



Bonfire Period Report 2020

Produced by: SM Andy Gray and Dan Taylor



CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Recording of Incidents.....	4
3. Pre Planning, Partnership and Internal Activity	5
4. Bonfire Removal Schemes and Waste Management.....	6
5. Educational Events and Activities.....	7
6. Operational Response.....	8
7. North West Fire Control.....	9
8. Media and Corporate Communications	10
9. Incident Data and Performance Summary	11
10. Accidents and Near Misses	17
11. Recommendations.....	18
12. Summary and conclusions	19

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 (2020-21) has had to reflect the changing conditions placed on all organisations from the current and ongoing Covid 19 pandemic.

ASB can include 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 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, 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 2020 captured data from 0800hrs 24th October 2020 to 0800hrs 7th November 2020. 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.

Additional guidance was also obtained from Cheshire Police and communicated to operational crews regarding the C-19 pandemic and the process to follow should CFRS attend incidents and witness breaches of Government regulations regarding no mixing of households etc. Assistance from Cheshire Police could be obtained via Northwest Fire control for emergencies or via access to a web based reporting tool for less urgent issues.

3. Pre Planning, Partnership and Internal Activity

Due to C-19 the large array of forward facing interventions, strategies and diversionary tactics at county, unitary and local levels with key partners based on previous intelligence and addressing current local needs that would have been implemented were subsequently paused.

The cancellation of all public bonfire events that CFRS promotes as the safest option for the public in this period presented risk that there may be a rise in injuries and property fires caused by people holding displays and bonfires in their gardens which could have rapidly got out of control.

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 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 all got involved in spreading 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.

4. Bonfire Removal Schemes and Waste Management

All Areas –The Street-scene type format of the reporting and removal of waste continued to occur in all council areas. There are some subtle differences across areas but essentially the public and fire service staff could access a free service to report the location of the waste. The Local Authority then arranged its removal. The Street-scene details and contact numbers were promoted via the Service’s social media platforms.

Operational crews also had an email reporting system in place to ensure an efficient reporting system should Local Authority phone reporting systems face high numbers of calls.

All Areas – Due to C-19 Operational crews were unable to implement their pre-planned increase in arson route activities in 2020 which limited the ability to provide valuable real time information to Street-scene and other removal services operating in their local areas.

5. Educational Events and Activities

A targeted face to face approach to education has been adopted by the Service in recent years but this was severely limited in 2020 because of the C-19 restrictions. Owing to this reduction in our ability to engage directly with education establishments, bespoke media was created to engage with schools and the general public.

The first film “Matt’s story” targeted primary school age children and was sent to all schools in Cheshire. Greater Manchester County Fire and Rescue Service also requested the content and sent the film to their primary schools.

On social media the reach was **210,457** people. The film was viewed over **63,500** times during the period on both the fire and police social media platforms. **902** people thought it powerful enough to share/tweet the post and video with their followers.



The Service had serious concerns of an increase in fires going out of control at events held by the public which would put people and property at risk (as we saw with the increase in fires resulting from the public burning garden waste during lockdown one). Therefore media advice and key messaging was created 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 display”. For those insistent on holding a display, relevant safety information required for a safe event at home was also shared.

This video was widely shared and also utilised by the Child’s Accident Prevention Trust for delivery by their practitioners to all those they engaged with during the season.

On social media the reach for this clip was **136,473** people. It was viewed over **32,600** times during the period on both the fire and police social media platforms. **317** people thought it powerful enough to share/tweet the post and video with their followers.



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 2020 were the on-call appliances from Penketh, Runcorn, Winsford and Birchwood.

These SIU were deployed flexibly maintaining three SIU on cover at any time during 9 evenings from the 30th October – 7th November between 1600-2200 hrs. Bonfire night fell on a Thursday bringing the weekend either side of the date into contention for possible increased activity. The Service's Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager attended North West Fire Control (NWFC) on the busiest evenings, 30th, 31st October and the 5th November to enable risk based mobilisation to take place to support and maintain operational cover levels across the county. Also in attendance was a Police Superintendent to act as a direct liaison between CFRS and Cheshire Police and provide an immediate Police response where required.

