

Appendix 1



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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.

ASB includes the setting of deliberate, and nuisance fires. This places pressure on the resources of Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service (The Service) 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 the service 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 2022 captured data from 0800hrs 24th October 2022 to 0800hrs 7th November 2022. 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 ASB, 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

The Service 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.

The Service's communications team and the deliberate fire reduction manager continually monitored daily incidents and addressed 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.

A designated 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. The deliberate fire reduction manager and the digital team produced short reel videos which were used and distributed 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

Across Cheshire 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 The 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, greens and on the designated Bonfire web page.

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.

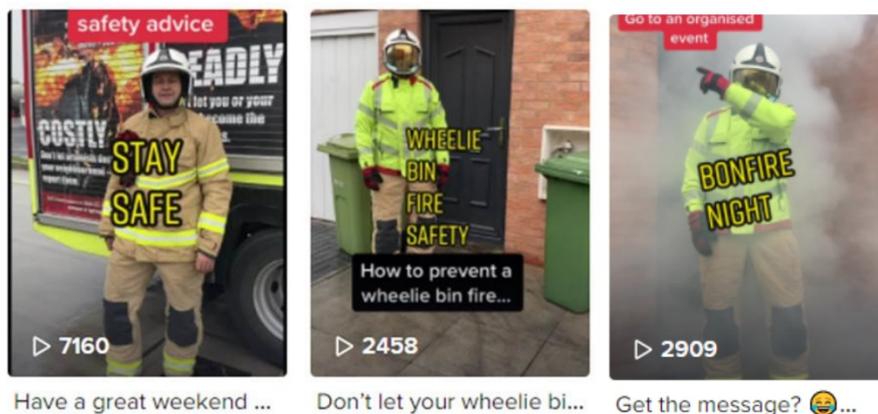
5. Educational Events and Activities

A targeted approach to education is utilised by the Service, and this continued across all areas in 2022. Utilising the business intelligence team comprehensive intelligence documents, 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 several 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, this message advised 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 over 12000 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 working closely with the streetscape team to remove fly tipped items.

Macclesfield run several engagement events through the period covering fire setting and the dangers as well as reporting fires via the street scene teams.

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 for a joint targeted approach.

A key part of the activity is working with Winsford Youth and Community Forum. £500 of Unitary Performance Group (UPG) funding was approved to support a variety of events held during the Bonfire period (pizza making) at the venue to engage with the local community. Further promotion of the diversionary events and activities was completed at local ASB hotspot locations - Winsford Town Park, Winsford Cross Shopping Centre and Weaver Park Way resulting in greater numbers attending the sessions.

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 residents on the safe storage of refuse containers.

Additionally in January 2023, The Service, Cheshire Police, Weaver Vale Housing Trust and Cheshire West and Chester delivered another engagement day in Wharton Ward giving advice to residents and placing bin stickers on domestic bins.

[Ellesmere Port](#) held planning meetings prior to the bonfire period which saw an extra 9 Police officers on patrol over the bonfire period targeting known hotspot areas and locations. Regular arson route patrols were carried out by the station identifying fly tipping and requesting removal through LA.

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

[Chester](#) completed regular arson route patrols identifying fly tipping and requesting removal through LA.

[Northwich](#) continued to utilise social media and arson routes over the period, also working closely with Cheshire Police holding an event on the 5th November in the town centre promoting organised firework events and the dangers of unorganised fires and firework displays.

[Halton](#)

[Widnes](#) Service Delivery teams and Prevention teams along with Cheshire Police also completed targeted Ward Walks utilising approximately 500 leaflets on wheelie bin advice which was in line with the bonfire safety message. Whilst crews delivered Safe and Well visits wheelie bin safety, bonfire and firework safety were included during this period. Social media outputs continued to be utilised by the crews to engage with the public and regular arson routes were completed identifying fly tipping and their removal.

The station also engaged in youth events during the period in and around the Frank Myler Pavilion fields with Halton council

[Runcorn](#) crews took part in Operation Banger in partnership with Your Housing where crews assisted in removing waste items from estates and having skips located around the estate so residents could dispose of unwanted items. They also attended Beechwood primary school and gave bonfire and firework safety talks to children.

They also 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 continued to be utilised by the crews to engage with the public.

[Warrington](#)

[Warrington](#) teams completed targeted work with Cheshire Police in areas where increased incidents of ASB and small fires had occurred, utilising the scrambler team to patrol known areas of activity.

Service Delivery, Prevention and Cheshire Police teams completed two community action days in 4 historically high-risk areas for the bonfire period. Crews discussed how to report bonfires over the upcoming bonfire period and how people could lower their risk of fire.

[Penketh](#) shared the bonfire pre analysis data with all managers which enabled them to identify areas of activity, and arson routes were designed around these. Social media was utilised and one community engagement event was held at Tesco's Widnes where they gave out fire safety advice regarding fireworks and bonfires.

[Lymm](#) and [Birchwood](#) continued with social media awareness campaigns to engage with the 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.

7. Operational Response

Appliances have been deployed in the busier areas during the bonfire period for several years. The appliances used for these additional resources in 2022 were the on-call appliances from Penketh, Runcorn, Winsford and Birchwood.

