

## MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF THE:	COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	30 JANUARY 2024	REPORT NO:	CFO/07/24
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER – PHIL GARRIGAN (PRESENTATION – SM MARK SOPP)		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER- PHIL GARRIGAN	REPORT AUTHOR:	GM FRANNY HILL
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	SUZANNE HAZZA, JO HENDERSON, JOHN FIELDING		
TITLE OF REPORT:	BONFIRE REPORT 2023		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A	SUMMARY REPORT FOR INCIDENT ACTIVITY DURING 2023 BONFIRE PERIOD
-------------	------------	---

### Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Members of the outcomes of Bonfire period 2023.

### Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the Members note the content of the report and the impact that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service ('MFRS') staff have had on the delivery of the Bonfire Plan 2023.

### Introduction and Background

3. There has been a reduction in the number of secondary fires during the reporting period between 19<sup>th</sup> October and 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Collectively we saw an 5.5% reduction in the number of secondary fires attended in comparison to 2022.

#### All Deliberate Fires

District	2022	2023	Difference	Percentage Difference
Knowsley	17	28	11	64.7%
Liverpool	92	69	-23	-25.0%
Sefton	23	23	0	0.0%
St Helens	20	26	6	30.0%
Wirral	31	27	-4	-12.9%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>-5.5%</b>

4. MFRS receive a significant increase in calls for the service over the Halloween and Bonfire period. In order to limit those demands, our annual Bonfire Plan was

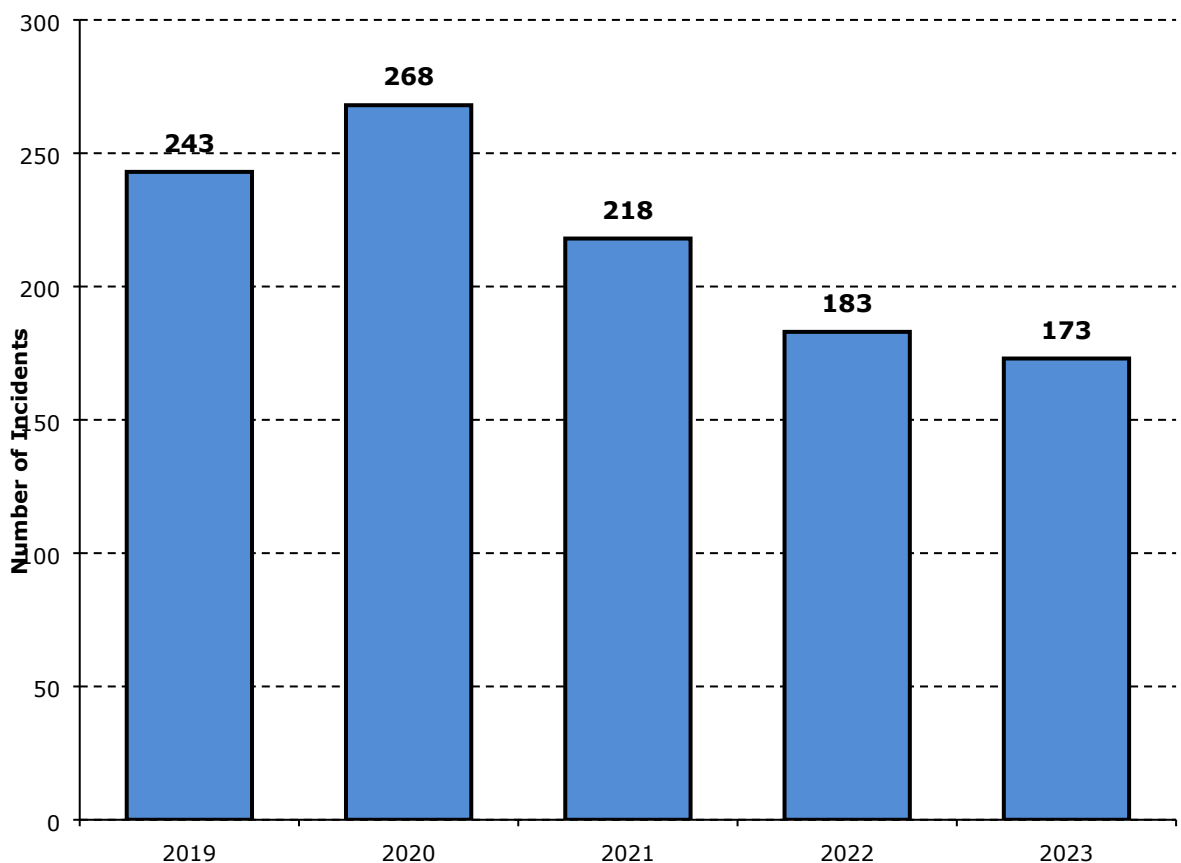
implemented to help mitigate the number of 999 calls and the overall number of AntiSocial Behaviour (ASB) fires MFRS attend.

5. The Prevention Directorate planning for Bonfire 2023 commenced in June. Merseyside Police led Operation Banger, the multi-agency operation which coordinates Police, Fire and Local Authority activity over the Halloween and Bonfire period. This included monthly Silver meetings chaired by Inspector Duncan Swan from Merseyside Police at the JCC. The monthly meetings involved all Police Commanders responsible for the implementation of Operation Banger and representatives from MFRS and other agencies.
6. This year MFRA issued 76 new licences from retailers to store and sell fireworks. There are currently 158 premises licensed to sell fireworks. Officers inspected premises to ensure suitable and sufficient action had been actioned by the retailers to comply with safe storage and guidance given on the selling of fireworks. A further inspection and compliance programme was undertaken by Protection Officers and Trading Standards.
7. MFRS Corporate Communications Team produced a bespoke Bonfire Communications Strategy which included:
  - A series of infographics carrying unique messages on social media.
  - A series of videos utilising MFRS staff to carry out unique messages around bonfire.
  - Bonfire Leaflets - distributed by MFRS staff and partner agencies.
  - Video animations in relation to the dangers of arson and the impact of ASB in local communities.
  - School presentations for both juniors and seniors.
8. The communications strategy included press releases promoting relevant messages at key times during the reporting period. MFRS received funding from City Safe that paid for a social media campaign enabling Corporate Communications to target important safety messages via social media. Members of the public were encouraged to report bonfire material via MFRS reporting link which was monitored by the Arson team.
9. From Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> October until Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November, MFRS had the use of 6 tipper trucks across Merseyside. The Prevention Directorate and volunteers from across the service including apprentices, operational firefighters and a number of green book staff, staffed these in order to remove the build-up of bonfire material. Our staff removed just over 53.17 tonnes of material. Probation services assisted us with the removal of 14.4 tonnes, making this a combined weight of 67.57 tonnes.
10. Organised fire work displays were held at a number of venues including the Totally Wicked Stadium in St Helens.
11. A range of diversionary activities were organised across Merseyside. Funding for

these events were met by a range of partners, including Local Authorities, Merseyside Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

12. MFRS staff along with partners visited schools to deliver key messages highlighting the impact of arson and ASB in local communities. MFRS and partners (PCSO's) visited over 50 schools and delivered our message to approximately 4000 children and young people.
13. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023, MFRS adopted a tolerant approach to bonfires. Bonfires were risk assessed and allowed to continue to burn if the bonfire did not pose a risk to people or property, and that the bonfire was organised safely. This allowed members of the public and communities to enjoy bonfire night safely.
14. The table below identifies that during the 2023 bonfire period the number of deliberate secondary fire incidents attended by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service was 173.

### **5 Year Retrospective for Deliberate Secondary Fires, Merseyside Wide, between 2019 and 2023**

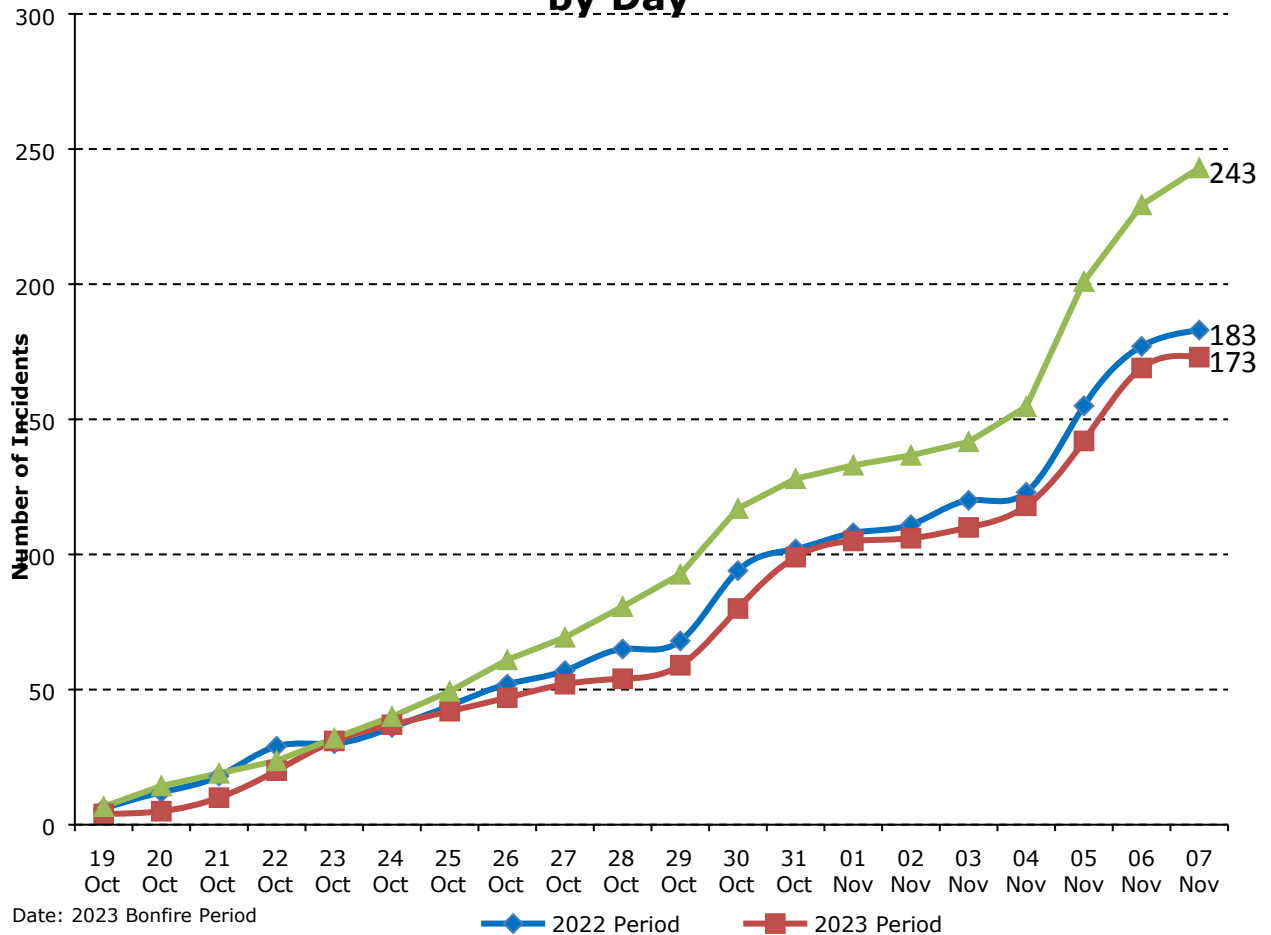


Date: 2023 Bonfire Period

15. The table (below) provides a cumulative analysis of deliberate secondary fire incidents through the 2023 period, contrasting it with 2022, as well as the 3-year

average. The chart shows that there was a 5.5% decrease in the number of secondary fires attended between the 2022 and 2023 bonfire periods.

### Cumulative comparison of Deliberate Secondary Fires in Merseyside between 2022, 2023 and the 3 year average, by Day



16. MFRS adopted a creative approach during this year’s Bonfire period and ensured high visibility throughout the recording period. Tactics utilised included:

- MFRS utilised the offer of Probation Service to assist with removing fly tipping
- PATS/Fly tipping referrals
- Community risk management routes
- Tipper trucks in each district

#### Potential Arson Targets/Fly tipping reports

17. The purpose of the Potential Arson Target (PAT) project is to highlight buildings that are possible arson targets, and to minimise risk to firefighters. Crews will familiarise themselves with each potential arson target so that they know the possible risks they could face if a fire breaks out at that location.

18. When a vulnerable empty property is identified, a PAT form should be completed which will be dealt with by the Arson team, working alongside

partners.

19. MFRS worked in partnership with local authorities and hired 6 tipper trucks to remove waste and fly tipping from each district. Fly tipping reports assisted with identifying waste materials across the region; 189 fly tipping referrals were submitted. This resulted in over 53.17 tonnes of hazardous rubbish and fly tipping being removed from the streets which otherwise may have been used to fuel deliberately set fires.

### **Community Risk Management routes**

20. MFRS identified ASB spots across Merseyside utilising current data to target ASB high spots linked to high numbers of secondary fires. Community Risk Management routes were allocated on this basis to fire stations with routes to be completed in fire engines.
21. The Service attended a number of incidents that involved the misuse of Fireworks. The table below capture 2023 figures:

District	2022	2023	Difference	Percentage Difference
Knowsley	2	1	-1	-50.0%
Liverpool	10	4	-6	-60.0%
Sefton	3	1	-2	-66.7%
St Helens	1	3	2	200.0%
Wirral	6	1	-5	-83.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>-12</b>	<b>-54.5%</b>

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

22. The MFRS communications team utilised both organic content and boosted posts for the Halloween and Bonfire social media campaign, with a budget of **£500**. During the Halloween and Bonfire period, the MFRS social media content had almost **300,000** impressions (number of unique users who see the content) across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X and Nextdoor. MFRS launched their Nextdoor channel during the Halloween and Bonfire period, with over **50,000** users across Merseyside viewing our messages during this time with the aim of accessing as many members of the community as possible.
23. The MFRS communications team also utilised local radio stations, articles in local papers and bespoke leaflets which were distributed across the districts via crews and prevention staff. Messages were also communicated to internal staff via the staff portal.

---

## **Staff Implications**

---

24. A number of directorates and departments contributed significantly during the bonfire period. This provided the Prevention Directorate with the ability to deliver the high performance with thanks to:
- Home Safety – provided additional staff
  - Youth Engagement – Providing staff assisting with tippers
  - Protection – Fireworks Legislation, compliance and enforcement
  - Corporate Communications – Communications and Media Strategy
  - Ops. Response – HFSC Campaigns, CRM routes, fly tipping reports
  - An additional IIT Officer was available at all times of high demand on key nights
  - Fire Control additional staffing operators were utilised due to demand over key nights
  - Prevention managers operating OSR to support Fire Control on each of the 4 key nights
25. The Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral Street Intervention Teams (SIT) worked throughout the reporting period in high demand areas to engage with young people and local communities about the associated dangers of the period.
26. The Operational Support Room was utilised to support co-ordination of prevention staff completing high visible presence and Street Intervention Teams.
27. To satisfy the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, all staff driving the tipper trucks have received a driver validation by the Driving School and all staff on the tipper trucks are manual handling trained.

---

## **Legal Implications**

---

28. Under the Explosives Regulations 2014 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Protection Officers visited retailers storing fireworks for sale to ensure compliance with legislation.

---

## **Financial Implications & Value for Money**

---

29. The Liverpool City Safe Board provided additional funding (totalling £1420). This enabled the hire of 2 tipper trucks from Wirral Van Hire to be deployed in North and South Liverpool during the Bonfire period and support our media campaigns.
30. Wirral Council, Sefton Council and St Helens Council hired tipper trucks to be used by MFRS during the bonfire period. Knowsley Council loaned their tipper truck to MFRS.

---

## **Risk Management and Health & Implications**

---

31. In considering the risk management implications for staff operating within Merseyside during key nights, a decision was made to utilise the Operational Support Room.
32. A post Bonfire night sweep took place on the morning of 6th November. This involved fire crews patrolling their station areas in order to extinguish smouldering bonfires in known fire locations. Appliances remained available for redirection by Fire Control.
33. The Bonfire plan identified 4 key nights where demands on MFRS were anticipated to increase, these were 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> October and the 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> November.

---

## **Environmental Implications**

---

34. In order to reduce the impact and noticeable increase of fly tipping, tipper trucks operated pre bonfire to remove hazardous waste or combustible materials to minimise the impact on the environment and the safety of MFRS staff.

---

**Contribution to Our Vision:** *To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.*

Our Purpose: *Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.*

---

35. Effective joint working with our partners from the Police, Housing Associations and Local Authority ensures the highest quality operational response is delivered to Merseyside residents.
36. The delivery of the Bonfire Plan aims to limit and reduce the threat of the number of Anti-Social Behaviour incidents and deliberate fires across Merseyside.
37. Its aim is to reduce the risk of attacks on firefighters through education and engagement. It also promotes key safety messages to allow the public to have a safe Halloween and bonfire period free from harm and injury.
38. MFRS maintained its attendance standard to life risk incidents throughout the bonfire period.

---

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

---

**NONE**

---

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

---

<b>MFRA</b>	<b>Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority</b>
<b>MFRS</b>	<b>Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service</b>
<b>IIT</b>	<b>Incident Investigation Team</b>
<b>JCC</b>	<b>Joint Control Centre</b>
<b>OIC</b>	<b>Officer in Charge</b>
<b>OSR</b>	<b>Operational Support Room</b>
<b>PAT</b>	<b>Potential Arson Target</b>
<b>SHQ</b>	<b>Service Headquarters</b>
<b>SIT</b>	<b>Street Intervention Team</b>