These SIU appliances were programmed at NWFC so that they were prioritised for small incidents. However, there was an automatic override built into the mobilising system that they would be sent to life risk incidents where they were nearer.

7. North West Fire Control

Extensive planning took place for the 2020 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 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.



Other posts include:



8. Media and Corporate Communications

The Communications team actively promoted a number of key messages for the Service over the Halloween and bonfire period which ran from 08:00 on October 24 to 08:00 on November 7.

Communications were promoted for the campaign internally and via the local press and social media for both events with the main focus on bonfire night. Several live and recorded TV and radio interviews were carried out by fire officers to re-enforce the key safety messages.

An “Alert” email was sent out to around **18,500** people who had previously signed up on the system. This is a voluntary messaging system which targets local businesses and people, some of whom it is believed may not use social media. The email provided a link to the website and our key 2020 bonfire messaging.

On bonfire night itself, we were unable to send a communications representative to NWFC due to Covid restrictions in place. Therefore the communication team supported the Service’s Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager remotely. A Communications Officer assisted by updating the website and social media as incidents came in from 18:00pm - 22:00pm on November 5th.

Social media was used daily in the run up to November 5th to promote a range of messages and stations were encouraged to use their own accounts to inform residents of the dangers of setting light to things in their own gardens this year.

The Service issued 35 separate messages on both Twitter and Facebook throughout the bonfire period. 15 of these were issued on bonfire night itself and included live incidents details direct from NWFC.

The “we’re here at NWFC” post was well liked on the evening of November 5.



A single post relating to an incident in Crewe, where a firework started a fire, was the most popular on Facebook, receiving **172** likes which enabled it to reach **7,813** people. It received a similar response 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 2020 Bonfire Period saw the lowest number of Deliberate Small Fires on record, showing a **90%** reduction from 5 years ago, and **38%** reduction from 1 year ago:

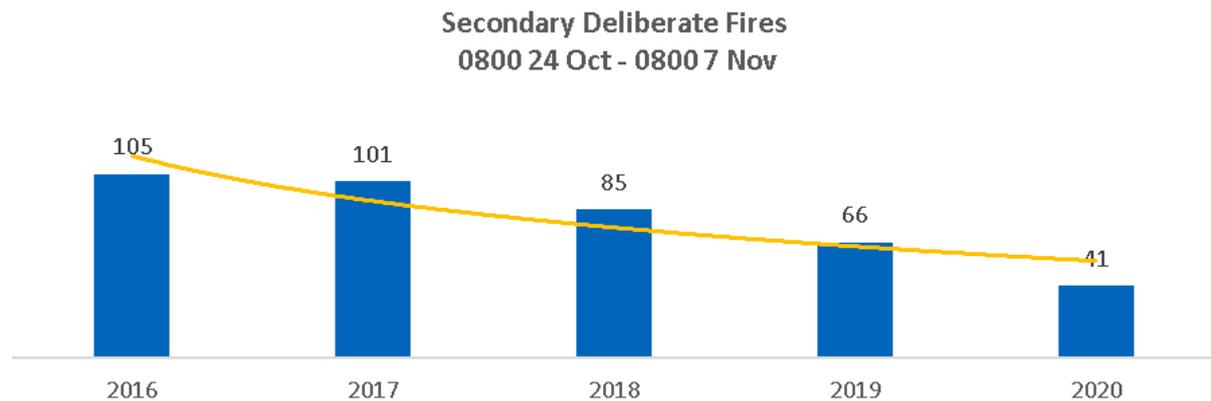
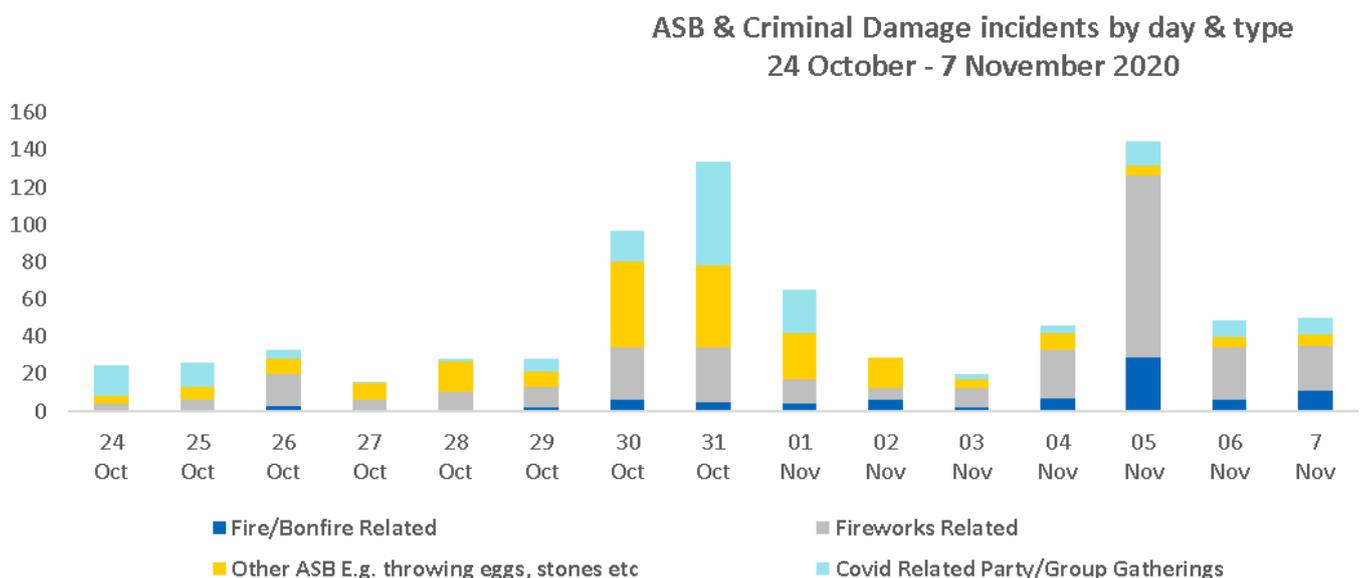


Fig. 1

A total of **12** Deliberate Small Fires were recorded on bonfire night, however a total of **42** bonfire related incidents were attended – **15** (36%) of these incidents were ‘False Alarms Good Intent’ and **14** incidents (33%) were ‘Accidental Small Fires’, with just **1** (2%) Deliberate Primary Fire recorded.

The graphs below (Fig. 2 & Fig. 3) display both Fire & Police activity levels by day and incident type, showing comparisons between deliberate small fire activity and ASB/Criminal Damage reported to the Police during this same time period. As can be expected, peaks are noticeable on 31/10 ‘Halloween’, and 05/11 ‘Bonfire Night’.



Firework Related ASB was the most common type throughout the period, peaking on 5th Nov.

Fig.2

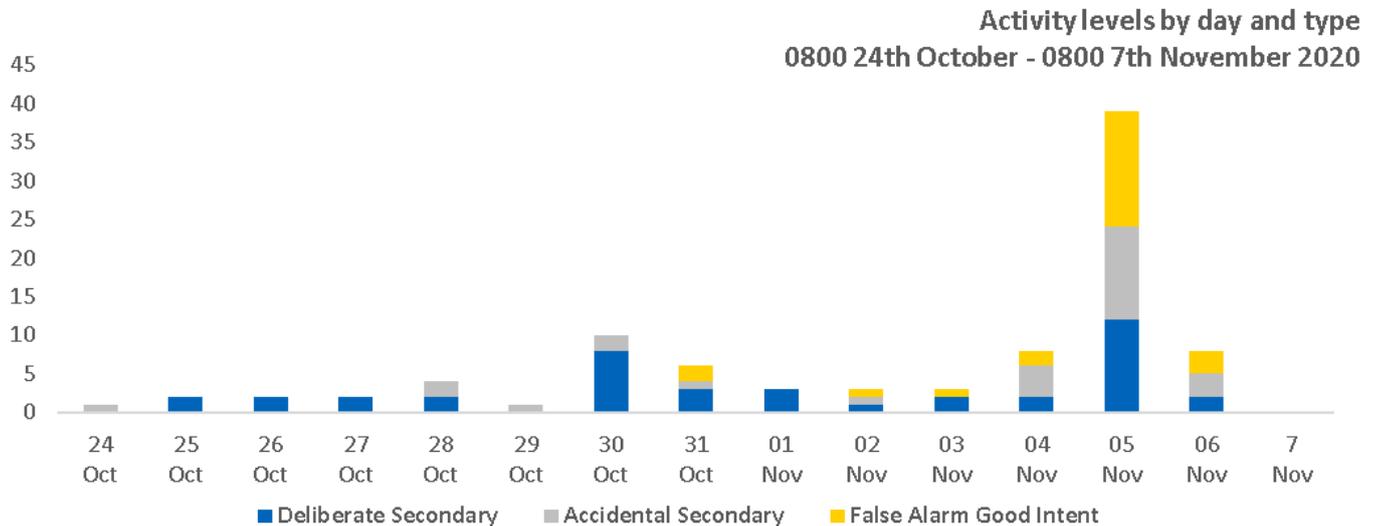


Fig.3

The two charts above shows a comparison of the time and day of when high or low activity is occurring for both Deliberate Small 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%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	00	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	1.0%	1.8%	3.3%
01	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	01	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.8%	0.6%	1.1%	3.3%
02	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	02	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%	0.1%	0.6%	1.5%
03	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	03	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.5%
04	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	04	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.4%	1.0%
05	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	05	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.8%
06	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	06	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.5%
07	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	07	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
08	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	08	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	1.4%
09	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	09	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.4%	1.3%
10	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.1%	1.9%
11	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%	11	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%	1.8%
12	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	12	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.4%	0.6%	1.9%
13	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13	0.5%	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%	0.6%	0.1%	0.1%	2.0%
14	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%	14	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%	0.6%	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	2.5%
15	2.4%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	9.8%	15	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%	0.6%	0.4%	0.1%	0.5%	2.4%
16	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	2.4%	4.9%	16	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.9%	0.8%	1.0%	0.4%	3.9%
17	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	4.9%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	12.2%	17	0.5%	0.1%	0.9%	2.3%	1.3%	2.1%	0.6%	7.8%
18	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%	4.9%	4.9%	0.0%	2.4%	17.1%	18	1.1%	0.8%	1.0%	3.5%	1.8%	3.0%	0.6%	11.9%
19	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	7.3%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	12.2%	19	1.1%	0.8%	0.9%	3.2%	3.5%	4.2%	0.9%	14.5%
20	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	0.0%	9.8%	20	1.1%	0.8%	1.9%	3.4%	2.4%	3.4%	0.4%	13.4%
21	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.8%	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%	14.6%	21	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	2.8%	1.8%	2.7%	0.1%	9.0%
22	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	22	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%	1.4%	1.5%	3.4%	0.9%	8.3%
23	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	23	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	1.0%	1.8%	0.5%	4.6%
Total	7.3%	9.8%	9.8%	29.3%	24.4%	7.3%	12.2%	100.0%	Total	7.8%	4.6%	9.4%	21.9%	18.5%	26.4%	11.5%	100.0%

The majority of Deliberate Small Fires occurred on a Thursday (29.3%) or a Friday (24.4%), which also coincided with the days that Bonfire Night and 'Mischief Night' (30th Oct), fell on this year, but the majority of ASB & Crim Damage occurred on a

Saturday (26.4%) which coincides with Halloween Night this year. The majority of fires occurred between the hours of 18:00pm – 22:00pm (53%), which again mirrored the most common times of day for ASB (57%). Overall, deliberate small fires saw a **38% decrease** from the 2019 Bonfire Period, whereas ASB incidents saw a **19% increase** from the same period last year, up from **664** incidents to **791**. However, this year an extra category for ASB was captured in the dataset (House Party/Group Gatherings) which impacted on the increase in incidents. This was due to Covid-19 restrictions and ASB, caused by illegal gatherings being broken up. If this new category of ASB incident was discounted, there would have been an **8% reduction** in total ASB across the reporting period.

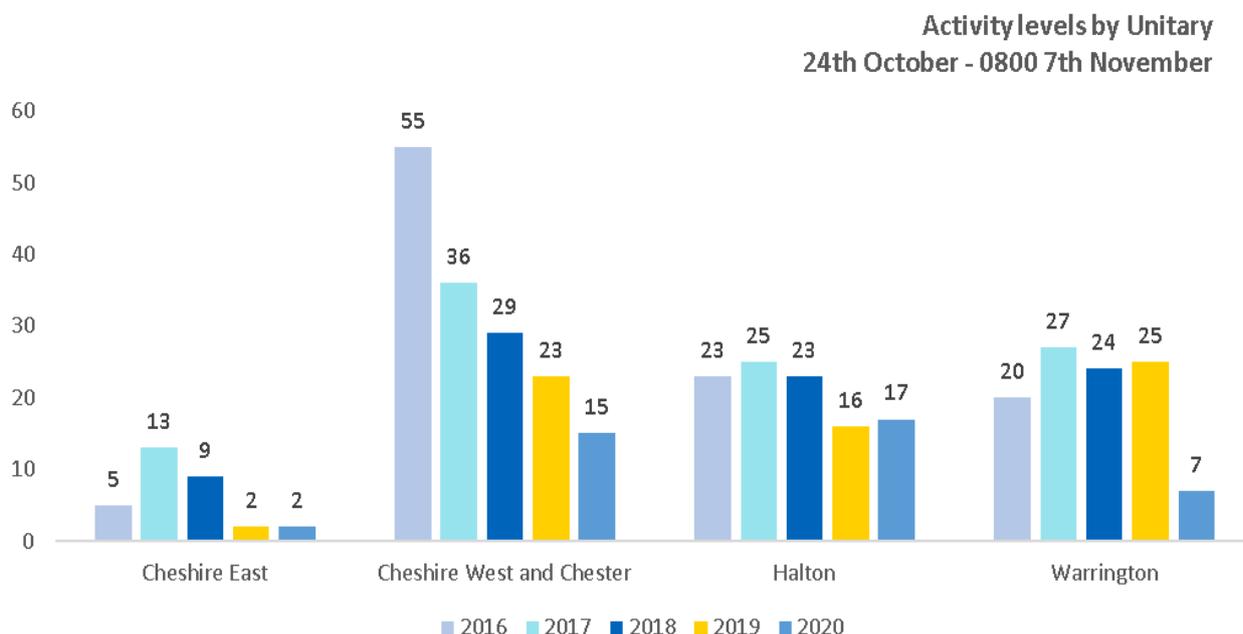
Unitary Performance

All but one of the four unitary areas recorded either no change or a year on year decrease in Deliberate Small Fires during this year’s bonfire period. Halton was the only Unitary Area to have seen an increase compared to 1 year ago, however all four Unitary Areas have seen a reduction from 5 years ago respectively. This can be seen as follows (*Figs. 4 and 5*):

Fig.4

Unitary Area	2020	2019	Year on year	2016	5 Year change
Cheshire East	2	2	0	5	-3
Cheshire West and Chester	15	23	-8	55	-40
Halton	17	16	+1	23	-6
Warrington	7	25	-18	20	-13

Fig. 5



Station Performance

In total, there were just **9** out of 28 station areas which recorded Deliberate Small Fire activity during the Bonfire Period, with **5** of these only reporting **5** or fewer incidents each.

