



Making Cheshire Safer

Bonfire Period Report 2018

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1. Introduction

The annual bonfire season represents a period of increased activity for Police and Fire and 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 fires, in addition to nuisance and celebratory bonfires. This places pressure on the resources of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service due to an increase in call levels to incidents classed as small deliberate fires (SDF).

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.

We have also considered that Bonfire Period dates coincide with Halloween, and it is recognised that these dates are opportunities for ASB of all types, not just fire related ASB. There is also an event called 'Mischief night' on the 30th November 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.

Police and Fire Bonfire Period recording dates were aligned in 2017. This made it easier to compare overall ASB. Data from previous years has been reviewed in order to establish trends. For CFRS the overall trend for SDF continues downward year on year. However, some station areas have seen year on year increases.

2. Recording of Incidents

The bonfire reporting period 2018 captured data from 0800hrs 24th October to 0800hrs 7th November. Data from these dates has also been examined for the preceding 4 years for all types of ASB.

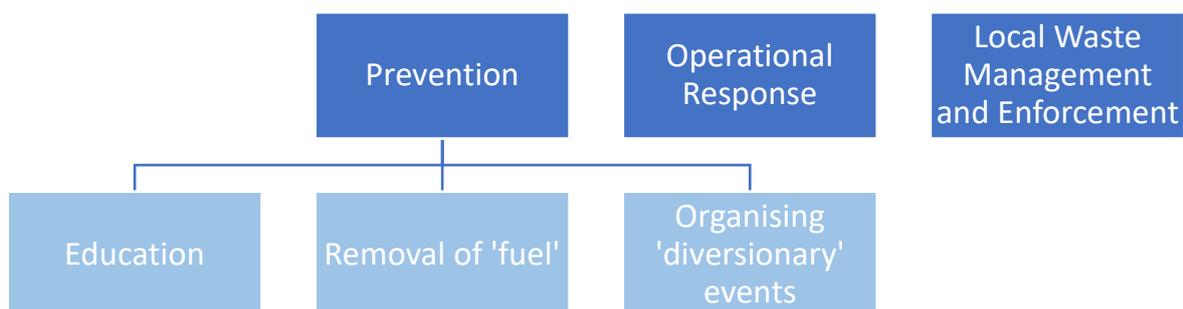
As there is no specific bonfire reporting category on the Incident Recording System (IRS) (this is the national method used to complete a fire report) this report relates to all small deliberate fires (SDF). The reasoning for this is that the difference between a bonfire and a pile of rubbish set on 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 and Partnership Activity

Station Managers and Lead Advocates engaged with local partners to plan a variety of interventions and strategies based on local needs and historical data. The objectives of these interventions and strategies were as follows:



Local strategies were again produced for Ellesmere Port, and Winsford, Warrington, and Halton. Each of these four local 'Bonfire Groups' is attended by the local Station Manager and/or the Station Manager responsible for arson reduction. Bonfire activity levels in any of the individual Cheshire East station areas do not warrant the formation of a specific strategy. SDF activities are however addressed at regular local meetings and appropriate interventions are planned if necessary.

4. Bonfire Removal Schemes and Waste Management

All Areas –The Street-scene type format of the reporting and removal of waste continues to occur in all council areas. There are some subtle differences across areas but essentially the public receive a service where by using a free phone number to report the location of the waste, it is then removed.

All Areas – Operational crews increased their pre-planned arson route activities in 2018 enabling them to provide valuable real time information to Street-scene and other fuel removal services operating in their local areas.

5. Educational Events and Activities

A more targeted approach to education has been adopted by the Service in recent years, and this continued across all areas in 2018. 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.

Separate presentations have been utilised for delivery at primary and secondary schools. Operational staff organised and delivered the primary school educational visits, in conjunction with key stage 2 visits scheduled for the weeks preceding bonfire night.

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.

Diversionary events vary across the 4 local authority areas and the relevant local strategy groups in Warrington, Halton, Ellesmere Port, and Winsford. There are dozens of 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.

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.

Youth and community groups organise a number of events during the bonfire weekend and the preceding half-term school holiday and there were a number of organised bonfire and firework events. Due to relatively low levels of fire related ASB, there is little need for partnership activity and the formation of a specific strategy in Cheshire East.

Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) – The key firework events in CWAC are displays in Chester and Ellesmere Port. Held at the Roodee and Whitby Park respectively. The Ellesmere Port event was supported financially by CFRS to occur, The Chester event although funding was approved it was not used due to a change in the way the event occurred, the Lions were not the organiser for 2018. Funding was obtained to provide 45 tickets to members of the public for the annual Winsford Town Firework Display and Bonfire organised by the Rotary Club of Winsford and Middlewich held at Barton Stadium.

The Winsford Bonfire Strategy Group worked in partnership with Cheshire Police, CWAC Council, Weaver Vale Housing, the local ASB team and Youth Engagement team to minimise SDF activity during the Bonfire period. The Service and partners held for young people within the known areas of fire related ASB sessions throughout the lead up to Bonfire Night, an assault course event, and virtual reality sessions were used to engage with the young people and encourage them to keep fit as well as receiving guidance from Police and Firefighters. The Police increased patrols and presence in the Winsford area for the period, and multi agency ‘ward walks’ enabled Fire, Police and Weaver Vale housing staff to effectively engage with residents. The Service also utilised the ‘On the Streets’ team in the area to directly engage with the public.

In the Chester and Ellesmere Port area five Youth Anti-Social Behaviour (YADE) events were held from the 26th Oct – 3rd November to act as diversionary events and to improve engagement with the local young people.

Cheshire Police again engaged with known previous fire related ASB offenders in Winsford and Ellesmere Port during half-term to demonstrate to them that their behaviour was not acceptable, and was being monitored. ‘Operation Proportion’ was also utilised by Cheshire Police, this involved dispersal orders in hot spot areas in Ellesmere Port.

Halton – Halton Borough Council organises one large firework display, which is always very well attended. This takes place on the bank of the Mersey and Ship Canal to ensure a good view from several locations. The council do not encourage other smaller bonfire events to be organised by local groups at this time.

Crews continued to be proactive in the run-up and during the period to reporting any waste removal that was required.

Warrington – Torus housing had shared Intelligence with CFRS that local youths would dress in clown’s outfits and put fireworks through the letterboxes of elderly and vulnerable residents, the intelligence was shared with the Police. Following the request from Torus housing, CFRS visited and installed 15 fire retardant letterboxes demonstrating how partnership working can reduce risks to our most vulnerable Warrington residents.

Operation Scattered was held on the 17/10/2018 around Leicester Street and Whitecross Road this was a Multi Agency Impact event prior to the Bonfire Period.

Operational Crews and the Prevention teams completed 89 safe and well visits in the area and provided detailed information on cooking safety along with arson prevention, mainly around fly tipping and wheelie bins.

In addition a chip pan was exchanged for a deep fat fryer, a House of multiple occupation and a property that was owned by a private landlord without working smoke alarms were reported to Warrington Borough Council.

The Protection teams visited and gave Arson prevention advice to 31 businesses around Lovely lane, Folly lane, Kerfoot Street and Bewsey road as part of this initiative.

Police and Housing reported there were a drastic reduction in activity, the residents have reported to housing and community engagement officers that they felt reassured and safe due to the activities of all the partners.

7. Operational Response

Small Incident Units (SIU) have been deployed in the busier areas during the bonfire period for several years now. The appliances used for these additional resources in 2018 were the On-call appliances from Penketh, Runcorn and Winsford. This deployment allows on call staff in development and our apprentices to gain experience of spate conditions, whilst leaving the whole-time appliances available for life risk incidents.

These SIU were deployed flexibly during five evenings from the 1st November – 5th November between 1600-2200 hrs. The services Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager attended North West Fire Control (NWFC) on the busiest evenings, Saturday, Sunday and Monday to enable risk based mobilisation to take place, often overriding the 'proposed resources' offered by the NWFC mobilising system in order to support and maintain cover levels across the County.

Availability of SIU at times of peak activity allows other appliances to be available for incidents that may pose a threat to life or property and, it will be recommended that this practice continues in future. SIU provision and deployment continues to be a cost effective means of maintaining structural appliance availability.

8. North West Fire Control

Extensive planning again took place for the 2018 bonfire period in North West Fire Control (NWFC). Prior to 2014, each FRS control had their own methods of dealing with expected spate call conditions. This was in addition to separate procedures for unlit bonfires, firework incidents, filtering or challenging calls, and mobilising procedures. NWFC planning meetings examined and retained best practice already in place in previous FRS Controls and evaluated and reviewed the systems adopted by NWFC in 2015 with an intention to adopt them as a common practice where possible.

Many of the practices adopted across all 4 Services by NWFC 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 on 3th, 4th and 5th of November. 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 an attending Station Manager (or higher) from each FRS.

