

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO HOLD A PUBLIC PROCESSION – BONNYBRIDGE SONS OF WILLIAM LOYAL ORANGE LODGE NO.211
Meeting: HEARING UNDER CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1982
Date: 20 June 2014
Author: CHIEF GOVERNANCE OFFICER

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider a proposed public procession on behalf of Bonnybridge Sons of William Loyal Orange Lodge No. 211 which is intended to take place in Bonnybridge on Saturday 5 July 2014. Notification of the proposed procession was submitted by Mr Robert Fulton.
- 1.2 Bonnybridge Sons of William Loyal Orange Lodge No. 211 submitted their notice (attached as Appendix 1 to this report) on 12 May 2014. They propose to assemble at 4pm at Foundry Road, and proceed along Broomhill Road onto Bridge Street before heading up High Street, proceeding onto Dunure Street, then onto Larbert Road, then onto Peathill Road before concluding at the car park to the front of the Masonic Hall. A map of the proposed route is attached as Appendix 2 to the report. The notification proposes that approximately 60 marchers will be involved. Included within the procession will be the Ballymoughan Purple Guards band.
- 1.3 The organiser has confirmed that 10 stewards will be deployed to regulate the march. All stewards have been trained to Grand Lodge standards and will work closely with the Police.
- 1.4 The Bonnybridge Sons of William Loyal Orange Lodge No. 211 is a newly established Lodge and falls under the jurisdiction of the Bannockburn Orange and Purple District No.2 which also consists of 5 other local Orange Lodges, namely Bannockburn, Plean, Fallin, Airth and Shieldhill.
- 1.5 The proposed march is the second march being held in Bonnybridge on Saturday 5 July 2014. An earlier march at 9am is proposed by the Bannockburn Orange & Purple District No. 2 and will include the Bonnybridge Lodge. This is the subject of a separate notification and is being considered by Members separately on the agenda today. The march proposed by the Bonnybridge lodge is part of the annual July celebration.

2. DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The Council's powers and duties in dealing with public processions are set out in the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. As a result of the report by Sir John Orr on "Review of Marches and Parades in Scotland" published in January 2005, the legislation was subsequently amended by the Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2006.
- 2.2 The legal starting point is the European Convention on Human Rights which provides in Article 11 that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. This includes a right to march or parade. This right can only be restricted if it is necessary to:-
- protect national security or public safety;
 - prevent disorder or crime;
 - protect health or morals; or
 - protect the rights and freedoms of others
- 2.3 Any interference with the right of peaceful assembly must be proportionate, which means that the nature of any restrictions must be in proportion to the issues which the authority is trying to tackle.
- 2.4 The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law, enabling people to enforce their Convention rights in UK courts. Since October 2000, all UK public bodies have a statutory duty to undertake their functions in conformity with the Convention.
- 2.5 Strictly, the licensing authority does not give permission for public processions. The 1982 Act, as amended, provides that organisers must notify the Council of proposed processions. The fact that this is a notification procedure rather than a licence application reflects the fact that the right of peaceful assembly is a fundamental right in a democratic society. The Act provides that in considering whether to prohibit the holding of a procession or impose conditions on it, the Council shall have regard to the likely effect of holding the procession in relation to:-
- public safety;
 - public order;
 - damage to property, and
 - disruption to the life of the community.
- 2.6 The licensing authority can also take into consideration the extent to which the containment of risks arising from the procession would place an excessive burden on the police. However, guidance issued to local authorities under Section 65A of the 1982 Act makes it clear that police costs are not an issue that can be considered.

- 2.7 As detailed in Sir John Orr's report, there have been a number of key court decisions regarding Article 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights in relation to marches and parades. The key points from these are that:-
- it is appropriate to have an authorisation procedure to consider processions;
 - as long as the organiser's intention is for peaceful assembly, the possibility of violent counter demonstration is not reason alone for prohibiting processions;
 - the rights under Article 11 cover processions which annoy or give offence to people opposed to the ideas or claims that it is seeking to promote; and
 - states should protect those involved in processions and take reasonable and appropriate measures to enable lawful demonstrations to proceed peacefully.