These appliances 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 Mischief night fell on weekends, with Halloween falling on a Monday this year. Both periods involved a period of the weekend which did bring two weekends into contention for possible increased activity.

These appliances 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 4th, 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.

8. North West Fire Control

Extensive planning took place for the 2022 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.

9. Media and Corporate Communications

The Communications team actively promoted several 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, local radio stations and TV interviews.

Our messaging was to encourage people to go to a professionally organised events rather than light to fires themselves. The goal was to help reduce the number of calls the Service gets involving bonfires and keep our resources available for real emergencies.

Internal communications

Two Green articles appeared, directing staff to an Intranet page, set up to provide up-to-date information for firefighters. It also contained waste removal contact numbers for the four unitary areas to help clear any build-up of bonfire materials prior to the evening itself.

All staff with access to station social media accounts were contacted and given post suggestions and key messaging to encourage the same advice was given across the organisation.

External communications

A press release was issued at the start of the period asking residents to go to organised events. Another was written highlighting an increase in arson incidents occurring in Winsford and attacks on firefighters in the town.

We promoted a list of organised Bonfire events to attend on the website.

Interviews were offered to several radio stations, and one was undertaken with Radio Northwich by Ryan Swindells.

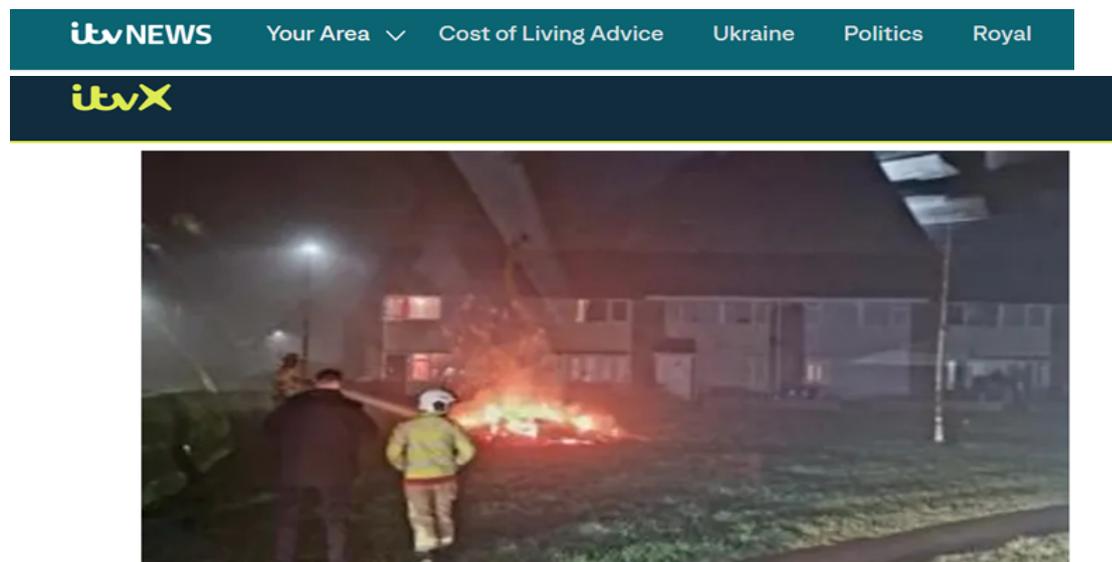
National ITV News responded to the press release for attacks on firefighters. They were sent dashcam footage from the fire engine to show the laser assault on crews and more information was provided. Granada News also took up the [story](#) and were

sent the footage in the hope they would both use it to highlight the dangers firefighters are facing around this time. The programme also used the information as part of a bigger piece that included all North West fire and rescue services. Cheshire Live covered the attack story on their social media platform.

On the night itself a live blog was set up on the website, staffed by Mark Shone who updated incident as they occurred from 5pm until 9.30pm. This blog received positive messages from residents thanking firefighters and it also provided the media with up-to-date stats and info, which Cheshire Live promoted during the evening.

Social media

We used Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Tik Tok to share our advice messaged over the period.

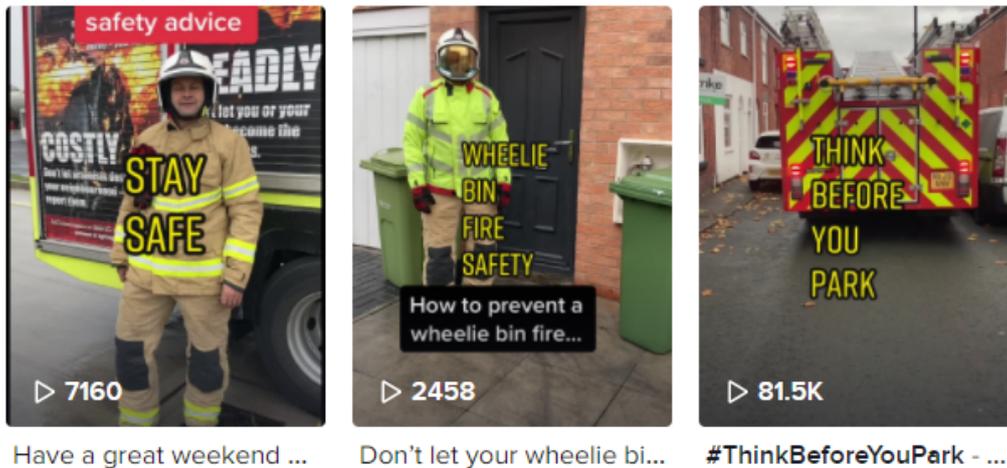


*Crews from Winsford Fire Station were attacked with fireworks after being called to an unattended bonfire
Credit: Cheshire Fire and Rescue*

The live blog on the website featuring a list on incidents as they occurred worked well on Facebook and Twitter, with followers engaging and commenting throughout the evening. The most popular posts across all platforms were for the parking responsibly and when highlighting firefighters being attacked in Winsford.

