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**CHIEF CONSTABLE'S REPORT TO NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD
(Additional Information Requested by Board Members)**

6 JUNE 2019

1. The Preparation for Policing Over the summer

There are no particular tensions so far this year with respect to parades. We continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders in our efforts to ensure that parades and bonfires pass off peacefully and successfully. It is also our intention to ensure that they pass off with minimum inconvenience to those who are not involved. We will ensure an appropriate and proportionate policing response to those parades where, historically, tensions have been raised.

Contingency planning for EU Exit has taken place alongside planning for parade and events etc this year. Although, at this point, it is not expected that EU Exit will take place until 31 October, contingencies to resource both the impact of EU Exit and parades have been considered.

A small number of unnotified parades took place over the Easter period, but, possibly as a reaction to the murder of Lyra McKee, they were relatively low key in nature and, where offences are believed to have been committed, are being dealt with via evidence gathering and interview rather than having required a direct intervention.

Police are already engaged with statutory agencies and Local Government. We are represented at both the strategic level and working group level in Belfast City Council's Strategic Bonfires Group.

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The proximity of both local Government and EU elections to the 11th night this year may lead to an increase in the number of election posters appearing at bonfire sites.

ACC Hamilton, as Gold Commander for the parading season this year has specifically addressed the issue of engagement around bonfires in his Gold Strategy for 2019.

Banners in support of “Soldier F” have been erected in a number of towns across Northern Ireland and, in some instances, have drawn adverse comment from elected representatives. They may serve to increase tensions in some areas.

Our approach to parading and to bonfires is to be open and transparent, in so far as possible, and to provide “no surprises” to organisers, participants and the wider public.

We will work with the organisers of parades and protests to minimise the risk of breaches of Parade’s Commission Determinations and to facilitate lawful protests.

Mutual Aid

We continue to plan for potential Mutual Aid deployments, should they be required.

Much of the preparation for Mutual Aid has been undertaken earlier than in previous years due to the potential impact of EU Exit. We are in regular contact with colleagues in NPoCC.

2. The Chief Constable's position on the court ruling last week regarding the investigation into the two Belfast journalists

The following press statements were issued on 3 June 2019.

STATEMENT FROM DURHAM CONSTABULARY:

Chief Constable Mike Barton said: "The PSNI asked Durham Constabulary to conduct an independent investigation into the alleged theft or unlawful leaking of sensitive documents from the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

"As part of that investigation, two men were arrested in August 2018 and search warrants were obtained from the County Court to search for and seize journalistic material.

"Following the outcome of last week's Judicial Review, a decision has now been taken not to progress the investigation into those two individuals and both will be immediately released from police bail.

"We are in the process of concluding what has been a highly complex investigation, with some final lines of inquiry still to be assessed. These lines of inquiry do not include the journalists, Mr Birney or Mr McCaffrey, as suspects in the investigation.

"At all times, my officers have acted in good faith, within the law and followed due process. The warrant application was originally submitted to and approved by a county court judge. We do, however, accept and respect the decision of the High Court last week.

"We plan to produce a final report to the Chief Constable of the PSNI outlining all of our findings".

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STATEMENT FROM CHIEF CONSTABLE GEORGE HAMILTON:

“In 2017, PSNI became aware of an alleged theft and/or unlawful leaking of sensitive documents relating to the Loughinisland Investigation from the Office of the Police Ombudsman. To ensure independence and address any conflict of interest I asked Durham Constabulary to conduct the investigation.

I am grateful to Durham Constabulary and to Chief Constable Mike Barton for the work they have conducted on our behalf in this sensitive investigation. I have always accepted the autonomy of Chief Constable Barton’s inquiry and I fully concur with his decision not to progress the investigation into the two journalists Mr Birney and Mr McCaffery (or the two individuals arrested in November 2018.)

Throughout the period of this investigation, the horror of what happened in Loughinisland has never been far from any of our thoughts. The perpetrators of that crime have never been brought to justice and that is a matter of huge regret for policing.

The police investigation into who murdered the six innocent men in the Heights Bar in 1994 remains open but progress is dependent on new information. There are people out there who know what happened. I would appeal to them to come forward and make a statement that will help us finally bring justice to the families of the victims.

I am aware that the investigation over the last year has caused concern for families who have already suffered so much. That is something none of us would ever have wished to do.

However, as a police service, the suspected theft or unlawful leaking of any sensitive documents containing information that may endanger life is a serious matter which we are statutorily obliged to investigate.

Recognising the sensitivities, we asked an independent Police Service to conduct the investigation. The clarity provided by last week’s hearing has now brought a significant part of that investigation to a conclusion.

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I await the final report from Durham on this complex investigation.”

Chief Constable Barton has responsibility for the direction and control of this investigation and will attend the meeting of the Policing Board on 6 June 2019 to update members and answer questions about the investigation to date (within the normal constraints pertaining to ongoing investigations).

3. An update on PSNI response to violent dissident activity and the attempted murder of an officer at the weekend

At 12.52hrs on Saturday 1st June 2019, an off-duty officer reported to police that a suspect device had been discovered under his vehicle at Shandon Park Golf Club, East Belfast. Police established the necessary cordons and duly evacuated the area. Ammunition Technical Officers attended the scene and declared that the device was a viable explosive device.

Numerous searches have been conducted as part of the extensive follow-up investigation and detectives are working to identify witnesses and recover CCTV and other available evidence. Forensic examinations are being conducted with the assistance of Forensic Science Northern Ireland.

Initial investigations indicate that Violent Dissident Republicans planted the under vehicle improvised explosive device (UVIED) in order to murder the officer. Investigations continue in order to identify those responsible.

We have identified that two cars burnt out in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast may have been involved in this terrorist attack. It has been reported in the media that those vehicles were initially removed from their deposition site and that it took police a period of time to locate them. It has been established that those vehicles were recovered by a local recovery firm before the UVIED incident was reported by the off-duty officer. There was nothing to suspect their involvement in any crime at that time and it was only as a result of the initial report of the UVIED and subsequent investigations conducted throughout Saturday, that the possible links were established.

The threat remains severe and we continue to focus a high degree of operational activity to counter that threat. We have also taken this opportunity to remind all officers and staff about their personal safety and security.