3. PROCEDURES

- 3.1 Provision with regard to public processions is to be found in part V of the 1982 Act. This sets out, among other things, the notification process, the functions of the licensing authority and the matters to be taken into account in the decision making process. Section 65A of the Act also obliges the licensing authority to have regard to any guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers. Such guidance was issued in December 2006 and the authority therefore requires to have regard to it when reaching any decision on a proposed parade.
- 3.2 The procedures adopted by the Council for dealing with public procession notifications are outlined in the following paragraphs.
- 3.3 When a notification is received it is normally contained within a form prescribed by the Council and accompanied by a risk assessment, again in the form set out by the Council. Details of the organisation and the chief steward are required in addition to information about the proposed procession: date, time, location, and route, expected number of people taking part, control arrangements and the number of stewards attending.
- 3.4 A copy of the notification is sent routinely to local members, Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Roads Authority for comment.
- 3.5 Section 63(10) of the Act requires licensing authorities to "make sufficient arrangements to secure that any person, body or other grouping resident in or otherwise present in their area who makes a request for the purposes of [the Act] is enabled to receive information about processions which are or might be held in that area or any part of it." In this respect, and prior to issue of the 2006 Guidance, all Community Councils within the Falkirk Council area were asked if they wanted to be informed of any public processions taking place in their area. Those who responded in the affirmative were placed on an "opt-in list". This means that they are given an opportunity to make representations with regard to any particular march or parade in the area they cover. In the case of this particular notification, the relevant Community Council is Bonnybridge Community Council. They were accordingly consulted on this proposed procession.

- 3.6 In addition to having an “opt-in list”, details of proposed public processions are published on the Council’s website: www.falkirk.gov.uk, as is information on how to make a comment in relation to them.
- 3.7 Once responses have been ingathered, they are considered by licensing officers with a view to identifying any issues that require to be addressed in accordance with the Act and guidance. A precursory meeting with the organiser may be held. This meeting is usually an informal discussion between representatives from the organisation proposing to march, licensing officials and representatives from the Police. Such meetings provide a useful face to face opportunity for all those involved to discuss any issues or problems.
- 3.8 The Council has produced a list of standard conditions for public processions. They are attached as Appendix 3 to this report. The list is not exhaustive and can be added to or taken from having regard to the requirements of any particular procession.

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 As detailed in paragraph 3.4 above, the following persons or bodies were given a copy of the notification and responded as follows:-

Organisation	Response
Police Scotland	No adverse comment to make
Roads Authority	Bus Services will be disrupted and affect passengers across the area
The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	No adverse comment to make.
Bonnybridge Community Council	Email objecting to the procession
Local Members	2 local members submitted emails outlining concerns expressed by constituents around possible disruption to the community and issues over public safety

5. BONNYBRIDGE COMMUNITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

- 5.1 Details of the notification were sent to Bonnybridge Community Council and they submitted an email by way of response. This is attached as appendix 4 to the report.
- 5.2 In the email the Community Council reiterates views expressed at a recent Community Council meeting in relation to proposed public processions in the area. In summary, the representation surrounds concerns that the proposed route involves travelling along congested roads populated by resident parked cars and a busy main bus route.

6. REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

6.1 In addition to those persons and bodies detailed above, four representations have also been received in the form of a letter, petition and emails from the local Parish Priest and members of the public. In order to assist the Committee, the representations have been collated and categorised into the factors the licensing authority may have regard to as set out in paragraph 9.2 below. Representations that relate specifically to disruption to the life of the community are attached as Appendix 5. A petition objecting to the procession has been classified as no specific category as it did not contain any factors to base the objection. The licensing section was unable to ascertain the origin of the petition to clarify the basis for the objection. In summary the following representations have been received:-

- Disruption to the life of the community – 3
- No specific category – a petition containing 133 signatures

6.2 The representations have been redacted to remove sensitive personal information such as email addresses to ensure compliance with data protection rules.

7 ROADS ASSESSMENT

7.1 The Roads Authority confirmed that the proposed procession would impact on three major bus services in Bonnybridge. It is considered that the proposed march would result in inevitable delays and disruption to local bus services. They have concluded however, that the shorter route and significantly lower number of marchers will result in the procession having far less an impact than the earlier public procession in the morning. The bus services affected would include:-

- First 37/ X37 (Falkirk – Greenhill – Allandale – Glasgow) frequency every 30 minutes
- First 2 (Dunipace – Denny – Bonnybridge- Falkirk) frequency every 12 minutes
- First 27 (Falkirk – Bonnybridge – Banknock – Glasgow) – frequency hourly

7.2 The Roads Authority has also commented that should the march proceed then Scottish Canals should be notified and advised that the lifting bridge on Bridge Street should not be open at any time during the procession.

8. LOCAL MEMBERS

8.1 Two local elected members submitted email representations in response to the proposed notification. Concerns were expressed in relation to the possible disruption to the community and possible threat to public safety. Alternative routes were suggested and are included in the attached emails as appendix 6.

