
Report by the Chief Constable

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CLIMATE CAMP FOR ACTION 2010**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Climate Camp is recognised as an annual event, attracting a wide variety of protest groups to a central location somewhere in the UK. Previous camps have targeted action against fuel providers and the financial sector. In the past huge police operations have been mounted and sometimes significant disruption has been caused to the business community and local residents.
- 1.2 In June 2010 intelligence indicated that the Climate Camp organisers had identified Edinburgh as a possible site for their annual gathering, with the Royal Bank of Scotland as their main protest target.

2. Planning

- 2.1 By July 2010 Climate Camp organisers had contacted the City of Edinburgh Council, confirming an intention to stage their event within the City, although specific details were not provided. Organisers made it clear that no formal application was to be submitted for permission to stage an event, but they did agree to hold discussions with planners.
- 2.2 Joint planning between Lothian and Borders Police and the City of Edinburgh Council commenced and the first meeting with Climate Camp representatives was held at the City Chambers on Friday, 30 July.
- 2.3 Throughout the planning process Climate Camp representatives refused to divulge the location for their camp. However, they made clear their intention to take direct action. Anticipating a risk to public order and the potential for significant disruption to the City, a major policing operation (Operation Octave) was planned. ACC Livingstone was appointed Gold Commander.

3. Climate Camp

- 3.1 About 2100 hours on Wednesday, 18 August 2010 protestors arrived unannounced at the Royal Bank of Scotland Headquarters, Gogarburn, and commenced the establishment of their camp. Despite earlier suggestions that the camp would be erected on Thursday, 19 August 2010, Public Support Units were on standby and were quickly deployed to the site. Efforts were immediately made to contain the camp and prevent direct access to nearby RBS buildings. By lunchtime the following day, camp organisers had made public its location and were encouraging their supporters to attend at Gogarburn.

- 3.2 During the first day of Climate Camp, contact was established between organisers, Council officials and the Police. A reasonable level of dialogue was maintained throughout the event, but nonetheless a large Police presence was considered to be necessary. Additional officers for the City Centre, RBS Headquarters and the Airport were provided on a 24-hour basis. Public Support Units were also brigaded and held in reserve for immediate deployment.
- 3.3 Day shift cover of Edinburgh Airport was provided by officers from Lothian and Borders Police, whilst night shift resources were drawn from Central Scotland Police. British Transport Police supported Operation Octave, with deployments of officers to protect the main railway stations and the railway infrastructure.
- 3.4 Among the tactics used by Climate Camp followers to disrupt RBS business were the occupation of branches, the gluing of locks and the daubing of graffiti on buildings. At RBS Headquarters attempts were made to access the main building and several assaults upon police lines were mounted.
- 3.5 Protestors were also very active in the media, taking every opportunity to highlight their causes.
- 3.6 By Saturday, 21 August 2010 the Gogarburn campsite housed approximately 500 Climate Camp supporters.
- 3.7 On Sunday, 22 August 2010 intelligence indicated that the protestors were intent on escalating their activities by causing criminal damage at RBS Headquarters, protesting at Edinburgh Airport and disrupting the roads network. This resulted in the Gold Commander requesting mutual aid from other forces and support was immediately sought from Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Tayside and Northumbria.
- 3.8 On Monday, 23 August 2010, their declared main day of action, protestors were prevented from causing serious damage or disruption by a large police presence at Gogarburn. However, protests were mounted at several RBS properties within Edinburgh and at the Coal Depot within Leith Docks.
- 3.9 Over the following days numbers at the Gogarburn campsite began to diminish and on Thursday, 25 August 2010 the last group of protestors departed.

4. Arrests

- 4.1 A total of 23 people were arrested during the period of the Climate Camp, mainly for offences within the City Centre.

5. Police Resources

- 5.1 Planning for Operation Octave was based around information that the camp would last for six days and that direct protest action would be focused around Monday, 23 August 2010. Despite this, it quickly became apparent that protest action would be taken at multiple sites, with no prior warnings given. As a consequence, Operation Octave was staffed for a period of nine days, and at significant cost.

5.2 A total of 8 police Forces were involved in Operation Octave at a cost of £649,600. This is broken down as follows:

Overtime .- £379,280

Non staff costs - £ 91,122

Mutual aid - £179,198

5.3 The Board may be aware of similar protests in other areas resulting in large numbers of arrests, injuries to police officers and protesters following violent clashes and media images that represent a threat to the reputation of the police forces involved. Such circumstances often lead to significant levels of complaint from protesters and the wider public, which require to be investigated causing further allocation of police resources. An additional impact in such cases can be legal costs with forces requiring to defend legal actions from protesters seeking to sue for damages. Overall, the approach applied at the Climate Camp for Action in 2010, with the focus on engagement and containment to reduce confrontation, minimised such adverse consequences and although notable expenditure was incurred this was proportionate to the scale and extent of the demonstrations.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Climate Camp had the potential to cause significant disruption to the City of Edinburgh and it posed a major risk to the Royal Bank of Scotland. Despite organisers refusing to fully engage with the Police, a highly effective operation, lasting over nine days, was mounted. The success of Operation Octave was built around detailed planning, excellent co-operation between the Force and the City of Edinburgh Council, and the ability of Lothian and Borders Police to respond rapidly to emerging threats.

7. Recommendation

7.1 That the Board notes the report.



David Strang
Chief Constable

20 January 2011