

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	5 FEBRUARY 2026	REPORT NO:	CFO/36/2526
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, NICK SEARLE		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	AREA MANAGER, MARK THOMAS	REPORT AUTHOR:	GROUP MANAGER, GED KNOCK
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	COMMUNITY SAFETY CO-ORDINATOR, LINDSAY SCHOFIELD, STATION MANAGER, ALUN EVANS BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE MANAGER, JOHN FIELDING STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)		
TITLE OF REPORT:	POST BONFIRE UPDATE 2025		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A: SUMMARY REPORT FOR INCIDENT ACTIVITY DURING 2025 BONFIRE PERIOD
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### Purpose of Report

1. To update Members on overall performance across the Bonfire Period (19<sup>th</sup> October to 7<sup>th</sup> November) 2025.

### Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members;
  - a) note the contents of the report including pre-bonfire events and performance; and
  - b) note the forward planning proposals for 2026.

### Introduction and Background

#### Executive Summary and Highlights:

3. The key dates during 2025 were: Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October, Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October and Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> November. During the 2025 bonfire period, **123** deliberate secondary fires were attended by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) crews.
4. When compared to the 2024 period, this is a reduction of **234** incidents or **-65.5%**. **The lowest in the recorded history of MFRS.** (See Appendix A).

Performance at a district level was as follows:

- Knowsley saw **22** incidents, which is a reduction of **18** incidents or **-45%**.
- Liverpool as a whole saw **44** incidents, a reduction of **111** incidents or **-71.6%** compared to 2024 (North Liverpool saw **23** incidents, a reduction on 2024's performance of **93** incidents or **-75.3%**. South Liverpool saw **21** incidents, which is **41** fewer incidents than 2024 or **-66.1%**.)
- Sefton saw **12** incidents, **32 (-72.7%)** fewer than in 2024.
- St Helens saw **18** incidents, a reduction on 2024's performance of **26** incidents or **-59.1%**.
- Wirral saw **27** incidents, which is **47** or **-63.5%** fewer than 2024.

When aggregated proportionally is applied to incidents per 10,000 population, Sefton had the fewest incidents with **0.4**. Liverpool had the highest proportion of **0.9** incidents per 10,000 population.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2025, crews attended **16** incidents. 10 of these incidents involved intentional burning/bonfires.

The top wards for incidents attended were: Bidston & St James (**22**) followed by Northwood (**6**), Garston (**5**) as well as Linacre and Festival Gardens with **4** each.

When compared to the previous year, most stations saw reductions in incidents, the exceptions were 11 - Liverpool City and 42 – Kirkby with minor increases of 3 and 1 respectively.

There were **4** incidents of violence at work during the 2025 bonfire period, 6 fewer than 2024.

#### **Background and pre-bonfire significant events:**

5. MFRS, in partnership with Merseyside Police and Local Authorities, plan for the protection of public safety across the Bonfire Period through Operation Banger, Safety Advisory Groups and community engagement.
6. For 2025, issues that presented during 2023 and 2024 in relation to community led bonfires, predominantly on the Wirral, resurfaced and were addressed through the Wirral Events Safety Advisory Group (WESAG). Bonfire sizes were found to be excessive and firework risk assessments inadequate. Robust engagement in combination with the MFRS position statement resulted in a return from MFRS to WESAG with limitations on all six proposed community bonfires.
7. The organisers of the community bonfires on the Wirral received notice of the limitations on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2025. This resulted in heightened community tension through social media and local reporting.
8. At 17:00hrs on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, both large scale bonfires, at Ilchester Park and Meadow Crescent, Woodchurch, which had been built without authorisation, were ignited. One instance of Violence at Work (VAW) was reported against an

