

Relevant extracts from notes of discussions between the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Police Scotland representatives (with Scottish Government official(s) in attendance).

14 May 2020

UK Freedom Movement Demonstrations:

Park-based demonstrations are planned for Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee and Inverness. Intelligence from similar events in England suggest turnout likely to be low, but police will monitor. There is the potential for counter-demonstrations. CSJ asked to be kept informed.

18 May 2020

UK Freedom Movement Demonstrations:

Very low attendance reported at the weekend demonstrations. No particular shared demographic noticeable among attendees.

Meeting with the Grand Master of the Orange Lodge:

The Cabinet Secretary will meet the Grand Master because of a recent attack on a lodge in Springburn. A police investigation is ongoing.

4 June 2020

Black Lives Matter movement:

[Redacted]

The Chief Constable was grateful for advance sight of the CSJ's statement which strongly encouraged people to explore alternative ways to protest. It was agreed that it is right for people to have a voice but that they need to express this in a way that is safe for them and for others. The emphasis of the communications is on explaining and encouraging other approaches, and discussions are ongoing with protest organisers to emphasise this and encourage a reduction in the potential numbers to ensure public safety.

[Redacted]

Police Scotland and the National Police Chiefs Council have made early, clear and unequivocal statements this week about racism. The Chief Constable was very clear that Police Scotland does not associate itself with some of the recent policing activity seen in the US. CSJ observed that Scotland is seeking to answer questions via a public inquiry.

8 June 2020

Black Lives Matter – weekend demonstrations:

There were 24 different protests across the Scotland over the weekend. Nearly 11,000 participated, mainly in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. These passed off peacefully, with nothing comparable to events in England. There were no reports of any officer injuries and only two arrests (in Glasgow, one of which was not demo-related). People were generally adhering to physical distancing.

The event in Glasgow went well, although failures of the PA system during the speeches meant that social distancing had been more difficult. There was a small counter-protest in George Square and anti-police graffiti placed on the Robert Peel statue. In Edinburgh, a small break out group went to the Scottish Parliament, while vehicles circled around Regent Road. Overall, good social distancing was observed, with very compliant crowds who dispersed well at the end of the day. The Aberdeen event was well organised, with physical distancing observed.

CSJ noted that, while he was disappointed that the events had gone ahead in the numbers that they did, given the public health risks, he was pleased with the way in which the events had been policed.

[Redacted]

The removal by protesters of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol was noted.

[Redacted]

11 June 2020

Weekend events:

The Chief Constable indicated that there was a possibility of further protests and counter protests this weekend.

[Redacted]

He was clear that there is a democratic process involved to sanction the removal of statues and that, as general starting principle, police would intervene should there be illegal activity. However, he was hopeful that, through intelligence and relationships with the community, this could be prevented.

CSJ thanked colleagues for a helpful update and agreed that the rule of law should be adhered to.

18 June 2020

George Square demonstrations:

It was noted that there had been some adverse commentary on the approach and scale of the policing response to the events of Wednesday evening.

The Chief Constable highlighted the difficult nature of the demonstrations, in that these were very diverse groups of people with no single organiser and no single, clear purpose. Police had facilitated the right of protest, albeit that those who were protesting were in contravention of the Covid-19 regulations.

[Redacted]

CSJ thanked colleagues, and was mindful of all the other burdens and pressures at this time.

[Redacted]