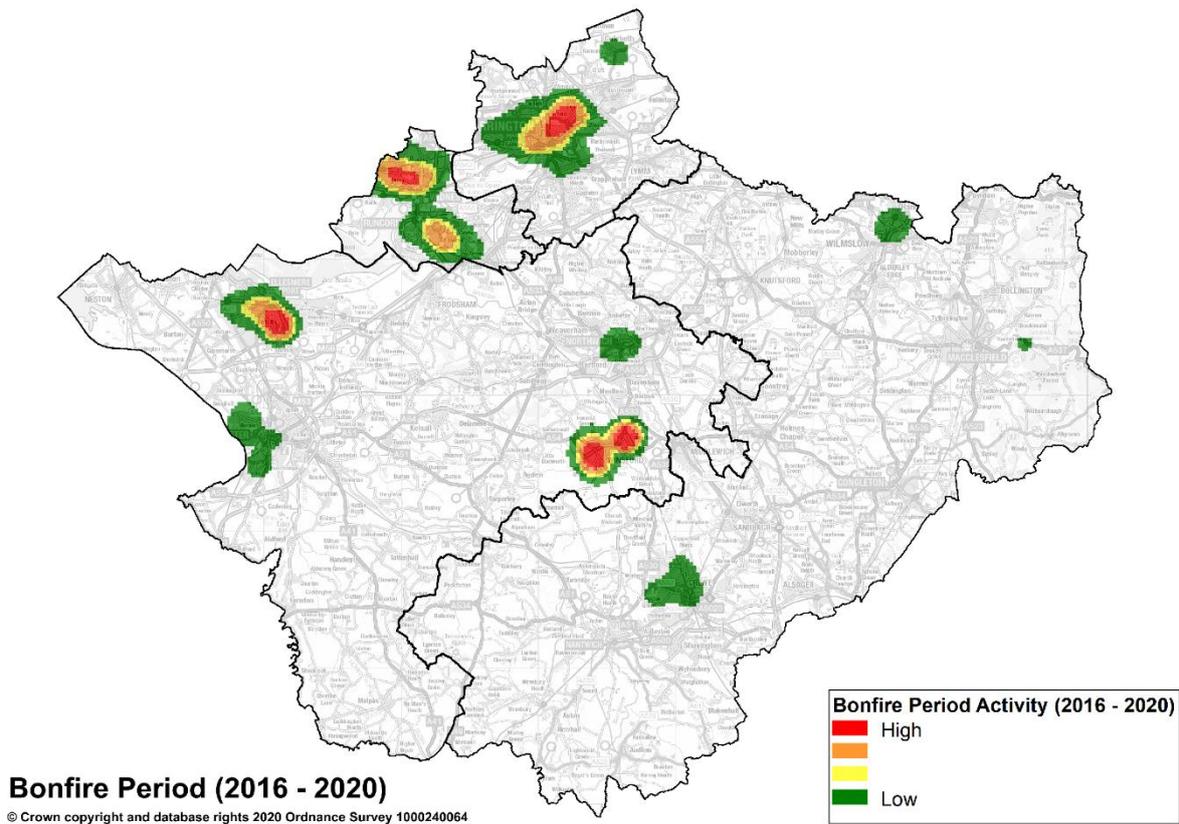
The following table (*Fig. 6*) summarises activity by the station areas with the highest volume of activity during the 2020 reporting period.