9. Media and Corporate Communications

The Corporate Communications team actively promoted a number of key messages for the Service over the Halloween and Bonfire period which ran from 8am on October 24 to 8am on November 7.

Communications were promoted for the campaign internally and via the local press and social media for both events, although the main focus was Bonfire Night.

This year the school holidays fell within a two week period so parents were asked: "Make sure your children are safe" as opposed to: "Do you know where your children are" which was felt to be more appropriate. This followed meetings with the youth engagement staff who helped with the approach and we feel it worked well.

A briefing was sent from Corporate Communications to all stations asking them to promote key messages. These included:

- Highlight to members of the public how you are keeping everyone safe during this period and what you are doing.
- Don't use the words "Mischief Night". We don't want to make the date of October 30th to be an event, although we will be giving out anti-social behaviour advice and information out on this day.
- Promote that everyone should go to organised bonfire and firework displays and direct them to the website for the list.
- Don't promote the use of fireworks or sparklers or give advice about people having their own bonfire. We don't want to encourage them to think its ok.
- Don't use "do you know where your children are" but use "make sure your children stay safe" instead.

We also promoted the hashtag **#treacle2018** so that we could collate social media activity for the period and analyse how effective the posts were. This hashtag was used on the main account and across the Service.

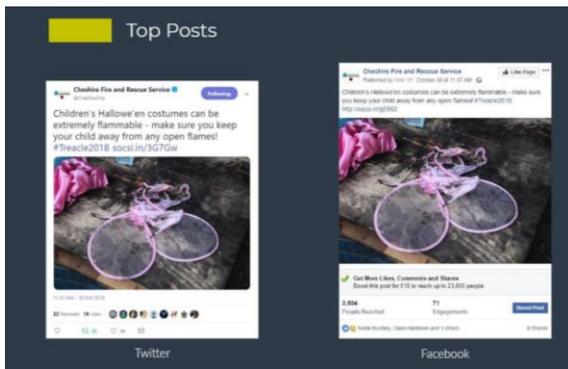
Between October 26 and November 5 we issued 17 social media posts on Twitter.



Facebook was also used to relay messages and the URL clicks totalled 278 for both:



The top post on both Facebook and Twitter was the Halloween costume warning:



The Service linked in with Cheshire Police and together used two canine celebrities to help get its messages out. Toby and Amos are dogs who are local social media stars and they introduced the campaign on Facebook and Twitter. We used the brothers on Instagram for the first time to follow their story and received some lovely comments. Along the way we incorporated messages within the boys' story and we



received some great support from social media users thanks to them.

The responses to the messages using these dogs were all positive and included:



Through this initiative the posts we used, which mentioned the boys, reached the following on the three social media platforms we use:



From this social media activity a number of news channels picked up the messages including BBC North West Tonight, who featured the brothers on their evening news bulletin, Signal Radio and the Warrington Guardian Series.



A pet safety code was also introduced, with advice for pet owners, which went down well with our followers:



On Bonfire Night itself (November 5th), a Communications Officer went to North West Fire Control and updated incidents on the service website as they happened. Communications Officers accompanied a reporter from the Warrington Guardian Series and rode the Winsford fire engine on Saturday, November 3. He also highlighted the work of on-call firefighters as part of the evening. This work produced the article below which went in the Winsford Guardian.



A Communications Officer, went to Warrington Fire Station on the evening of Saturday November 3 and accompanied a film crew from Granada who filmed footage of the crews as they dealt with incidents. This footage was shown on the programme on the Monday along with messages from the press release.

The services Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager gave a radio interview to Wire FM about bonfire activity on November 5 and ITV Granada also phoned the department to ask if any of our firefighters had been attacked over the weekend.

Following the events the department collated information for the media around how many calls we had received and attended, and what issues the Service had to deal with, in the different areas of the county. This information was issued in the form of a press release to the county’s media.