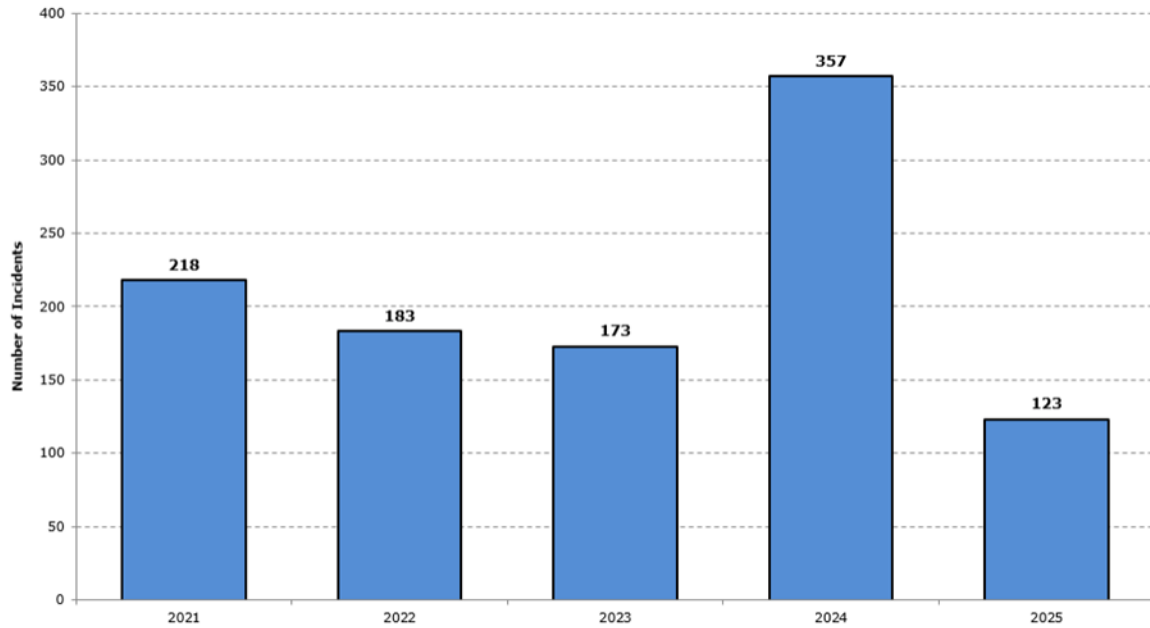
MFRS crew with no injuries or damage. Merseyside Police colleagues received a similar attack at Ilchester Park. Both fires were allowed to burn out.

9. In response to this act, the remaining four organisers stated to WESAG that they would remain within the limits set by MFRS and resubmit appropriate firework risk assessments. A period of heightened tension continued for 48 hours following the ignition.
10. A further WESAG was convened and two community charities, North Birkenhead Development Trust and Woodchurch Trust presented intentions to provide a bonfire within MFRS limits at Ilchester and Woodchurch respectively to ease community tensions. Planning was submitted and found to be adequate on 24<sup>th</sup> October. A “no-build” instruction until 4<sup>th</sup> November was added to both sites.
11. On 5<sup>th</sup> November, MFRS received notice through WESAG that both new organisers had “lost control” of their sites and that security/contractors were refusing to operate on site due to threats and intimidation. This was communicated to Merseyside Police who provided a presence to limit further building.
12. The remainder of Merseyside saw no planning submissions from community organisers; however, several large-scale bonfires were erected on 5<sup>th</sup> November, most notably at:
  - County Rd, Kirkby
  - Kirkdale Recreation Ground
  - Northumberland St, Toxteth
13. Several planning applications for bonfires/displays at sports grounds and public houses were reviewed by the local authority SAG with no issues.
14. As per the planning for Operation Banger, all command allocations and community safety measures were put in place for the three key nights, 30<sup>th</sup> October, 31<sup>st</sup> October and 5<sup>th</sup> November.

**Performance Report (Deliberate secondary and bonfires, 19<sup>th</sup> October – 7<sup>th</sup> November).**

15. During the period, 123 deliberate secondary/bonfires were recorded, a reduction of 66% from 357 similar incidents in 2024 and 29% lower than the highest performing year in 2023, where 173 incidents were recorded. (see below).

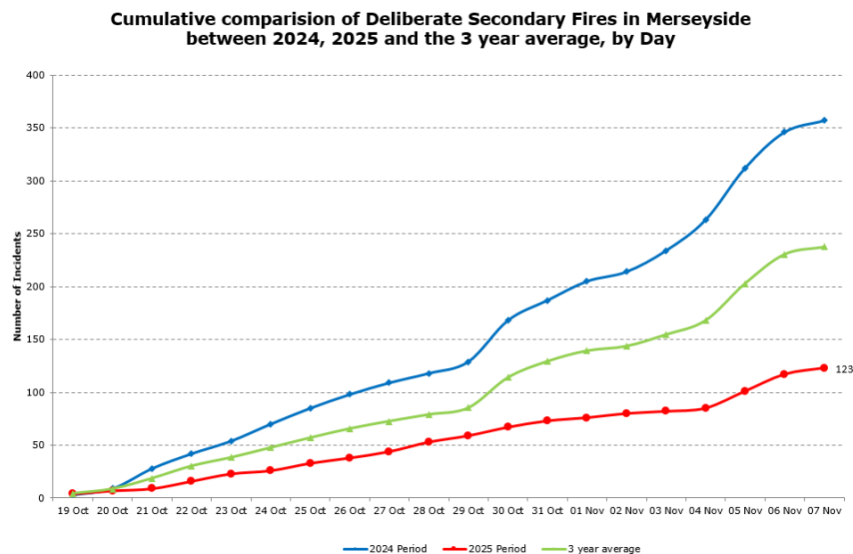
### 5 Year Retrospective for Deliberate Secondary Fires, Merseyside Wide, between 2021 and 2025



