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COP26 FAQs - General

Q: Do Police Scotland have enough officers to support COP26?

A: Specialist resources, made up of Police Scotland officers and other officers from other UK police forces, will be in place for the duration of the event to ensure the safety of everyone involved, including world leaders, heads of state, delegates and the wider public within Scotland. Officers will be drafted from all divisions across Scotland, supported by a substantial number of colleagues from other UK police services as part of mutual aid arrangements.

Q: Will Police Scotland be actively policing the transport network?

A: There will be disruption to the traffic infrastructure in Glasgow. Police Scotland is assisting Transport colleagues to develop suitable plans which will mitigate, as far as possible, any disruption which occurs.

Q: How many arrests are you planning for?

A: We hope that there will be minimal, however, as seen in recent years in London, we are preparing our custody estate for additional arrests over and above business as usual levels. A better indication of the anticipated number of arrest should become clearer as the intelligence picture develops in the lead up to the event.

Q: How do members of the public report something they believe might be suspicious?

A: Members of the public should call 101 in non-emergency or 999 in an emergency to speak to the police.

Q: Will there be armed police officers?

A: Yes. COP26 will be the biggest and most complex event ever staged in Scotland, and will necessitate the largest mobilisation of police officers that has taken place in the UK in many years, and this includes armed officers.

Q: What is the role of armed officers at COP26?

A: Armed officers will be present at the event as part of the protective security element of the operation and to ensure that Police Scotland can respond appropriately to any incident which requires officers to protect the public or respond to serious or threat to life incidents. Armed officers will be deployed as a contingency only in support of the wider security operation. These officers are first and foremost police officers and may well attend or respond to all types of incidents. They are highly trained and have specialist First Aid capabilities and equipment and regularly assist unarmed colleagues with a variety of incidents across the country.

Q: How do I keep up to date with arrangements for COP26?

A: Visit the Get Ready Glasgow website regularly for the latest updates.

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BUSINESSES

Q: What are the security risks I need to consider in relation to COP26?

Businesses will already be aware of security risks as part of their business as usual planning e.g. through the Contest Strategy, Actions Counters Terrorism (ACT) etc and the associated products and materials provided to support businesses. Further advice and guidance can be obtained from the Scottish Business Resilience Centre (SBRC).

Q: What can I do to prepare my business and staff for COP26?

A: There are a number of things businesses can do to plan and prepare to minimise any disruption. The most important thing to do is talk to your staff and make sure they are aware of COP26 and what it means for the city. Visit the Get Ready Glasgow website regularly for the latest updates and use the information as part of your own internal communications to staff. For example, staff should consider their routes to and from work and how they may be impacted. Further information on safety and security tips for businesses can be found on the Police Scotland website.

Q: My business is close to the island site will Police Scotland be providing specific support?

A: There will be an increased police presence near to the island site. They are there to help you and your business where that is needed before and during the event. If you receive information that your business may be impacted in any way by protesters or activists it is important the police are notified so we can engage with you and consider a proportionate response. Those businesses in very close proximity will be contacted directly by the event organiser to discuss the impact.

PROTEST

Q: Will there be increased demonstrations/activists in the city?

A: Climate Change is a topic which is receiving significant media attention and ever-increasing numbers of protests around the world. COP26 will attract protest activity and protest is being encouraged by the United Nations.

Q: I'm concerned about the potential disruption by XR after seeing what happened in London? How are Police Scotland planning to ensure we avoid similar levels of disruption?

Police Scotland is a rights-based organisation that puts our values of integrity, fairness, respect and a commitment to upholding human rights at the heart of everything we do.

We have a duty under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to protect the rights of people who wish to peacefully protest or counter-protest, balanced against the rights of the wider community.

We take all reasonable measures to engage protest groups and/or activists in advance of the conference and minimise disruption as far as practicable. It is vitally important that our policing response to any demonstration is proportionate and lawful.

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Where disruption does emerge the police will respond proportionately. Where it is clear that offences have taken place, which cause disruption to Scotland's communities, we will take action. Where proportionate and necessary, we will make arrests.