10. 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 – although there were more fires recorded than 5 years ago during this years Bonfire Period, the 2018 period has seen a positive year on year reduction of 14%:

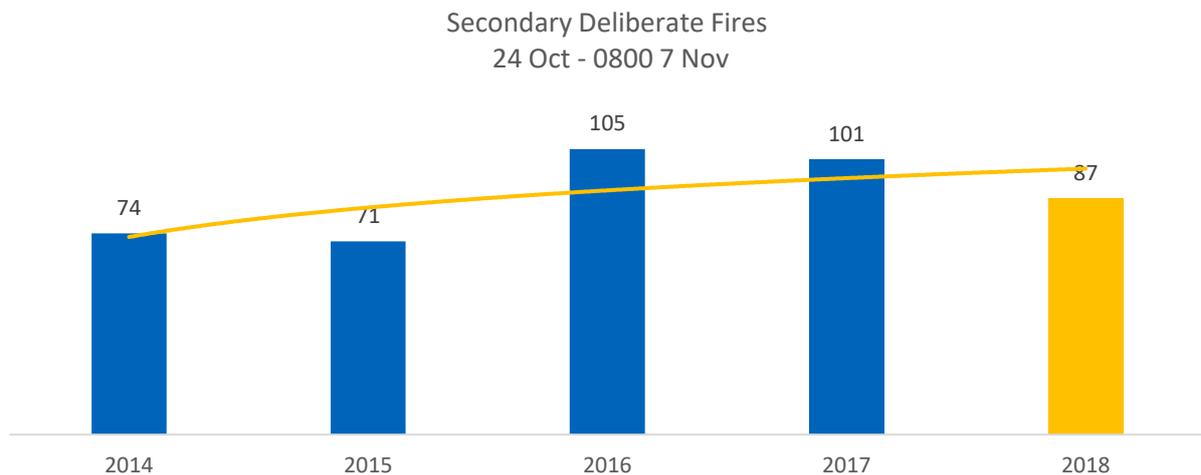
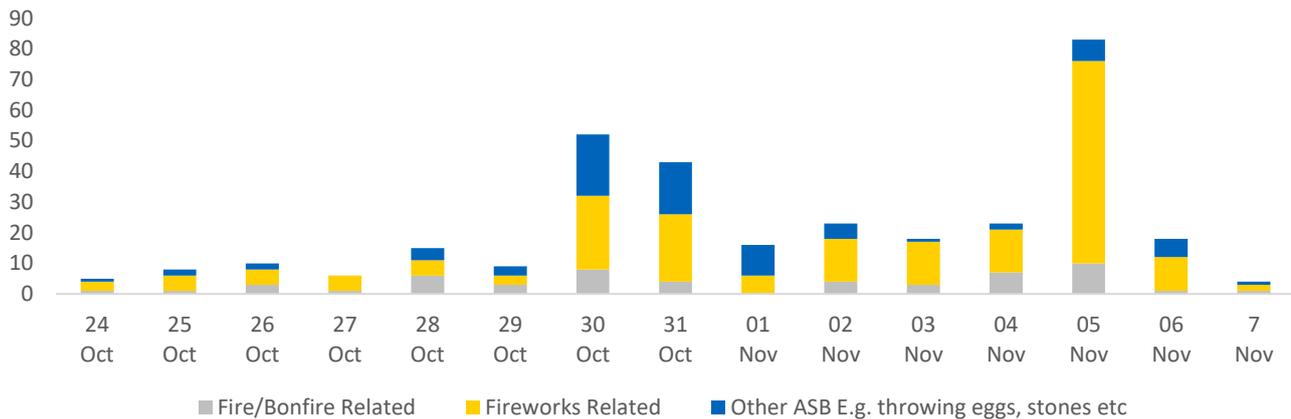


Fig. 1

A total of 17 secondary deliberate fires were recorded on bonfire night, however a total of 67 bonfire related incidents were attended – 25 (37%) of these incidents were ‘False Alarms Good Intent’ and 21 incidents (31%) were ‘Secondary Accidental’.

The graph below shows activity levels by day and recording type. Showing comparisons between small deliberate fire activity and ASB/Criminal Damage reported to the Police during this same time period. All inputs have similar trajectories throughout the period, with the same expected peaks noticeable on 30/10 “Mischief Night”, 31/10 Halloween and 05/11 Bonfire Night. Firework Related ASB is the most common type throughout the period, peaking on 5th Nov.