The post with the highest shares on Facebook was the Hallowe'en post which offered Stop, Drop and Roll and Cool, Call, Cover advice in the wording. The business safety messages around Hallowe'en and ensuring fire escapes were not blocked by decorations and stock worked well on LinkedIn.

Our highest rating Tik Tok video was for parked cars, warning people to think where they parked if visiting events over the weekend. This came following concerns that there was a large unofficial bonfire taking place in Winsford and concerns were raised that a fire engine may not get through if an incident occurred. The video was viewed 81.5k times by Bonfire Night and was liked and shared by many people who agreed with our messaging. We also included videos on general bonfire advice and wheelie bin safety on the platform.



Following 16 deliberate fires the weekend before the event in Winsford Ryan Swindells provided a piece to camera that was issued on the Winsford Fire Station page, highlighting the need to report anyone seen setting light to anything or targeting firefighters with physical or verbal abuse.

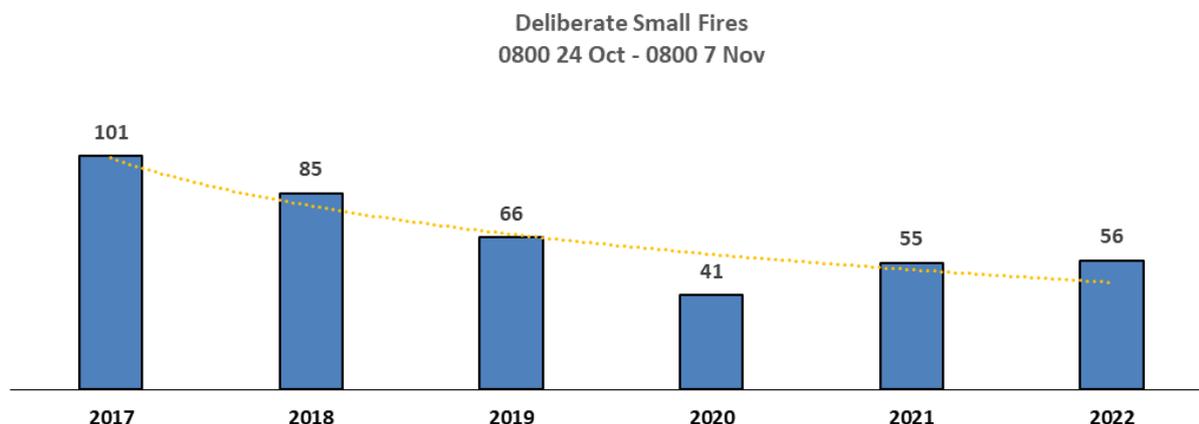


10. Incident Data and Performance Summary

Incidents recorded during the bonfire period

The following graph (Fig. 1) illustrates the overall trend of Small Deliberate Fires in Cheshire over recent years. The 2022 Bonfire Period saw 56 Small Deliberate Fires, showing a 45% reduction from 5 years ago. There was however a slight increase from 2020 and 2021, but 2022 was still lower than in 2019 when Covid-19 lockdown measures were not in place and is therefore a more appropriate comparison.

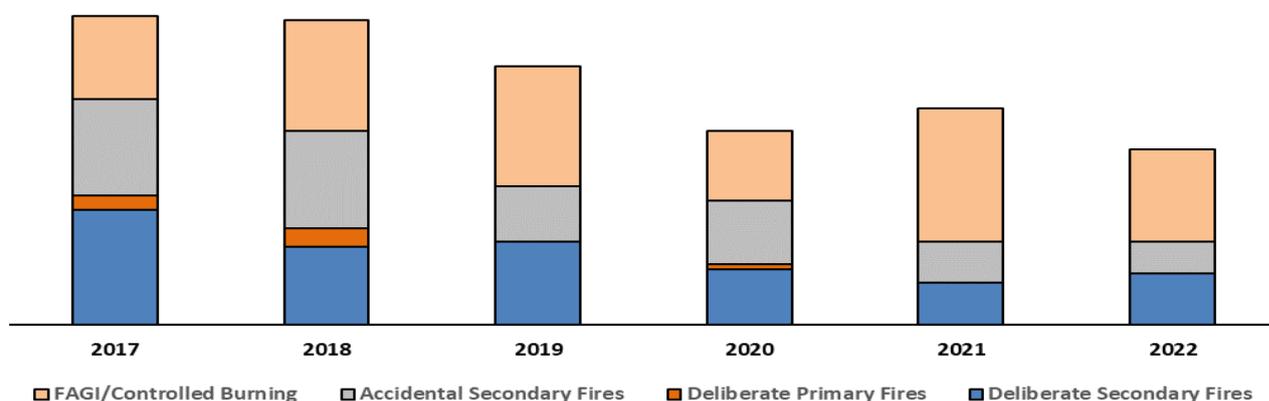
Fig. 1 – Small Deliberate Fires in bonfire period by financial year



A total of 11 Small Deliberate Fires were recorded on Bonfire Night (5th Nov), however a total of 38 bonfire related incidents were attended – 20 (53%) of these incidents were recorded as ‘False Alarm Good Intent’ and 7 incidents (18%) were ‘Accidental Small Fires’, with zero Deliberate Primary Fires recorded.

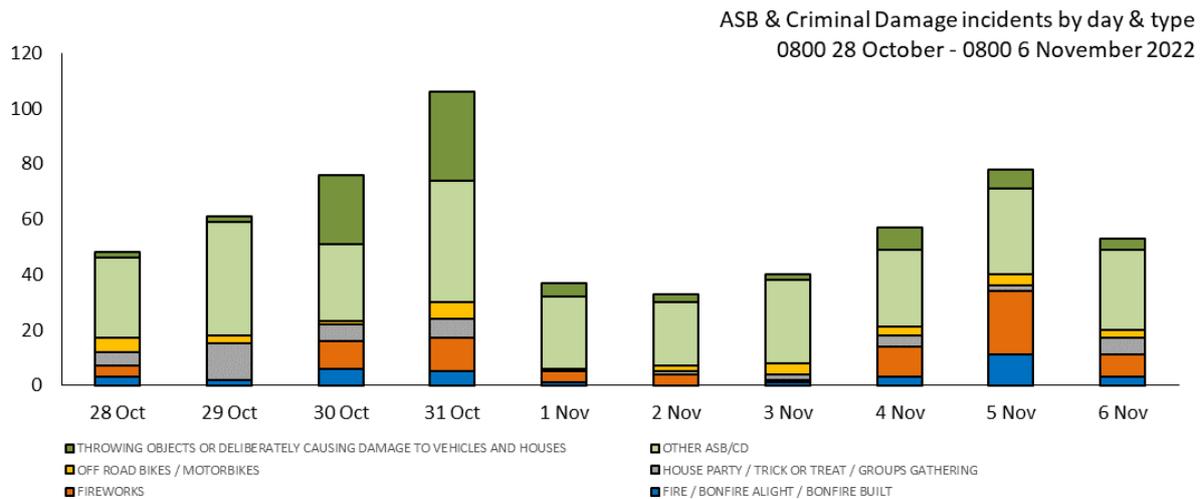
Bonfire Night (5th Nov) 2022 had the smallest number of recorded bonfire related incidents (38) in the last 6 years compared to previous Bonfire Nights (excluding 2020 & 2021).

Fig. 2 – Bonfire related incidents on Bonfire Night (5th November) by financial year



The graphs overleaf (*Fig.3 & Fig.4*) illustrate both Fire & Police activity levels by day and incident type, showing comparisons between bonfire related activity and ASB/Criminal Damage reported to the Police during this same time period. More incidents were attended by CFRS on Bonfire night [5th November] (38) compared to other days in the Bonfire period, with Mischief Night [30th October] (14) the next most common. For Small Deliberate Fires, these also peaked on Mischief Night (11) and Bonfire Night (11).

Fig.3 CFRS selected incident activity per day



For the Police, after ‘other ASB/Criminal Damage’ (309), ‘Throwing objects or deliberately causing damage to vehicles and houses’ (90) was the most common type of ASB/Criminal Damage incident. This peaked on Mischief Night (25) and Halloween (32). ‘Fireworks’ (77) were the next most common incident type, with peaks seen around Bonfire Night (23) and Mischief Night (10) / Halloween (12).

Fig.4 Cheshire Constabulary selected incident activity per day

The following three temporal charts show the time and day when high or low activity is occurring for Small Deliberate Fires, Bonfire Related Activity and ASB/Criminal Damage – apart from differences in incident volumes they show very similar peak times and days.