Businesses should be prepared, keep updated on planned events and activity via the Get Ready Glasgow website and review their safety and security procedures.

Q: Why does it take the police time to move protestors causing disruption?

It is vitally important that our policing response to any demonstration is proportionate and lawful. We have a duty under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to protect the rights of people who wish to peacefully protest or counter-protest, balanced against the rights of the wider community.

Those wishing to protest have a responsibility to do so within the law and we will take action against those who may be intent on significant or violent disorder or causing damage.

Certain protest groups are known for adopting complex methods in order to cause disruption, by using lock-on devices. Clearly these devices can be challenging to remove but we have highly specialist officers who are trained to deal with these situations. But this task must be done safely and it is clear that however good we are at removing people, this does take time. If this is multiplied across a lot of people who are locked on, this can take a lot of time. We understand and share the frustration of those who are affected by this, but it simply cannot be done quickly.

Q: If a march takes place in the city centre during the conference – how will the police plan for this and protect the city from any disruption?

A: The local authority will consider the impact of any march taking place and Police Scotland will inform that process through the statutory consultation process. Police Scotland are used to dealing with large scale parades and we will have a proportionate plan in place.

Q: I've heard there will be a school walk-out during the period of the conference – is this legal? What numbers are you expecting and how will you police this? Should we expect major disruption?

A: Whilst there is no confirmed school walk-out it is well known that school walk-outs in support of climate change do happen. The legalities of any school walk-out rests with local authority. Police Scotland are engaging with students from the Scottish Youth Parliament and will consider any related information and/or intelligence and respond appropriately and proportionately

Q: How will you deal with protesters?

A: Police Scotland is a rights-based organisation and has a duty under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to protect the rights of people who wish to peacefully protest or counter-protest, balanced against the rights of the wider community.

We will provide a proportionate policing response to any protests and will seek to engage with known protest groups to ensure their rights to peaceful assembly and protest are met.

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Those wishing to protest have a responsibility to do so within the law and the small minority of people who may be intent on violent disorder or causing damage will be dealt with swiftly and robustly.

Q: What protest groups are you expecting to be in Glasgow during COP26?

A: We anticipate a wide range of groups seeking to raise awareness of climate change concerns and other issues given the international audience COP26 will provide. We will provide a proportionate policing response to any protests and will seek to engage with known protest groups to ensure their rights to peaceful assembly and protest are met

Q: Are you liaising with activists and other groups in advance of the conference?

A: Yes, Police Scotland engage with a variety of groups and activists in advance of events such as COP26.

Q: Should the people of Glasgow expect mass disruption to the city?

A: With an event of this scale some disruption is inevitable but we are working with partners to keep this to a minimum.

Q: How you deal with unplanned protest activity?

A: Specialist resources, made up of Police Scotland officers and officers from other UK police forces, will be in place for the duration of the event to ensure the safety of everyone involved, including world leaders and heads of state, delegates, and the wider public within Scotland.

Q: Will protests be allowed during the pandemic?

A: We will continue to consider coronavirus restrictions as planning continues. Officers have to consider all legislation and balance this against the rights people have to protest. We have positive obligations under Articles 10 (expression) and 11 (assembly) of the ECHR. However, Articles 10 and 11 are qualified rights, meaning they are not absolute unlike Article 2; The Right to Life. In circumstances where it is judged that there is a risk to public health the rights to assembly may be restricted. Any application to rally will be considered. Advice and guidance will be provided in order to ensure safety for all.

Q: How will you ensure the protests are peaceful?

A: Police Scotland are committed to a communication led approach to protest and have a dedicated Police Liaison Team who are already engaging with groups planning to protest during COP26. They can be reached via OSDPoliceLiaison@scotland.pnn.police.uk and will provide a dedicated point of contact for individuals or groups planning protest activity in relation to the Conference. These teams perform a vital role in providing a means with which Police Scotland can communicate and engage with protest groups to ensure a 'no surprises' approach. This often involves providing an explanation and rationale for the implementation of proportionate police tactics.

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Q: How are Police Scotland planning for the large number of visitors expected in the city?

A: Police Scotland has an enviable reputation and significant experience in policing major events. We are working with partner agencies to develop a set of planning assumptions to inform the preparation and delivery of the policing operation. The planning assumptions also recognise the likelihood that the conference will be subject to protest and as such will require a 24/7 conventional and specialist police response for the duration of the event.

Q: Will Police Scotland be told in advance if certain businesses are to be targeted by protesters and activists?

A: Whilst the police are making efforts to engage with event organisers and their wider groups, there is a recognition that not all information may be shared about plans. Where we do become aware of specific information we would engage, where appropriate, with relevant businesses.

Q: What do I do if I become aware my business is a target for protesters / activists?

A: You should contact Police Scotland on 101 to report any concerns.

Q: What support will be given if my business is to be targeted by protesters / activists?

A: Where we do become aware of specific information we would engage, where that is appropriate, with relevant businesses, to support both your response and consider and appropriate and proportionate policing response. This will depend on the threat assessment of the available information which will inform your options and any tactical options by the police.

Q: My business is close to the island site, are we at greater risk of disruption from protesters / activists?

A: There will be an increased police presence near to the Island site. They are there to help you and your business where that is needed. If you become aware of information that your business may be impacted in any way it is important the police are notified so we can engage with you and consider a proportionate response.

Q: My business has vacant premises in the city centre, what can I do to protect these premises?

A: The responsibility of the premises rests with the owner and security should be reviewed in the same way as occupied buildings. It is worthwhile knowing your rights in relation to squatters and this should be available from your company lawyer, the Scottish Business Resilience Centre (SBRC) and Citizen's Advice.

Q: What should we do if, during the event, protesters or activists are causing damage to our buildings or preventing our staff accessing buildings at work?

A: If protesters and/or activists are causing damage to buildings then you should dial 101 to report the matter to Police Scotland. If there is a threat to life or public safety you should always dial 999 in an emergency.

If protesters are obstructing access to the building this is an offence and the police should be notified. However, businesses should consider other options of entry/exiting the

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building as part of your emergency planning procedures (e.g. back door etc.) should this be necessary whilst the police deal with any obstructions.

It is worth reviewing your business continuity procedures to prepare for any potential disruption to your services.

Q: What should we do if protesters or activists get access to our building?

A: You should dial 101 to report the matter to Police Scotland. If there is a threat to life or public safety you should always dial 999 in an emergency. Do not place yourself or staff in danger. Notify the police immediately.

Q: Some of my staff are members of protest group – should I be concerned?

A: Any concerns should be addressed through your business safety and security policies. Any specific concerns can also be shared with the police.

Q: Are you aware if climate camps will be set up in the city?

A: This is a matter for Glasgow City Council and any policing response will be appropriate and proportionate.

Q: What do I do if I can't get access to a building or go about my business due to protest disruption?

A: If protesters and/or activists are causing damage to buildings then you should dial 101 to report the matter to Police Scotland. If there is a threat to life or public safety you should always dial 999 in an emergency.

If protesters are obstructing access to the building this is an offence and the police should be notified. However, businesses should consider other options of entry/exiting the building as part of your emergency planning procedures (e.g./ back door etc...) should this be necessary whilst the police deal with any obstructions.

It is worth reviewing your business continuity procedures to prepare for any potential disruption to your services.

Q. What do the police have to consider when dealing with protests or demonstrations?

A: Police Scotland is a rights-based organisation. We have a duty under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to protect the rights of people who wish to peacefully protest or counter-protest. This will be balanced against the rights of the wider community.

Decisions about how to police protests and other similar events require police to consider complex and often competing rights and issues. Decisions are often difficult and finely tuned but are made by experienced and well-trained officers. The guiding principles are maximising the safety of protestors, the public and police officers involved, preventing criminal behaviour or disorder and deescalating tensions.

Q. Can the police ban protest activity?

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A: Article 11 of the Human Rights Act guarantees the right to freedom of assembly and association. This right covers protests and demonstrations. Article 10 guarantees the right to freedom of expression.

There is a positive duty on police in law to protect these rights.

While we can't "ban" a protest, we do need to take public safety into account and will engage with known groups about their plans so that we can ensure their rights are met, while taking into account the rights of counter-protesters and the wider community and ensuring the safety of everyone involved.

The law (Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982) says that a person proposing to hold a public procession must give no less than 28 days' notice of that proposal to the relevant local authority and to the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Scotland. After consulting with the Chief Constable, the local authority may prohibit the procession or impose conditions upon it.

In exercising its powers, the local authority must have regard to the likely effect of the procession upon public safety, public order, damage to property, and disruption of the life of the community, as well as the extent to which containment of risks arising from the procession place an excessive burden on the police.

Q. What happens if a protest turns violent?

A: Any violence will not be tolerated. Most protests are peaceful but there can be a minority of people who attend such events with the sole intention of committing crime, including assaulting police.

Police officers go to work, putting their safety at risk every day to keep the public safe, and any violence they face at protests is totally unacceptable.

Any person who is identified as committing acts of violence at protests will be dealt with swiftly and robustly

Q. What will you do if a protest is causing disruption to the wider community?

A: It is a particularly difficult balancing act when protests are non-violent and peaceful but highly disruptive.

We will seek to facilitate peaceful protests, but even if the protest is peaceful, this doesn't always mean the actions taken by those protestors are legal.

People at protests can break the law for a variety of reasons that aren't linked to violence or disorder. For example, officers may arrest someone for:

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- Wilfully obstructing the highway
- Prohibited activities in controlled area (e.g. use of amplified noise equipment or erection of tents)

Q. In what circumstances are officers allowed to use force against “peaceful” protestors - such as those sitting?

A: The level of force officers use in the course of their duties must be proportionate, legal, and absolutely necessary and officers are individually accountable in law for the amount of force they use.

The use of force in any situation will involve a unique set of circumstances and deploying use of force tactics will be based on a variety of factors. A police officer’s priority will always be ensuring wider public safety as well as that of the individual(s) they are dealing with.

For example, Where protesters are breaking the law by wilfully blocking a highway or causing disruption and a risk to the safety of themselves and others, officers will engage with the protesters and ask them to voluntarily release themselves. If they refuse to do so thereafter officers will engage them in a staged appeal prior further police action. There will be significant investment in engagement and encouraging protesters to consider the impact of their actions on others beforehand.

RESTRICTIONS

Q: Will I be made aware of road closures in my area in advance?

A: As you would expect with an event of this scale there is the need for traffic management plans to keep disruption to a minimum while allowing the conference to take place.

Information on travel and road restrictions is available on the Get Ready Glasgow website. There will also be communications to local residents and businesses as appropriate.

Q: Will I be prevented from gaining access to my business?

A: This is unlikely.

Q: What happens if there is an emergency or major incident?

A: Follow advice and guidance from blue light emergency services.

MUTUAL AID

Q: Will mutual aid officers be armed?

A: A very limited number of mutual aid officers will be armed, however they will be deployed as part of the firearms plan and will not respond in isolation to any incidents in Scotland which are not COP26 related.

Q: Do Police Scotland procedures and processes apply to mutual aid officers?

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A: All mutual aid officers when they deploy will come under the command and control of the Chief Constable of the host force, in this case CC Livingstone, and will receive detailed briefings on the style and tone of policing which will be friendly, fair, accessible and accommodating. Officers will operate in line with the host force policies and procedures and will be given guidance in relation to those prior to their arrival.

Q: How do you account for differences in legislation in Scotland?

A: Police Scotland has a briefing and guidance team that are currently compiling and have developed an extensive briefing package for all mutual aid officers, this includes differences in legislation. This will be provided to all officers prior to them leaving their home force, so they can familiarise themselves in plenty of time.

Q: What procedure will apply to manage complaints against mutual aid officers?

A: Our Professional Standards Department are working with all mutual aid forces and developing a process for this.