16. Deeper analysis shows that 16 bonfires/deliberate fires were attended and extinguished throughout Merseyside on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2025 in contrast to 49 incidents on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Daily analysis of the “key nights” – 30<sup>th</sup> October 31<sup>st</sup> October and 5<sup>th</sup> November in relation to secondary fires over the last 5 years is shown below:

Date:	2022	2023	2024	2025	Year average
30 <sup>th</sup> Oct	26	21	39	8	29
31 <sup>st</sup> Oct	8	19	19	6	15
5 <sup>th</sup> Nov	32	24	49	16	35

17. A representation of deliberate fires between 2024-, 2025- and 3-year average is shown below. This also highlights the reduction in incidents for 2025.



18. In addition to this, four Violence at Work submissions were made for the period, two occurring on 5<sup>th</sup> November. Fortunately, no MFRS staff were injured.
19. VAW that was reported inside the bonfire period includes:
- 22/10/25: Fireworks aimed at an appliance in Birkenhead – no injuries or damage.
  - 22/10/25: Youths attempted to enter Wallasey Fire Station as the appliance responded, bricks and missiles thrown at the appliance but did not make contact – no injuries or damage.
  - 5/11/25: Fireworks aimed at crew and appliance while in attendance at a van fire – no injuries or damage.
  - 5/11/25: Crew, officers and appliance attacked by youths directing fireworks at the scene of operations at a high-rise flat fire at Knowsley Heights. Fire ignited by fireworks directed onto a fourth-floor balcony. No injuries to fire crew or damage to appliances, however, one Merseyside Police Officer and member of the public both injured.
20. An overview of performance across the local authority areas over the sample periods is given below:
21. 5<sup>th</sup> November only:

#### All Deliberate Fires

District	2024	2025	Difference	Percentage Difference
Knowsley	5	1	-4	-80.0%
Liverpool	27	5	-22	-81.5%
Sefton	8	5	-3	-37.5%
St Helens	4	4	0	0.0%
Wirral	5	1	-4	-80.0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>-33</b>	<b>-67.3%</b>

#### Bonfires Only

District	2024	2025	Difference	Percentage Difference
Knowsley	4	1	-3	-75.0%
Liverpool	14	2	-12	-85.7%
Sefton	4	4	0	0.0%
St Helens	4	2	-2	-50.0%
Wirral	3	1	-2	-66.7%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>-19</b>	<b>-65.5%</b>

22. 19<sup>th</sup> October to 7<sup>th</sup> November:

#### All Deliberate Fires

District	2024	2025	Difference	Percentage Difference
Knowsley	37	19	-18	-48.6%
Liverpool	139	35	-104	-74.8%
Sefton	38	10	-28	-73.7%
St Helens	36	14	-22	-61.1%
Wirral	62	23	-39	-62.9%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>-211</b>	<b>-67.6%</b>