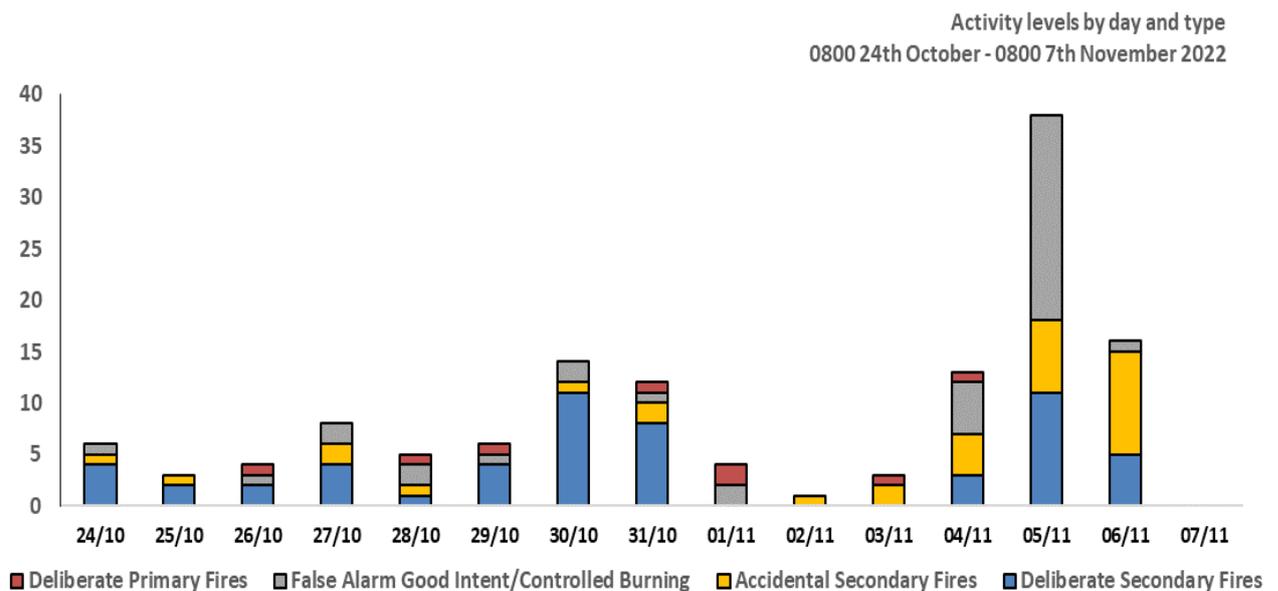
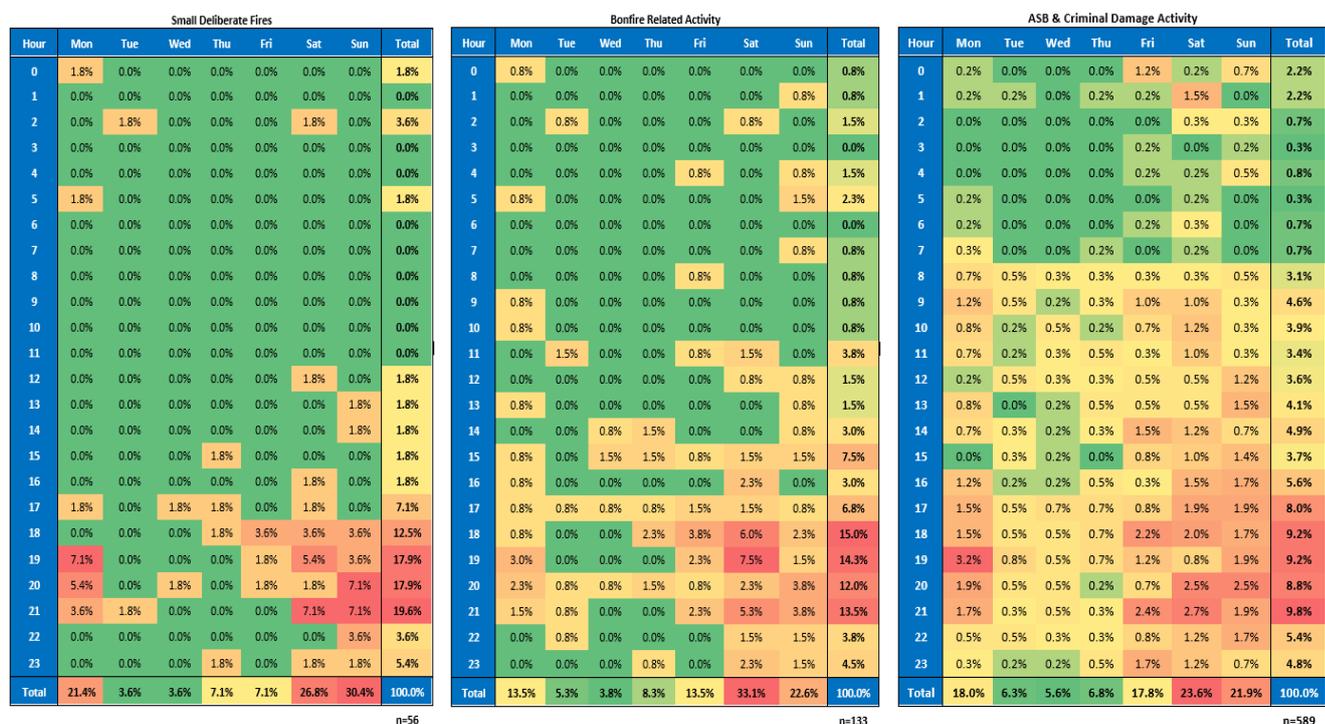


Fig.5 Temporal Chart of Bonfire Related & ASB/Criminal Damage incidents

The majority of Small Deliberate Fires occurred on a Sunday (30.4%), followed by Saturday (26.8%) and Monday (21.4%). This coincided with the days that Bonfire Night (Saturday), Mischief Night (Sunday) and Halloween (Monday) fell on this year. The majority of ASB & Criminal Damage incidents occurred on a Saturday (23.6%) which coincided with Bonfire Night. The majority of fires occurred between the hours of 6pm – 10pm (67.9%), which again mirrored the most common times of day for ASB & Criminal Damage incidents (37.0%).