ASB and Criminal Damage incidents by day and type
24 October - 7 November



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

Deliberate Fire Activity

Hour	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
00	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	1.7%
01	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	1.4%
02	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
03	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
04	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
05	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.6%	0.9%
06	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
07	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	1.1%
08	0.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	2.3%
09	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	1.7%
10	0.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	1.1%
11	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	2.0%
12	0.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%	2.6%
13	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	1.4%
14	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	1.4%
15	0.6%	0.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
16	0.3%	1.7%	1.4%	0.3%	1.4%	0.6%	1.4%	7.2%
17	3.7%	4.0%	2.3%	0.3%	1.1%	1.1%	1.4%	14.1%
18	4.6%	3.2%	2.6%	1.4%	1.4%	0.9%	2.6%	16.7%
19	5.5%	3.2%	2.6%	1.1%	1.7%	0.9%	0.3%	15.2%
20	3.4%	1.7%	1.7%	0.0%	0.3%	0.6%	0.3%	8.0%
21	4.0%	1.7%	0.9%	1.4%	0.9%	1.1%	0.3%	10.3%
22	0.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	2.3%
23	0.6%	0.6%	0.3%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.3%	4.3%
Total	27.0%	20.7%	15.2%	7.8%	10.3%	7.8%	11.2%	100.0%

ASB/Criminal damage

Hour	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
00	0.0%	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.6%
01	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
02	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	1.1%
03	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
04	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
05	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
06	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
07	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	1.1%
08	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
09	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%
10	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	1.1%
11	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
12	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	1.1%
13	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	2.3%
14	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	2.3%
15	1.1%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%
16	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%	9.2%
17	2.3%	2.3%	1.1%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	10.3%
18	5.7%	3.4%	0.0%	2.3%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	14.9%
19	5.7%	2.3%	1.1%	0.0%	1.1%	3.4%	1.1%	14.9%
20	2.3%	2.3%	3.4%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	1.1%	10.3%
21	2.3%	4.6%	2.3%	0.0%	1.1%	1.1%	0.0%	11.5%
22	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	2.3%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	6.9%
23	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
Total	26.4%	26.4%	11.5%	6.9%	4.6%	11.5%	12.6%	100.0%

Unitary Performance

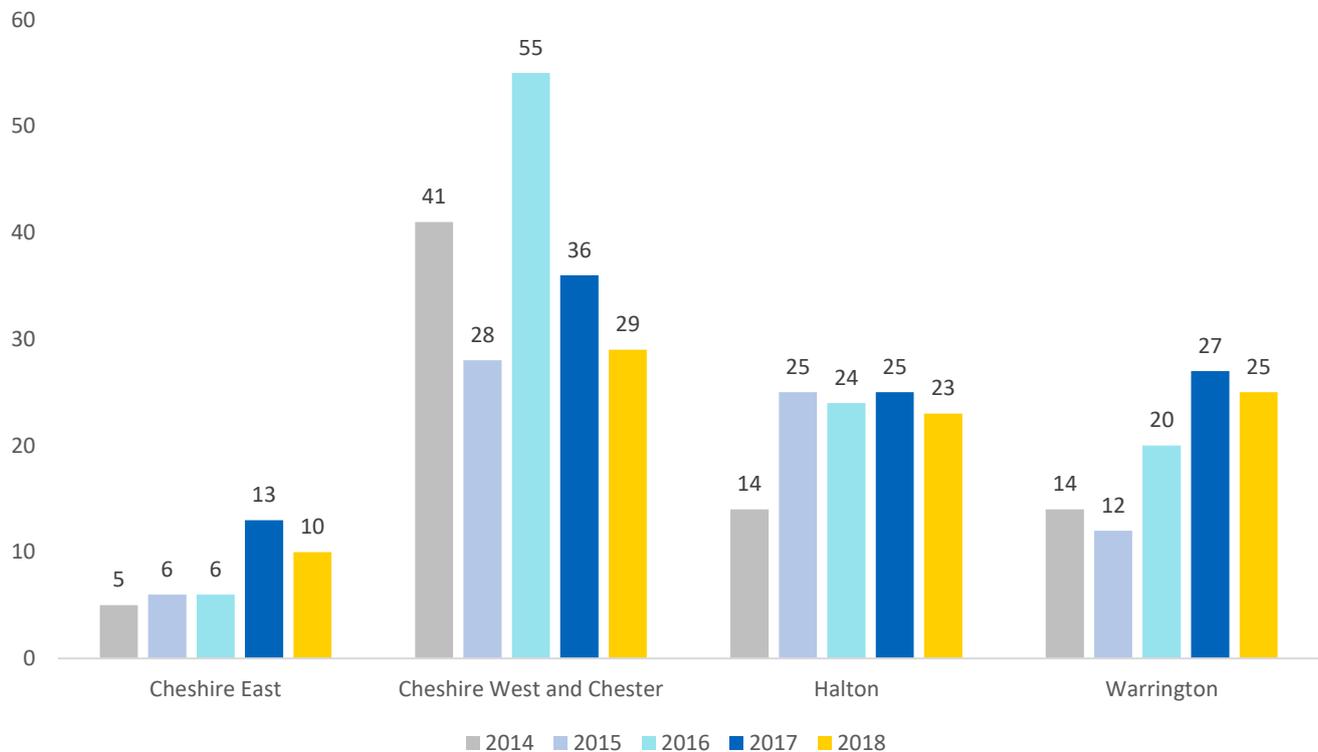
Each of the four unitary areas recorded a year on year decrease in SDF during this year's bonfire period. Cheshire West and Chester is the only Unitary Area to have seen decreases compared to 5 years ago. This can be seen as follows (Figs. 2 and 3):

