

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Meeting to be held on 12 March 2018

Fracking Update

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Panel with an update on the Constabulary's strategic approach to the management of the resourcing for the policing of the protests

RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to consider the report.

Background

The Panel will recall at their meeting in December 2017, Members were provided with a detailed report in relation to the policing aspects of the fracking operation by Cuadrilla and asked for a further report on the strategic approach to the management of the resourcing for the policing of the protests.

As Members are aware, Operation Manilla is the Constabulary's response to Fracking related protest which is currently concentrated largely at Preston New Road.

Protracted protest started in January 2017 and in the previous twelve months the resources required on a daily basis have varied from a Police Liaison response to at peak times 3 PSUs plus associated add-ons.

Lancashire Constabulary have had protests on a daily basis supported by local and national campaign groups. This protest peaked in the late summer of 2017 with the delivery of the drilling rig and after a reduction in activity in the autumn it would appear that the intensity is increasing as the process of fracking gets closer.

To date Lancashire Constabulary have had:

- over 350 arrests
- over 80 lock-ons
- 46 full or partial road closures
- significant disruption to both Cuadrilla, their sub-contractors and the local community
- 145 complaints in respect of the policing of the fracking operation.

Dependent upon the presence of significant gas reserves it is unlikely that the current process will be completed until at least early 2019 and it is quite clear from discussions with both local and national protestors that they intend:

- to stop the fracking process at Preston New Road by any means, because they believe it will lead to large scale gas production across Lancashire
- to use direct action in combination with peaceful protest and mass civil disobedience
- to request support from national protestors and provide them with the necessary means to stay in the vicinity at the various protest camps

Based upon what Lancashire Constabulary experienced in 2017 and the stated intentions of both local and national groups it is reasonable to expect:

- significant protest by local groups supported by individual nationals, and national groups such as Reclaim the Power
- protest tactics including peaceful protest, mass gatherings, lock-ons, vehicle surfing and other associated direct action tactics
- it is likely that this activity will peak in the spring/summer/early autumn and during specific points in the fracking process such as:
 - removal of the drilling rig
 - arrival of the fracking rig
 - removal of the waste water (up to 600 HGV movements)
 - construction of the gas pipeline

Whilst the above timescale is subject to change due to a number of factors including, licensing and environmental factors it is quite clear that in terms of protest Lancashire Constabulary expect a busy year.

Therefore, Lancashire Constabulary have established a permanent command structure for Operation Manilla for the period 1st March 2018 – 31st December 2018 which will be supplemented by a daily public order resource that will be made up of officers working on rest day (so whilst there is a financial cost, there will be no cost in terms of abstractions from their normal place of duty) in order to meet the predicted demand the predicted resource levels.

The future costs will be met initially from Constabulary reserves with the likelihood of full or partial cost recovery from the Home Office.

Request to the Home Office for financial support

As the Panel is aware, the Commissioner has written to the Home Office on a number of occasions to request financial support in respect of the costs incurred for the fracking operation to date. Lancashire MPs have also submitted a cross party letter in support of the Commissioner's request.

Further, the Commissioner has made a claim for 'Special Grant' support from the Home Office and HMICFRS attended Lancashire in the week commencing 20th November 2017 to review that claim.

In terms of value for money, HMICFRS found that the Constabulary's operation has been well planned, with a clear governance structure. Expenditure is closely monitored and the force has tried to reduce costs where possible. HMICFRS found several examples of money-saving measures and have therefore concluded that the force has applied value-for-money principles.