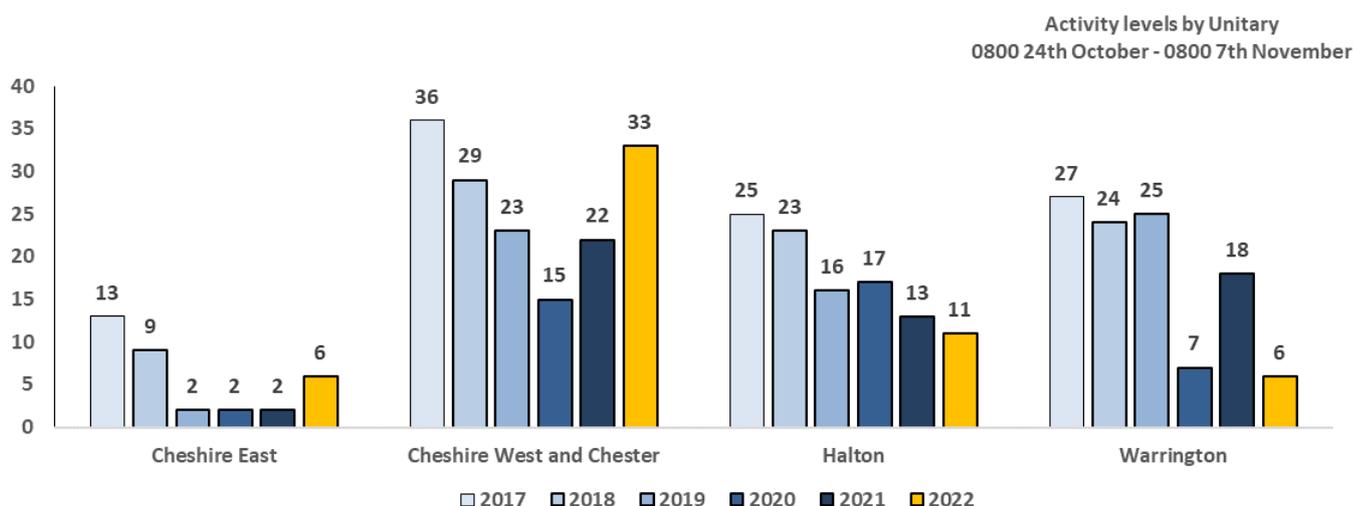
Unitary Performance

Cheshire East and Cheshire West unitary areas saw increases in small deliberate fires in the 2022 Bonfire Period compared to 2021. Conversely, Halton and Warrington recorded decreases in the 2022 Bonfire Period compared to 2021. However, all four Unitary Areas have seen a reduction from 2017. This can be seen as follows (Figs. 6 and 7):

Fig.6 Small Deliberate fires by unitary area

Unitary Area	2021	2022	Year on year	Pre-Covid (2019)	Pre-Covid Change	2017	5 Year change
Cheshire East	2	6	4	2	4	13	-7
Cheshire West and Chester	22	33	11	23	10	36	-3
Halton	13	11	-2	16	-5	25	-14
Warrington	18	6	-12	25	-19	27	-21

Fig. 7 Small Deliberate fires by bonfire period year and unitary area



Station Performance

In total, there were just 14 station areas which recorded any Deliberate Small Fire activity during the Bonfire Period, with 8 of these only reporting 1 incident each.

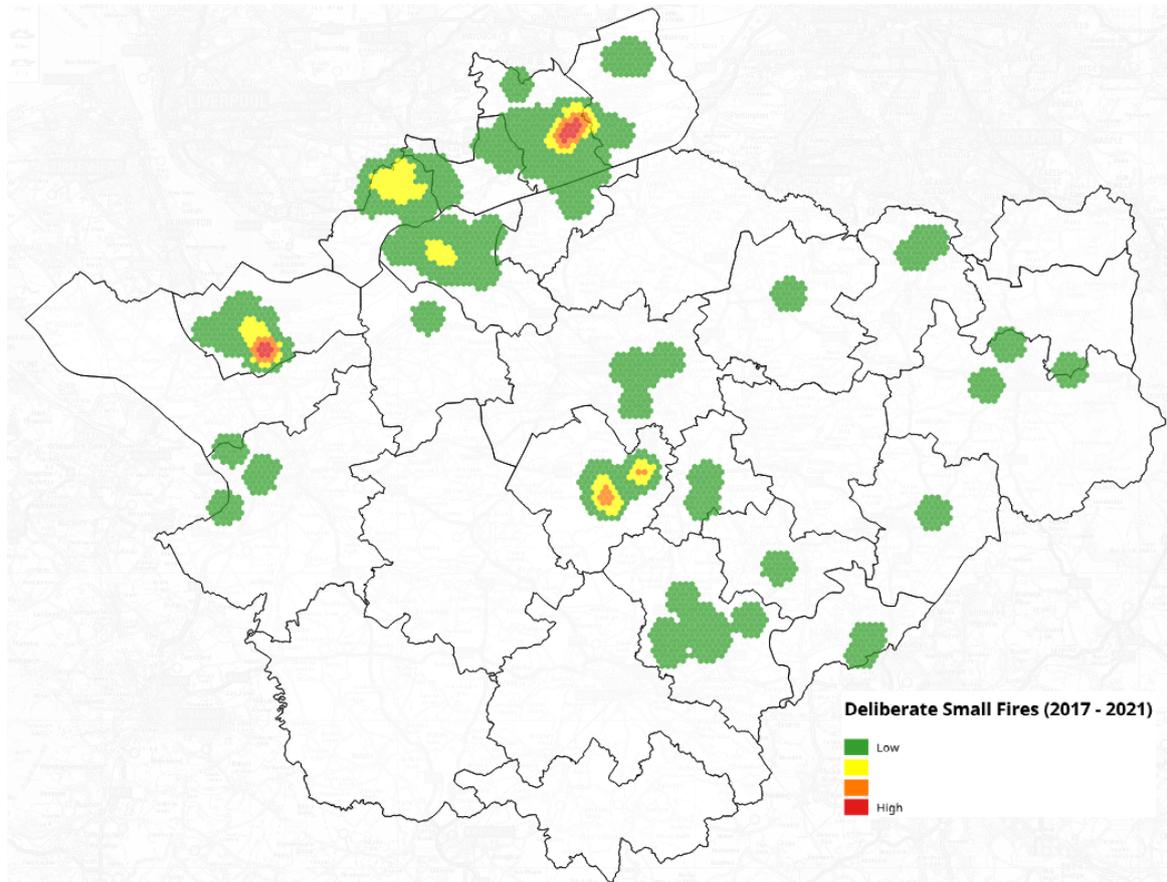
The following table (Fig. 8) summarises activity by the top 5 station areas with the highest volume of activity during the 2022 reporting period.

These 5 station areas accounted for 82% of all Deliberate Small Fire activity recorded during the period.

Fig. 8 Small Deliberate fires by station area

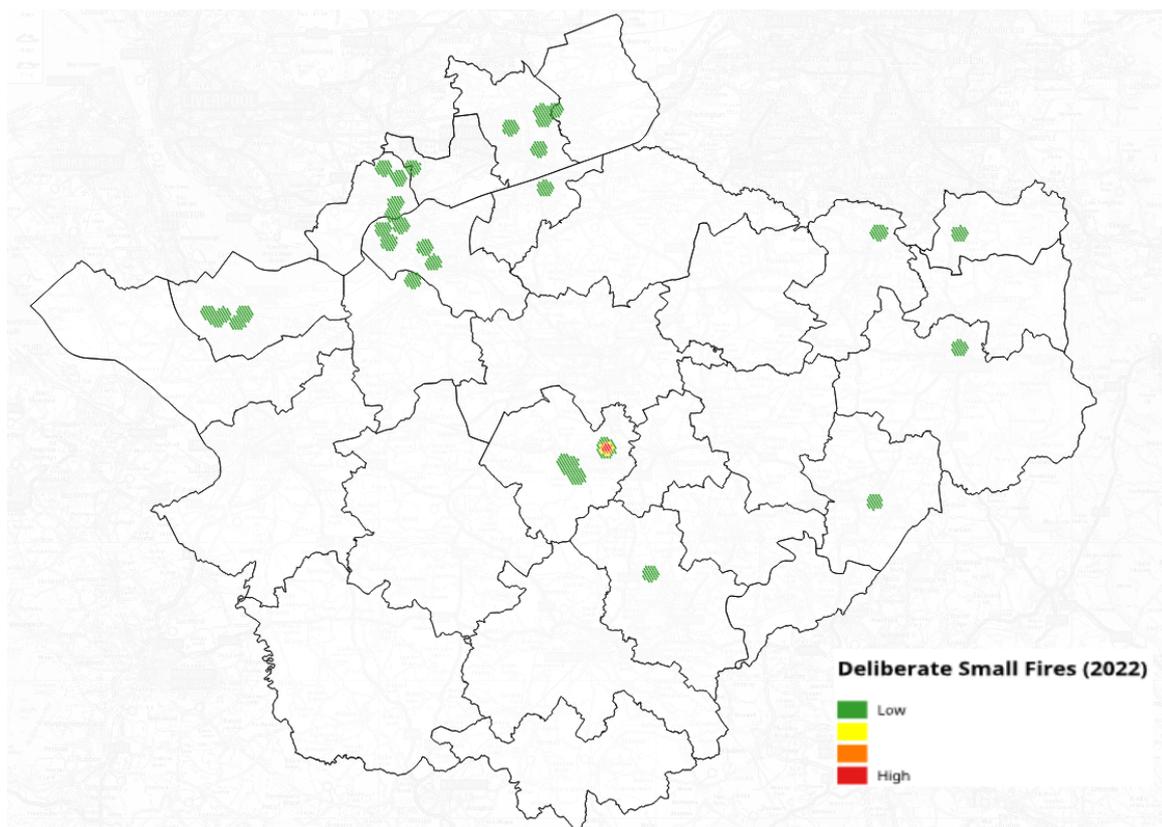
Station Area	2021	2022	Year on year	Pre-Covid (2019)	Pre-Covid Change	2017	5 Year change
Winsford	7	26	+19	14	+12	15	+11
Runcorn	3	6	+3	9	-3	6	0
Ellesmere Port	12	6	-6	7	-1	16	-10
Warrington	18	4	-14	21	-17	24	-20
Widnes	9	4	-5	6	-2	19	-15