These 5 station areas within the table, accounted for 80% of all Deliberate Small Fire activity recorded during the period.

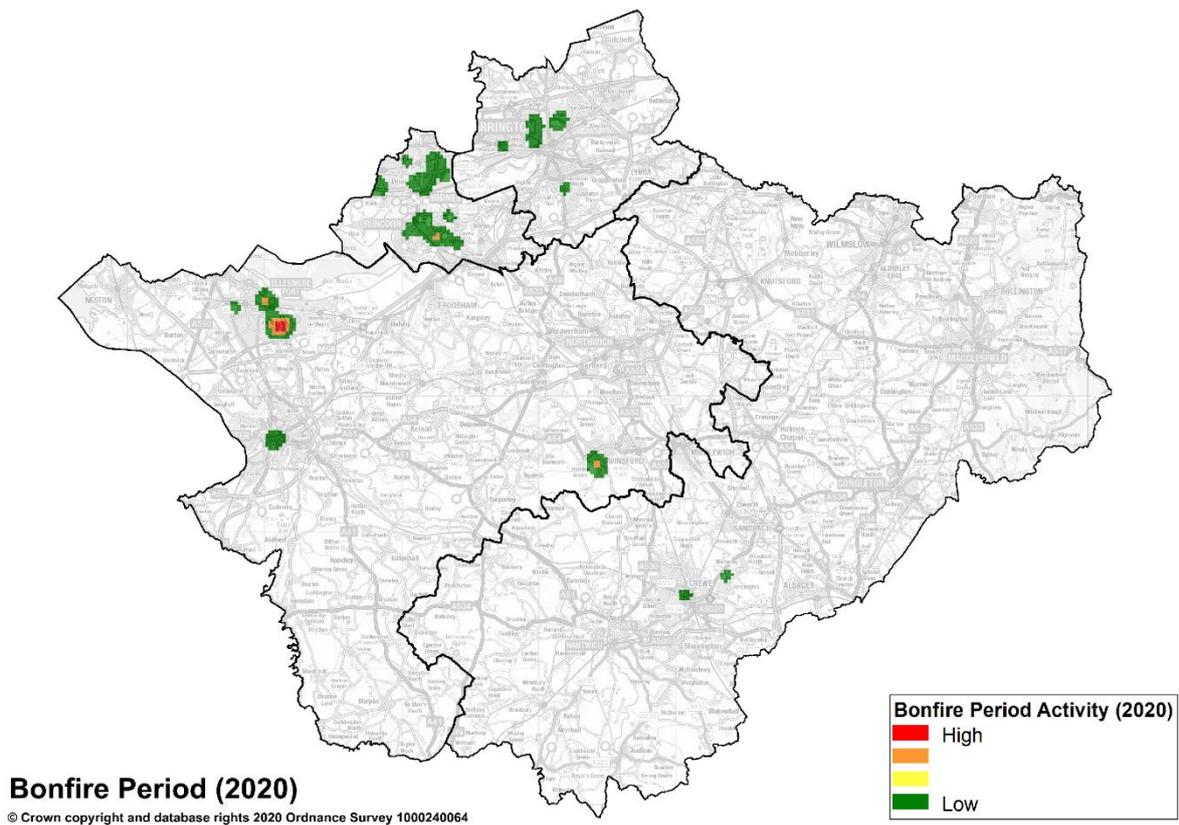
Fig. 6

Station	2020	2019	Year on year	2016	5 Year change
Ellesmere Port	10	7	3	9	1
Runcorn	8	9	-1	7	1
Widnes	6	6	0	16	-10
Warrington	5	21	-16	18	-13
Penketh	4	2	2	2	2

Below shows Bonfire Period Deliberate Small fire hotspot areas from 2016 – 2020:

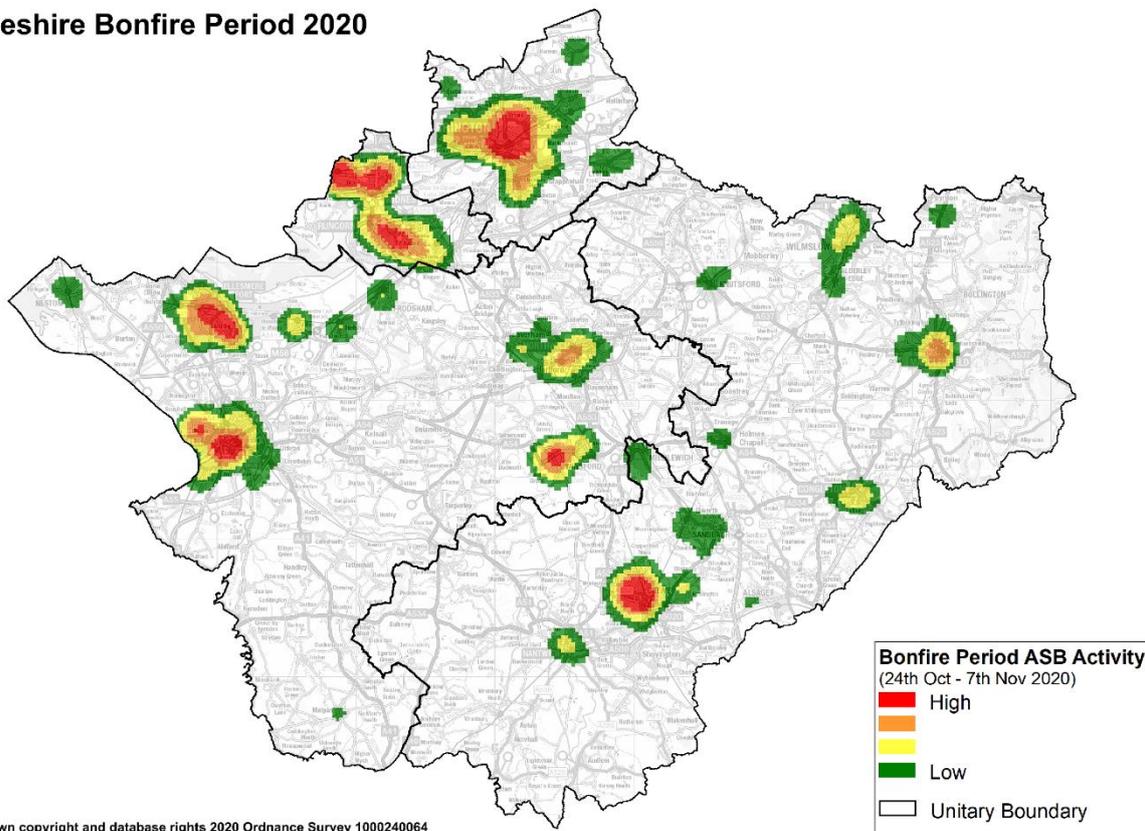


Below shows the 2020 Bonfire Period Deliberate Small Fire hotspot areas:



Below shows the 2020 Bonfire Period ASB & Criminal Damage hotspot areas:

Cheshire Bonfire Period 2020



10. Accidents and Near Misses

We had one incident of youths throwing missiles at fire crews (fortunately with no injuries). As we had Cheshire Police at NWFC we were able to mobilise police teams with no delay to this incident and on arrival Cheshire Police apprehended the alleged individuals involved.

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 (where appropriate due to C-19);
- B. increased use of different communications tactics 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 3 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 use of our Communications staff to provide 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. support approved organised displays and diversionary activities (where appropriate due to C-19) particularly in areas of high deliberate fire activity.

12. Summary and conclusions

The total number of SDF attended during the period was lower than in previous years. It should be noted that this period encompassed a national lockdown period due to C-19.

Engagement: This was achieved with 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 will have an impact on incident volumes.

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.