Fig.2

	2018	2017	Year on year	2014	5 Year change
Cheshire East	10	13	-3	5	+5
Cheshire West and Chester	29	36	-7	41	-12
Halton	23	25	-2	14	+9
Warrington	25	27	-2	14	+11

Fig. 3

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



Station Performance

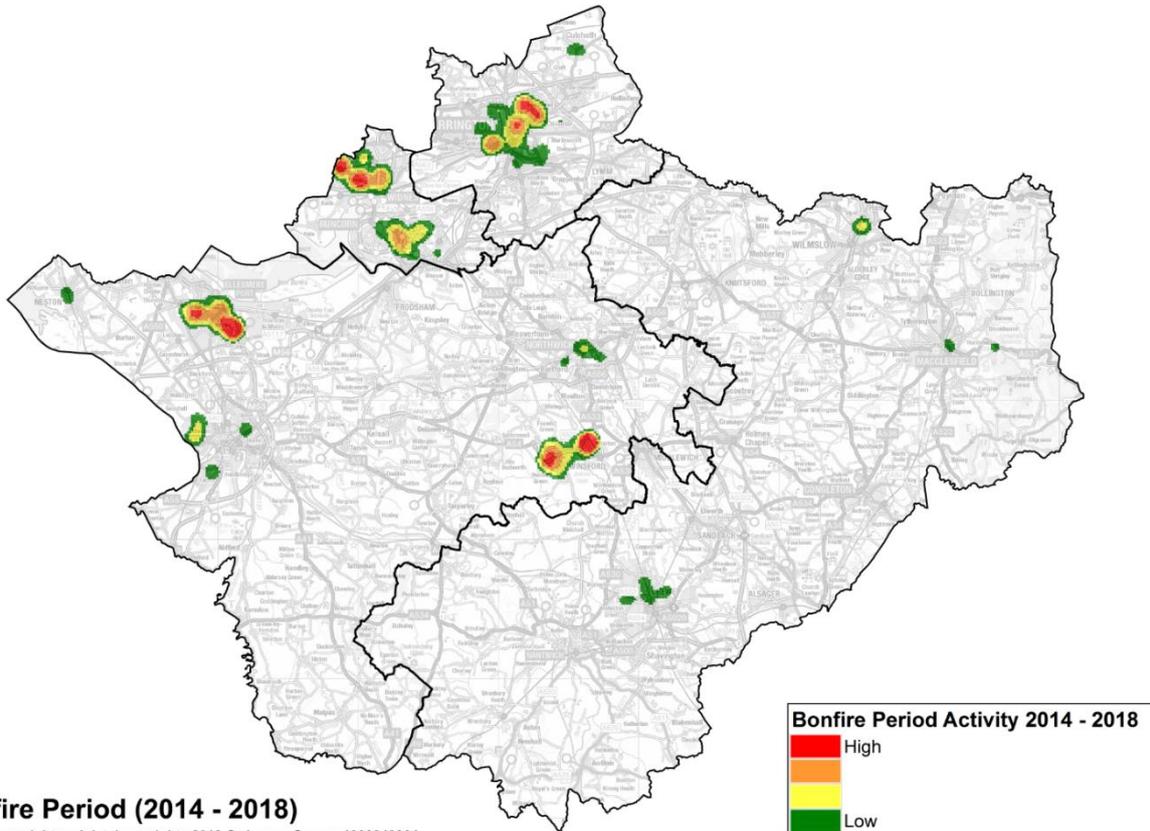
In total, there were 14 station areas which recorded Small Deliberate Fire activity during the Bonfire Period, with 5 of these only reporting 1 incident each.

The following table summarises activity by the station areas with the highest volume of activity during the 2018 reporting period.

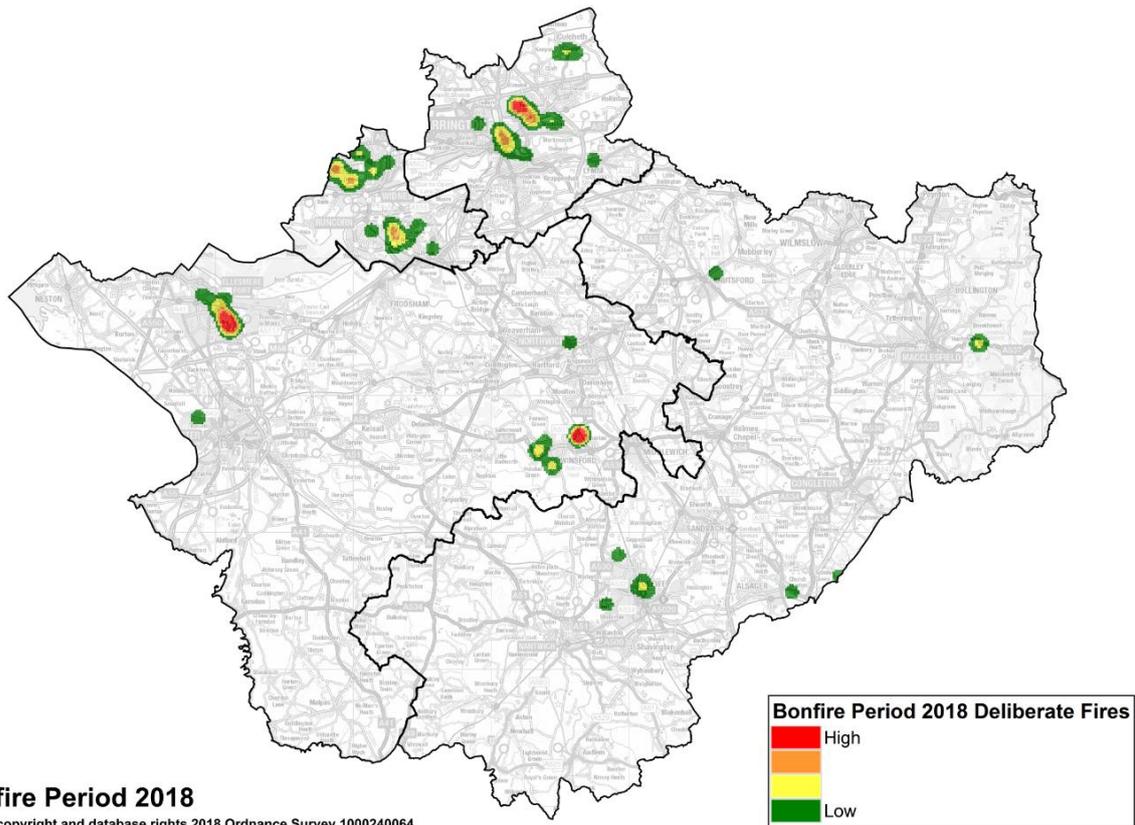
These 5 station areas accounted for 77% of all Small Deliberate Fire activity recorded during the period.

	2018	2017	1 Year Change	2014	5 Year Change
Warrington	18	24	-6	13	5
Ellesmere Port	15	16	-1	23	-8
Widnes	12	19	-7	5	7
Winsford	12	15	-3	10	2
Runcorn	10	6	4	9	1

Below shows activity of deliberate small fires from 2014 – 2018.