The map below shows Bonfire Period Small Deliberate Fire hotspot areas from 2017 – 2021 (08:00 24th Oct – 08:00 7th Nov):



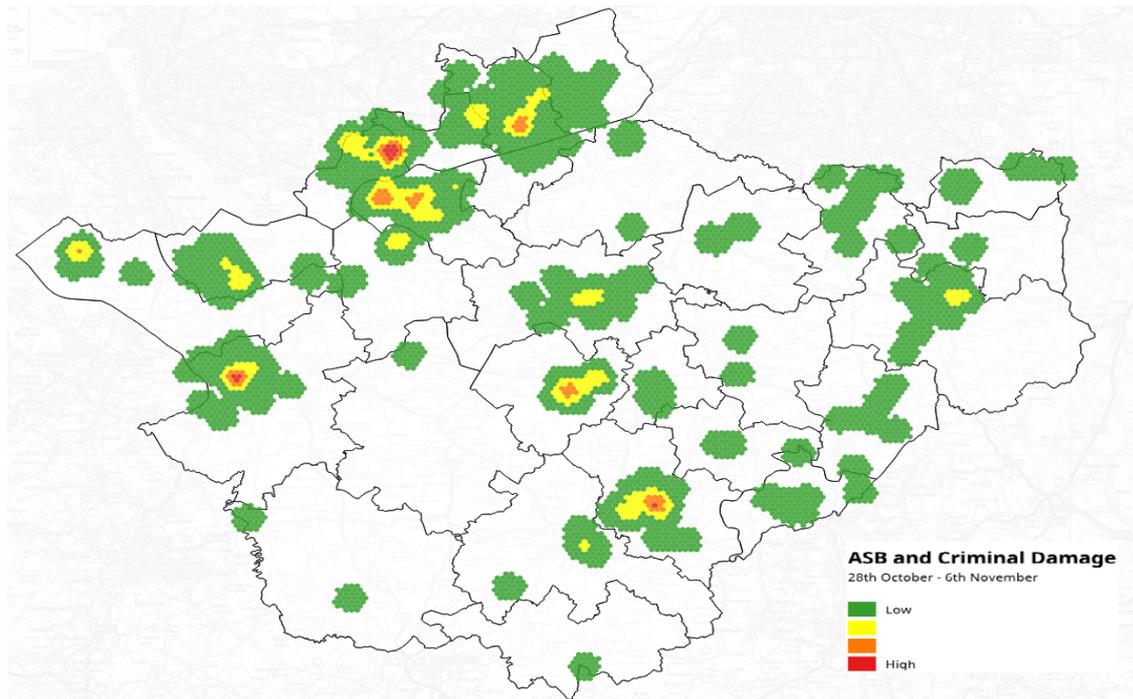
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The map below shows the 2022 Bonfire Period Small Deliberate Fire hotspot areas:



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The map below shows ASB and Criminal Damage hotspot areas in 2022 from the 28th October – 6th November.



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11. Accidents, Near Misses and Attacks on Staff

There were six reported incidents of youths attacking crews or appliances during the Bonfire Period. All were reported in the Winsford area. Primarily all these fires have occurred in the known hotspot wards (Wharton & Swanlow) locations such as Dart Walk, Leyland Walk, Esk Rd, Dee Way, and Bedford Rise.

The recorded attacks on crews consisted of;

3 incidents involved objects being thrown or laser pens,

1 incident involved physical abuse,

2 other acts of aggression.

66% of attacks occurred during Mischief night and Halloween night with the remaining 34% of attacks occurred on the Bonfire night.

Due to the pre-planning that had taken place and having established direct links to Cheshire Police whilst at NWFC we were able to mobilise police teams with no delay to these isolated incidents in Winsford.

Through collaborative work with Cheshire Police, the Service secured police resources to escort operational crews from 16:00 – 23:00 from the 30th October to the 31st October and the 4th & the 5th of November. This resulted in the crews from Winsford feeling safer and able to carry out their roles safely.

12. Recommendations

It is recommended That:

- A. the delivery of specific data led engagement through timely education packages to schools in identified hotspot areas should occur when permitted (this should be attempted in collaboration with other partners);
- B. there be increased use of a variety of communications methods including 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 to allow people to celebrate bonfire night safely;
- D. use of on call resources and appliances 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. the Service and partner agency resources and efforts should be focused and coordinated 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 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. having direct communications with Cheshire Police (Inspectors) in known hotspot station areas should be developed after the evaluation of the findings in Winsford 2022 and;

- K. consideration should be given to promoting diversionary activities in areas of high deliberate fire activity. Local station crews and the designated deliberate fire reference holders on station should consider this in conjunction with UPG members and develop funding bids as required.

13. Summary and conclusions

The 2022 performance has been a multi agency, cross service approach which has delivered success and the service continues to experience low numbers of SDF and ASB and that we will continue to work together to improve this further.

Engagement

The service used direct engagement with the public and the Service's main social media accounts and station accounts to communicate and engage with the community. Messages were also developed based on local intelligence which allowed content to be directed at a level that is relevant; local issues for local residents which has 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 has impacted on the number of incidents recorded as SDF.

Weather

It has been found that weather conditions experienced over the bonfire period can have an impact on incident volumes. There were periods of rain over the first weekend and the second weekend during 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.