9. DETERMINATION

- 9.1 As noted in section 3 of this report, the organisers of a public procession must give written notice of their proposal to the licensing authority and the Police. The procession can then take place as notified unless the licensing authority, after consulting the Chief Constable, makes an order:-
- prohibiting the holding of the procession, or
 - imposing conditions on it.
- 9.2 The 1982 Act also sets out the considerations to which the licensing authority must have regard when deciding whether to make such an order. Those considerations include:-
- the likely effect of holding of the procession in relation to:-
 - public safety;
 - public order;
 - damage to property;
 - disruption of the life of the community.
 - the extent to which the containment of risks arising from the procession would (whether by itself or in combination with any other circumstances) place an excessive burden on the Police;
- 9.3 With regard to considering disruption to the life of the community, the statutory guidance sets out that “all processions, no matter how small, will cause some disruption to communities and businesses. That is an inevitable consequence of holding processions. However, the degree of disruption may not, by itself (or with other events) be enough to prevent people from holding a procession, or from placing conditions on it. [The licensing authority] will need to consider the circumstances of each notification and assess how far the procession would affect the community or any individual or organisation who can reasonably be considered to be part of a community affected by the notification, and attach weight accordingly. However, the most important question which [the licensing authority] needs to tackle is whether the level of disruption which will or may be caused by a procession will be far greater than the right to free assembly and this means they need to place a restriction on the march.....Any decision to make an order which prevents a procession or places a condition on a procession will have to keep to the European Convention of Human Rights. As a result, it is important that any order which is made about a procession is a proportionate response to the level of disruption to the community that this event may cause”.
- 9.4 It is worth highlighting, too, that there have been a number of cases before the Scottish courts following decisions to prevent certain marches. These cases have made it clear that a Council cannot prohibit a march due to the nature of the views promoted by the organisation and concern that it might promote religious intolerance or sectarianism.

- 9.5 In the case of Aberdeen Bon Accord Loyal Orange Lodge 701 –v- Aberdeen City Council (September 2001) the court was of the opinion that the Council’s reasons for its decision were not made out and an outright ban was disproportionate. The Sheriff stated that “This right [under article 11] is not restricted to those whose views accord with the majority. It is the essence of a civilised democratic society that many points of view may be expressed in public.” The Sheriff went on to indicate that the right to public assembly may be restricted in certain circumstances but that it was for the public authority to show that it was necessary to curtail that basic right before any such restriction would be upheld. The action proposed needed to be proportionate to the risks which might arise and provide a reasonable response to the perceived risk. The Sheriff considered that a complete prohibition requires much more than “concern that the procession might promote religious intolerance and might interfere with the rights of other citizens to go about their business freely and lawfully ... it is the right of individuals and groups in a civilised society to express their views as long as neither the words nor their actions contravene the law. Tolerance is what is required in a democratic society and that includes toleration of views or sentiments which might not coincide with one’s own”.
- 9.6 In the case of County Grand Lodge of Ayrshire, Renfrewshire and Argyll –v- Argyll and Bute Council the Sheriff stated that “it seems quite clear that ... there is a right to individuals and groups to express their views as long as neither their words nor their actions contravene the law and the mere concern that the procession might promote religious intolerance or might interfere with the rights of other citizens to go about their business freely and lawfully is not sufficient to justify prohibition”. The case of Wishart Arch Defenders Loyal Orange Lodge 404 –v- Angus Council (April 2001) is in similar terms.
- 9.7 More recently, in the case of Provincial Grand Black Chapter of Scotland –v- West Dunbartonshire Council (August 2009), the Sheriff stated that “it is for [the licensing authority] to establish that there is a necessity for intervention and that any intervention will be proportionate to meet that need. Necessary implies the existence of a pressing social need and proportionality has to be assessed by the standards of a democratic society characterised by pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness.....Following on from that it seems to me to be well established that an organisation such as the appellants must be able to hold their event without fear of disruption or violence from those of competing opinion. While it is the duty of a contracting state to take reasonable steps to enable lawful demonstrations to proceed peacefully they cannot be expected to guarantee that. What they must do is see what can be done to do that.”

10. ATTENDANCE

- 10.1 The organiser of Bonnybridge Sons of William Loyal Orange Lodge No. 211 and those who have made representations as detailed in the report have been invited to attend the meeting to be heard on the matter.

11. RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 It is recommended that Committee considers the terms of this Report and any submissions made before determining whether it is necessary to make an order relating to the proposed public procession.

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Chief Governance Officer

16 June 2014

Contact Officer: Bryan Douglas, Licensing Co-ordinator (extension 1262)

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS