



**METROPOLITAN  
POLICE**

Working together for a safer London

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Dear

**Policing of the Camp for Climate Action**

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the policing of the Camp for Climate Action. While, of course, we both know that there was a discussion about the climate change camp at last week's Police Authority meeting, I thought I should reply in detail to your actual letter.

Whilst I recognise your concerns and fully respect your support for the cause, on this occasion I do not share your concerns for the majority of issues that you raise. Indeed, I firmly reject the assertions regarding police violence, mass detention, unnecessary arrests and the unjustified use of counter-terrorism legislation.

This was always going to be a challenging event to police. We had to balance the rights of demonstrators to lawfully protest whilst, at the same time, keeping the world's busiest airport open for business. There are clear political and economic reasons for keeping Heathrow Airport operational, but we were more concerned with maintaining airport security and keeping people safe. Whilst I firmly believe that the demonstrators had no intention of putting passengers at risk, their actions could easily have compromised safety, either inadvertently or by causing police and other agencies to take their eye off security whilst distracted with protesters. Equally, we were concerned with the human misery that would have been caused to thousands of people, including many families with young children, caused by the cancellation of flights.

Our biggest problem was the lack of dialogue with the protesters. Their lack of co-operation made it impossible for us to police this event with a reasonable number of officers and the command team had to devise a strategic and tactical plan that ensured the many key sites on the airport were protected. From the outset, those acting as liaison officers for the demonstrators had told us in no uncertain terms that



they intended to take direct action against the airport and would have no hesitation in disrupting the travelling public. Indeed, you chaired a meeting at which Bob Broadhurst pressed them on what they meant by direct action and what exactly they intended to do. They refused to say, stating that no decisions had been made and that this would be a matter for the collective, not individuals. Bob also pointed out our concerns regarding the actions at Drax last year, where a small number of committed protestors resorted to direct action that involved disruption and violence. The liaison officers stated that such groups would not be welcome this year but, crucially, they would not be turned away and they, the protestors, would not be able to control them. Bob then clearly stated that any attempt at direct action on the airport would be dealt with robustly.

Our fears were compounded by the fact that there were in excess of 80 demonstrators within the camp who have been actively involved in the past in direct action. During the week of the camp a number of protestors used tactics that appeared to underline their commitment to direct action. This included dressing up in airline uniforms; reconnaissance visits to key sites and cutting the perimeter fence. In particular, a number of lock-ons and other disruptive acts took place at sites in and around London. I have no doubt that protestors would have carried out these actions at key strategic sites on the airport had they been given the opportunity.

Many of your concerns are centred around the events of Sunday, 19 August, when the 24 hours of mass action began. Shortly before midday, police were faced with four no-notice marches leaving the camp in a short space of time. Whilst I fully accept that the majority of these were peaceful protesters including, as you say, many local families, the police had no way of knowing who was in each march, nor what their intended targets were. To prevent disruption to the airport, each march was accompanied by a number of police officers. In attempting to bring order to each march, some minor scuffles did break out, but at no stage was violence used. Admittedly, there were a few minor injuries to both protesters and police, but nothing that required any attention, either by the London Ambulance Service or local hospitals. Those protesters who broke out of the back of the camp did clash with police and missiles were thrown at our officers. That group was detained for a short period of time, but only so long as to bring them under control, after which we took them on to join the main protest. During this period of activity, there were some instances of officers not correctly displaying their numerals, but such instances were relatively few and not part of a widespread attempt to hide identity. Actions are in hand to prevent this happening in future.

Over the course of the Climate Camp, 70 arrests were made, and it would not be right for me to comment on individual arrests, all of which were fully scrutinised by a detective chief inspector as part of the crime strategy. As for stop and search, there are clearly sensitivities regarding the use of Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 when policing public order events, and the command team went to great lengths to ensure the lessons from DSEi were adhered to. The demonstrators were informed before the event that their proximity to Heathrow and the current security regime meant that people giving rise to suspicion close to the airport, and in particular strategic sites, were likely to be stopped under terrorism powers in the first instance if that were the most appropriate power. All officers were briefed on every shift as to their stop and search powers and informed not to use terrorism legislation to deter

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protest. In the event, 1727 stop and searches were conducted, of which 230 (13%) were Section 44 TACT. I believe this is entirely reasonable and is in proportion with the increase of such activity in Hillingdon before the arrival of the Climate Camp.

You were right in saying this was an expensive operation involving a large number of officers. However, I am satisfied that it was well-planned and conducted, and was an appropriate response to the threat we faced.

*Kind regards*  


Ian Blair  
Commissioner