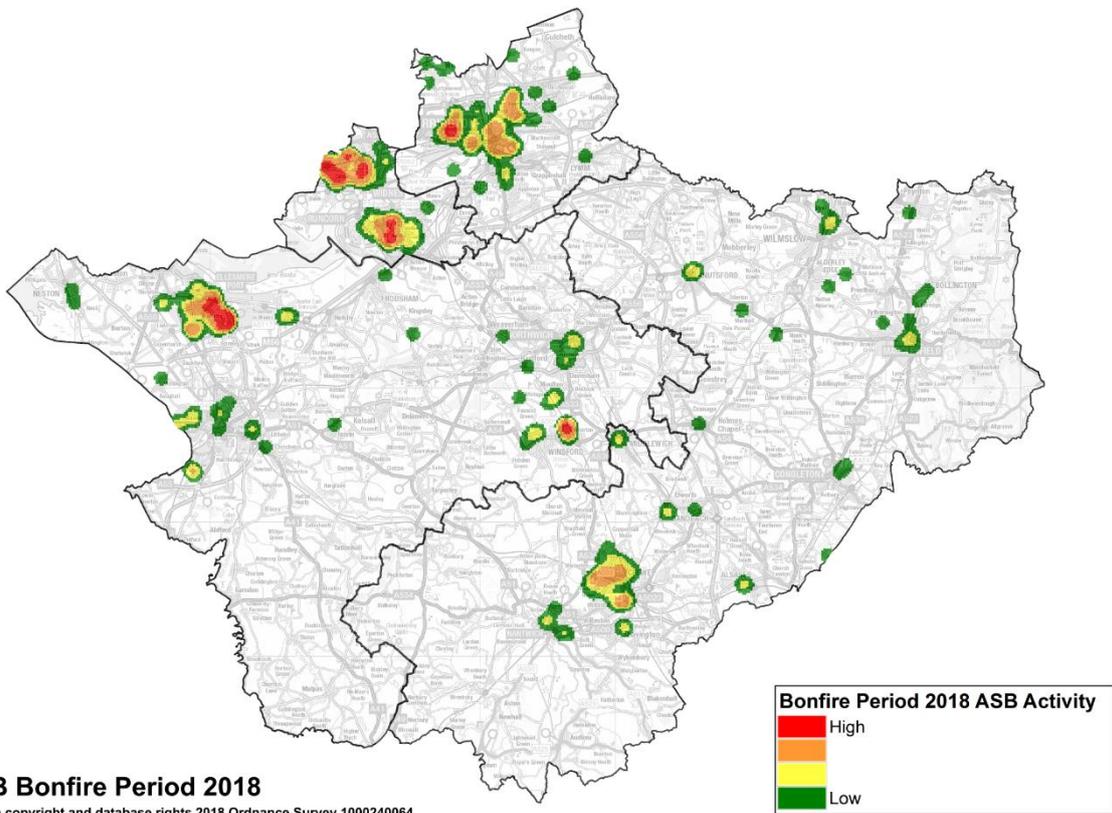
2018 activity areas.



Bonfire Period 2018

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Below shows ASB hotspot areas.



ASB Bonfire Period 2018

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11. Accidents and Near Misses

There have been no accidents or near misses during the bonfire period for 2018.

12. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- a) The delivery of targeted and timely education to schools in all Service Delivery areas should continue to be led by the Service, ahead of other organisations. A working group of Lead Advocates and the Station Manager responsible for arson reduction will review the education currently offered and implement improvements.
- b) Bonfire Strategy Groups should continue to encourage safe organised displays to allow people to safely celebrate bonfire night. Where possible or appropriate, these should be supported by the Service and partners.
- c) Planning meetings for the relevant Strategy Groups should start well in advance of the bonfire period.
- d) Use of SIUs should be targeted over an appropriate number of evenings and the number of vehicles to remain as a minimum at 3 to cover the known risk areas.
- e) Service and partner agency resources and efforts should continue to 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), during the preceding month. This should be discussed with partners at Bonfire Strategy Group planning meetings.
- g) The tolerance policy adopted by the Service again this year has proven successful and should be continued. The desire to celebrate bonfire night is present in most areas, and residents should be encouraged to do so in a safe manner.
- h) Targeted youth activity should be repeated using the On the Streets Team and volunteers, based on data provided by the Business Intelligence Unit.
- i) The use of our Communications staff to provide live social media updates should continue.
- j) Consideration should again be given to having a local newspaper reporter riding appliances accompanied by a communications team member in the areas of higher activity.

- k) Continually review the practice of making cash contributions to organised displays, particularly in Chester and Ellesmere Port, and as an alternative fund the provision of diversionary activities in known areas of increased call activity.
- l) Continue to provide an ongoing programme of Primary Respect courses in targeted schools.

13. Summary and conclusions

The total number of SDF attended during the period was slightly lower than in previous years. It should be noted that there are considerable improvements to the totals of almost 300 SDF that we experienced less than 10 years ago.

Engagement: Some areas received increased engagement by our staff and other agencies. Consistent, timely and targeted delivery of bonfire and firework education was delivered. The timeliness of this delivery is important to its effectiveness.

Fuel removal: Bonfire removal schemes continue to be an effective means of reducing the numbers of SDF. A visual presence of teams actively removing material also discouraged the rebuilding of bonfires.

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 will have an impact on incident volumes. For example, we know from previous years that rainfall will suppress activity. Yet Weather conditions during the 2018 period were predominately dry without extremely low temperatures yet we still managed an overall reduction in SDF.

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.