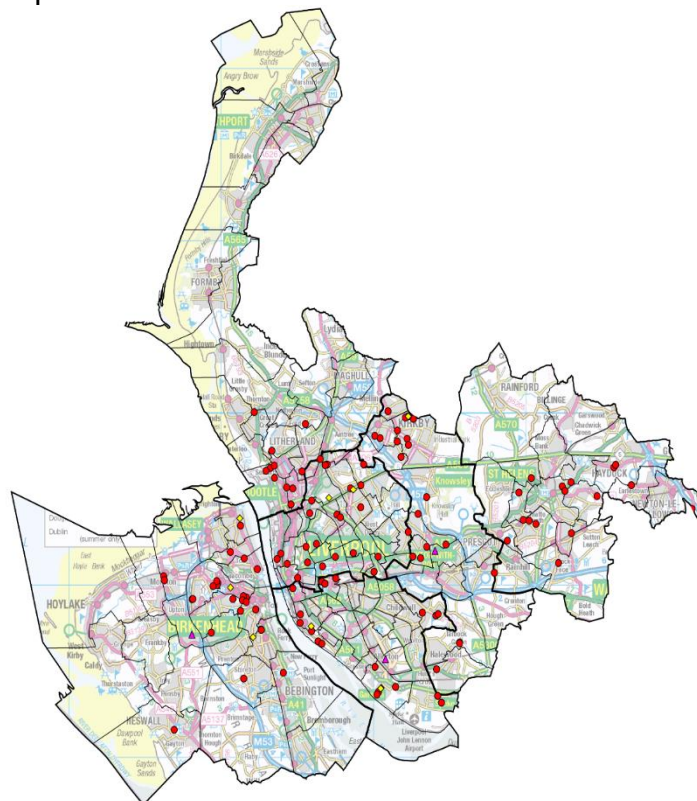
#### Bonfires Only

District	2024	2025	Difference	Percentage Difference
Knowsley	18	8	-10	-55.6%
Liverpool	33	8	-25	-75.8%
Sefton	12	6	-6	-50.0%
St Helens	10	9	-1	-10.0%
Wirral	26	14	-12	-46.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>-54</b>	<b>-54.5%</b>

A geographical breakdown of incidents (including fireworks and VAW) across Merseyside for the period is shown below:

#### Legend:

- Incidents
- ▲ Fireworks
- Violence At Work
- ▭ District Boundary
- ▭ Ward Boundary



Distribution of Deliberate Secondary Fires 2025 Bonfire Period overlaid with incidents of Violence at Work and Fireworks



23. A comparison of secondary incident types during 2024 and 2025 is shown below:

Incident	2024	2025	Change	% Change
04 01 Derelict Building	3	4	1	33.3%
04 02 Grassland	16	3	-13	-81.3%
04 03 Intentional Burning / Bonfire	126	61	-65	-51.6%
04 04 Outdoor Structure	10	7	-3	-30.0%
04 05 Refuse Fire	202	48	-154	-76.2%
04 06 Derelict Vehicle	0	0	0	0.0%
Grand Total	357	123	-234	-65.5%

This table identifies that most deliberate secondary fires attended were “04 03 Intentional Burning / Bonfire” with 61 incidents (a reduction of 65 incidents or 51.6%). This incident type accounts for 50% of total incidents. This was then followed by “04 05 Refuse Fire” with 48 incidents, a notable reduction of 154 incidents or 76.2%.

Concerning other incident types, there were further reductions in “04 02 Grassland” and “04 04 Outdoor Structure”. The “04 01 Derelict Building” incident type saw an increase of 1 and “04 06 Derelict Vehicle” saw no (zero) incidents.

24. From the data provided and performance recorded, it can be seen that bonfire 2025 was **successful** in protecting communities, reducing incidents and minimising harm, injury or loss. In summary:

- Overall **secondary incidents are reduced by 67.6%** across the five local authorities.
- Overall **bonfires are reduced by 54.5%** across the five local authorities.
- **VAW submissions for the period were reduced by 50%** with no injuries or damage. An additional VAW was incurred on 6<sup>th</sup> October relating to fireworks. Of the five in total, three occurred in the vicinity of the proposed Wirral bonfires.
- Tipper trucks collected over **80 tonnes of waste** during the period.
- **Arson Officers and Road/Water Safety team engaged with approximately 4000 pupils** across primary and secondary schools in the county, providing education and safety messages.
- MFRS facilitated diversionary /education activities including LFC Kicks and Everton in the Community “high risk” youths at TDA.
- Street Intervention Teams were deployed under Threat/Risk/Harm intelligence to educate young people in key areas.
- Incident Investigation Team (IIT) stood up double staffing for resilience purposes across key nights.
- Trojan appliance stood up but only utilised twice (30<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> November).

25. **Observations outside of data show:**

- Perceived trend of fireworks being used as weapons against MFRS and Merseyside Police. Of note, an incident occurred at Knowsley Heights involving both agencies being attacked.

- Consideration from Wirral Borough Council to place injunctions on land at Ilchester and Woodchurch to prevent future unauthorised bonfires.
- Merseyside Police dispersal zones in South Liverpool largely breached by young people with ongoing reports of ASB/firework use throughout the evening of 5<sup>th</sup> November.

