

**Title:** Bonfire Actions  
**Update of:** Crime & Disorder Select Committee  
**Status:** Information

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform the Crime & Disorder Select Committee on Thirteen Housing Groups Actions during the week of “bonfire night”.

## 2. Background

Currently Thirteen Housing Group (THG) work closely with Middlesbrough Borough Council (MBC) supporting Operation Autumnus. A multiagency steering group surrounding the week around bonfire night

### 2.2 Operation Autumnus

Planned meetings start around August to discuss action plans for the Middlesbrough Area.

Attendees:

- LA (MBC),
- Thirteen Group (NCO's, Estates, ASB, environmental)
- Fire Service
- YOS (Youth offending service)
- LINX (Hemlington childrens action group)
- Middlesbrough FC
- Police
- Other Housing Providers

Typical Actions.

- On the run up to bonfire week THG undertake a number of “flash your trash” days across all local authorities to reduce the amount of bonfire fuel available. This is organised by THG's Neighbourhood Coordinators to targeted areas.
- NCO's/MBC/Police compile a list together of known perps/youths who may cause issues around this time and pass to YOS/Linx who arrange to speak with youths around fire issues/serious outcomes. Activities are arranged in the days leading up to and around bonfire night to get the youths away from the areas of high activities (MFC etc)

- MBC/Thirteen work together to dismantle any bonfire builds/remove bonfire remains irrespective of land ownership leading up to and around bonfire night.
- Thirteen have an internal inbox/admin specifically for bonfire removal requests/emails. Where safe to do so all bonfires and bonfire remnants are removed within 24 hrs.
- On bonfire night, Thirteen provide 2 men (minimum – some years it has been 4) and at least one van from 3pm – 8pm paying their operatives overtime to assist MBC and the police in removing bonfire builds. An Area Lead is on standby during this period to provide a point of contact for both MBC and THG's on call teams.
- After bonfire night MBC/Thirteen to clear bonfires debris irrespective of land ownership.

## 2.3 Other Local Authorities

### Stockton Borough Council (SBC)

Historically THG were a key partner in Project Gremlin, a project designed to tackle bonfires and ASB similar to project Autumnus. Over the previous years THG's involvement in this project has slowly dwindled up to 2020 when THG were not invited to any of the action planning meetings, although did support any actions/requests from these planning meetings. This could be partly attributed to the impact of CV19.

THG's ASB officers regularly undertook letter drops, school visits, serve notice on customers stockpiling fuel and undertook regular joint area inspections, with the LA and Police.

At present Thirteen offer similar support to SBC annually but due to the scale of the works in the Stockton Area, to date SBC has not felt the need to accept the offer.

For information, between September 2021 to date THG, have only had five bonfires to clear, all cleared within the 24-hr response target. This is mainly due to THG not owning much "open space land" in the area suitable of supporting bonfires.

### Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC)

Thirteen have offer support to HBC but as a above to date HBC have not accepted THG offer to help but have committed to request assistance if required.

## **2.4 Issues**

Over the previous years it is becoming increasingly problematic to dismantle bonfires prior to ignition with regular threats and intimidation of the teams attending.

With THG and MBC following a no risk strategy many bonfires are left to burn if a competent adult is present, to prevent escalating issues.

For the SBC area, THG are solely responsible for the clean ups on THG owned land.

## **2.5 Strategic Approach to reduction in bonfire fuel**

Since 2018 THG has employed 12 staff members in their Clean Sweep team. Clean Sweep has had a significant impact on the amount of fly tipping/fuel in situ on our estates. THG undertake estates audits and generate an estates standards score then using the clean sweep teams, improve that estate to a predetermined standard.

One member of the team has been employed as a Fly Tipping Investigator and has helped realise a 29% reduction in fly tipping across THG's operating area.

The clean sweep project was designed to increase the environmental standards to all THG owned estates and develop a sense of pride in the community.