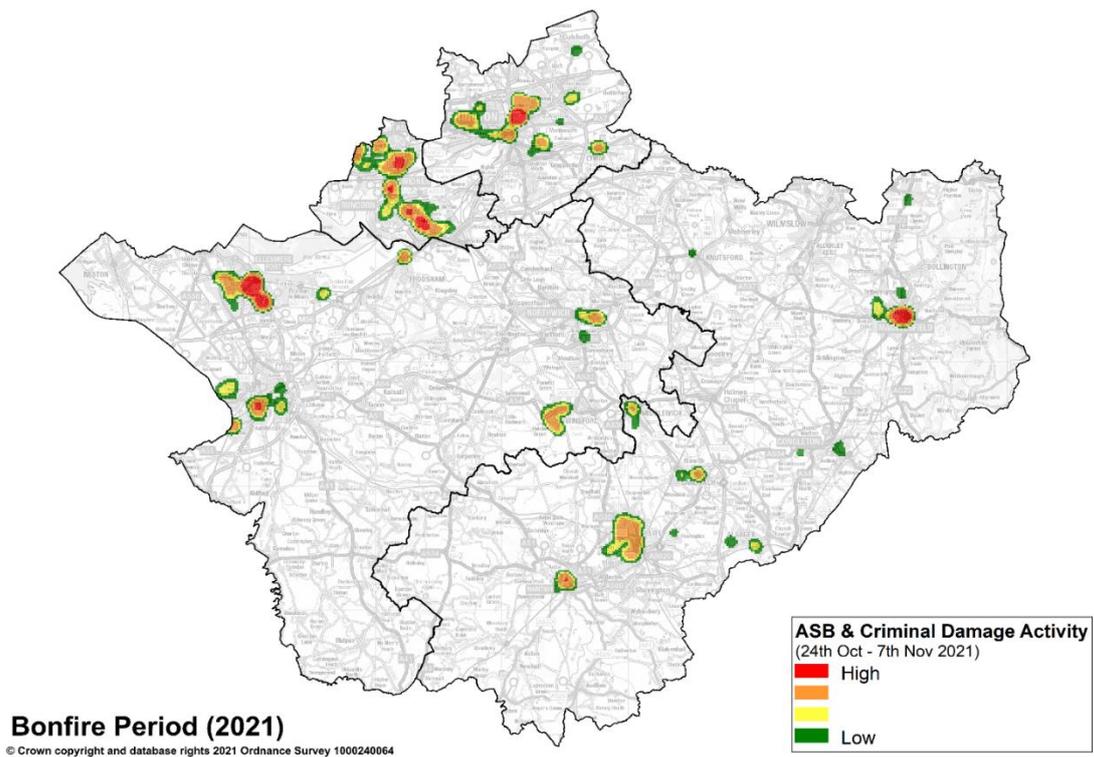
Below shows Bonfire Period Small Deliberate Fire hotspot areas during 0800hrs 24th October to 0800hrs 7th November 2017 – 2021



Below shows the 2021 Bonfire Period Deliberate Small Fire hotspot areas:



Below shows the 2021 Bonfire Period selected Op Treacle word search of ASB & Criminal Damage hotspot areas:



10. Accidents, Near Misses and Attacks on Staff

One incident of youths throwing missiles at fire crews within the Bonfire Period (fortunately with no injuries) occurred on 31st October in Winsford at Glebe Green Drive. As we had direct links to Cheshire Police whilst at NWFC we were able to mobilise police teams with no delay to this incident.

Following the report of an incident in Whitby Park Ellesmere Port (hoax call) one male individual was threatening to crews and kicked the fire appliance (again with no injuries to CFRS staff). Police arrested the individual, and he has been charged with attempted criminal damage and misuse of the 999 system.

A further incident of youths throwing stones (again fortunately with no injuries) occurred on the 18th October at Valley View, Ellesmere Port (Whilst out of the bonfire period this is still noted and relevant within the report).

11. Recommendations

It is recommended That:

- A. the delivery of targeted and timely education to schools in all Service Delivery areas should occur when permitted;
- B. increased use of different communications methods occurs including the talking-head videos that worked well to express key safety messages;
- C. bonfire strategy groups should plan well in advance of the period and encourage safe, organised displays as the primary advice (when it is suitable due to C-19) to allow people to celebrate bonfire night safely;
- D. use of SIUs should be targeted over an appropriate number of evenings and the number of vehicles to remain as a minimum at 4 to cover the known risk areas;
- E. Service and partner agency resources and efforts should be focused in areas where intelligence suggests that high incident volumes may occur;
- F. where possible, partner agencies should be persuaded to continue the free removal schemes for the removal of large items (normally a chargeable service). This will continue to be “championed” at Bonfire Strategy Group planning meetings;
- G. the tolerant approach adopted by the Service has proven successful and should be continued;
- H. targeted youth activity should occur (where appropriate due to C-19) using the On the Streets Team, utilising data provided by the Business Intelligence Unit;
- I. the involvement of Communications staff providing live social media updates should continue;
- J. the approach of utilising a member of Cheshire Police within NWFC will be requested for the key nights of the period;
- K. consideration should be given to continue support to organised diversionary activities (where appropriate due to C-19) particularly in areas of high deliberate fire activity.

12. Summary and conclusions

The total number of small deliberate fires (SDF) attended during the 2021 period (55) was higher than the previous year 2020 of (41). It should be noted that within the 2020 period there were still C19 lockdown limitations in place. This years figure is lower than the 2019 period (66).

The 2021 figure was 46.6% lower than figures from 2016 (103).

Engagement

This was achieved with direct engagement and by the public utilising the Service's main social media accounts and station accounts which allowed content to be directed at a level that is relevant; local issues for local residents which is proven to be effective. This resulted in consistent, timely and targeted delivery of bonfire and firework safety messages.

Fuel removal

Bonfire removal schemes continue to be an effective means of reducing the numbers of SDF.

Incident recording

The tolerant, risk-based approach to dealing with incidents and recording will have impacted on the number of incidents recorded as SDF.

Weather

It has been found that weather conditions experienced over the bonfire period have an impact on incident volumes. There was heavy rain over the first weekend in the bonfire period. .

Cross Departmental Work

Departments throughout the Service were proactive during the run up to and including the bonfire period. Without the efforts of staff and partners it is likely that the number of SDF would have been much greater.