## **26. Forward planning considerations for 2026:**

- MFRS will, with partners, adopt the same position adopted for Operation Banger 2025 in respect of large, unregulated bonfires.
- MFRS will, with partners, attend a debrief to share best practice and lessons learnt from Operation Banger 2025.
- A multi-agency call for legislative change in regard to sale of fireworks to restrict public/underage access.
- Potential for WBC to place injunctions on land at Ilchester Park and Meadow Crescent Woodchurch.
- Potential for Merseyside Police to seek criminal action against former organisers (Ilchester and Woodchurch) for unauthorised ignition and disregard to authority.
- Consideration for WBC to arrange council display.
- A strict “no-build” policy until 4<sup>th</sup> November for all proposed community bonfires.
- Expansion of dispersal zones by Merseyside Police to include additional key nights and areas.
- Investigate cultural links to youth behaviour/ASB in areas of community bonfires through Violence Reduction Partnership.
- Review Knowsley Borough Council approach and tipper funding in respect of the serious fire at Knowsley Heights in addition to least reduction of secondary fires reported back.
- Seek media debrief with local media outlets.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

27. The aim of Operation Banger and all other measures taken across the bonfire period is to protect communities from the perspective of threat, harm and risk. The focus is predominantly on areas of high social deprivation which contributes to improving standards of life by reduction of anti-social behaviour or targeted crime.

## **Staff Implications**

28. Consideration to maintain current staff levels within SIT/Arson.
29. Consideration to expand IIT team by one resilience post in forthcoming review.



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**Legal Implications**

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30. MFRS continued to exercise its powers in responding to incidents during the Bonfire period and collaborating with partners seeking to ensure both its staff and the community remain safe.

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**Financial Implications & Value for Money**

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31. All costs for delivering the bonfire plan were sourced from planned budgets or supported by external partners.
32. Exploration of planning and funding from Knowsley Borough Council in relation to SIT/Tipper Trucks 2026.

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**Risk Management and Health & Implications**

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33. Briefings on safe operation (PPE/Appliances) will be given to operational crews before the bonfire period. SOP 5.4.0 Civil Disorder supports the measures and will be redistributed to crews.
34. The MFRS position statement and Fire Control briefings provided a framework for operations in the event of a planned large-scale bonfire.
35. Tipper truck operators were given sufficient information, training and instruction on driving and operating the vehicles prior to commencement. Guidance on handling materials and PPE will be given. No injuries or incidents reported.

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**Environmental Implications**

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36. In order to reduce the impact and noticeable increase of fly tipping, tipper trucks operated pre and post bonfire night to remove hazardous waste or combustible materials to minimise the impact on the environment and the safety of MFRS staff.
37. A post Bonfire night sweep took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

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**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.*

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38. MFRS will continue to support partners in achieving the common goal of protecting communities and reducing risk or harm.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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**NONE**

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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<b>CRM</b>	<b>C</b> ommunity <b>R</b> isk <b>M</b> anagement
<b>MFRS</b>	<b>M</b> erseyside <b>F</b> ire and <b>R</b> escue <b>S</b> ervice
<b>CRMP</b>	<b>C</b> ommunity <b>R</b> isk <b>M</b> anagement <b>P</b> lan
<b>MFRA</b>	<b>M</b> erseyside <b>F</b> ire and <b>R</b> escue <b>A</b> uthority
<b>CSP</b>	<b>C</b> ommunity <b>S</b> afety <b>P</b> artnership
<b>ASB</b>	<b>A</b> nti- <b>S</b> ocial <b>B</b> ehaviour
<b>LRF</b>	<b>L</b> ocal <b>R</b> esilience <b>F</b> orum
<b>JCC</b>	<b>J</b> oint <b>C</b> ontrol <b>C</b> entre
<b>OSR</b>	<b>O</b> perational <b>S</b> upport <b>R</b> oom
<b>TDA</b>	<b>T</b> raining and <b>D</b> evelopment <b>A</b> cademy
<b>PPE</b>	<b>P</b> ersonal <b>P</b> rotective <b>E</b> quipment
<b>SOP</b>	<b>S</b> tandard <b>O</b> perating <b>P</b> rocedure
<b>VAW</b>	<b>V</b> iolence <b>a</b> t <b>W</b> ork
<b>SIT</b>	<b>S</b> treet <b>I</b> ntervention <b>T</b> eam
<b>WESAG</b>	<b>W</b> irral <b>E</b> vents <b>S</b> afety <b>A</b> dvisory <b>G</b> roup
<b>SAG</b>	<b>S</b> afety <b>A</b> dvisory <b>G</b> roup
<b>IIT</b>	<b>I</b> ncident <b>I</b> nvestigation <b>T</b> eam