

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting to be held on 26 April 2021

FIRE PROTECTION REPORTS

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

This report summarises Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's (LFRS) fire safety prosecutions and arson incidents (where evidence has been provided by Fire Investigators into the Criminal Justice System) where court proceedings have progressed to trial and sentencing stage.

Fire Protection and Business Support Information are included in the report.

Recommendation

The Authority is asked to note and endorse the report.

FIRE SAFETY CONVICTIONS

Fire Safety Prosecutions

The mention hearing for Plaza Beach Hotel, Albert Road Blackpool at Preston Crown Court was listed for the 22/02/2021, with sentencing rescheduled for 13/5/2021.

Prosecution case files continue to be produced for 6 further premises.

FIRE PROTECTION & BUSINESS SUPPORT INFORMATION

Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP)

The Inspection Programme which will shape the pro-active audits Fire Protection Officers undertake in the period 2021/24 has been through a series of quality assurance processes and is being rolled out to teams for use commencing 1st May.

Inspection activity for High Rise premises remains a priority (as part of the ongoing building risk review) along with ongoing management of risk in Care & Nursing Homes. The latter is being undertaken utilising additional information from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Care Commissioners to assist effective targeting. Joint CQC and Fire and Rescue Service Inspections, following intelligence and Information sharing, have been ongoing. Recognising the ongoing challenges of Covid 19 infection control in the care sector, inspectors will initially undertake a telephone audit, requesting key records by e-mail, with full audits being undertaken where compliance cannot be assured.

Business Fire Safety

With the government roadmap to recovery now clearly outlining the approach to reducing national lockdown, business safety advice is being tailored to match.

Mindful that many businesses may not have been occupied or operating throughout the recent lockdown, their focus will inevitably be on commencing trading and Covid control measures potentially at the expense of wider health and safety issues such as fire safety.

Consequently, tailored advice is being provided to ensure responsible persons fully consider fire safety within their reopening process. The advice will be communicated via LFRS' website, social media channels, leaflet drops and via local liaison with District Councils.

The content fully recognises that re-opening of businesses is crucial to the wider financial and emotional well being of the County and emphasises LFRS does not want to impede this in any way but fire safety remains a legal requirement and the last thing recovering businesses and communities need at this time is to experience a serious fire.

ARSON RISK REDUCTION

R v Jordan SCHOFIELD

Maccs Nightclub Hammerton Street, Burnley

Date and Time of call – 26/09/2019 02:50

This incident involved a fire in a nightclub which was broken into during the early hours of the 28 September 2019 before fuel was poured over the bar and a DJ stand set alight. The fire caused severe damage to a large section of the bar and surrounding areas including fridges, optics and tills. The entire ground floor suffered further damage by smoke and water.

On the 28th January 2021 the defendant pleaded guilty to the charge of arson and attempted arson and was sentenced to 47 months imprisonment.

R v Anthony ECCLES

29 Marcroft Avenue Blackpool FY4 3JL

Date and Time of call – 14/02/2020 18:23

This incident involved the deliberate ignition of a garden shed resulting in the destruction of the shed and contents by fire. The fire also caused damage to the fascia board and cladding of an adjacent domestic conservatory. CCTV footage from a neighbouring property showed the fire being started deliberately by the defendant.

The defendant pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 3 years and 4 months imprisonment for arson and causing criminal damage

R v Michael Ashby YOUNG

143 Fawcett Close, Blackburn BB2 2LS

Date and Time of call – 30/08/2020 10:11

This incident involved the deliberate ignition of an item which was placed in a bedroom cupboard. The fire caused severe damage to the property and contents and put the lives of two adults and a child in danger.

On the 26th February 2021 the defendant pleaded guilty to arson being reckless as to whether life was endangered and was sentenced to 32 months imprisonment and received a 5-year restraining order.

R v Royd ULLAH

11 Waddington Avenue, Burnley BB10 4LB

Date and Time of call – 15/10/2020 19:37

This incident involved two separate points of origin of fire in a flat, one in the bedroom and one in the living room, which had been ignited deliberately. The property was severely damaged by the fire.

The defendant pleaded guilty to arson and committing violence and was sentenced to 10 years and 8 months imprisonment.

R v Susan HODSON

135 Rodwell Walk Blackpool

Date and Time of call – 21/10/2020 16:53

This incident involved a fire in the bedroom of a 2nd floor flat which had been set deliberately by the occupier. The bedroom and contents were destroyed by the fire and the remainder of the flat suffered severe smoke damage.

On the 5th February 2021 the defendant pleaded guilty to reckless arson and was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment.

R v HOUGHTON

118-120 Hornby Road Blackpool FY1 4QS

Date and Time of call – 08/08/2020 05:18

This incident involved a deliberate fire in derelict house. One room suffered severe damage by fire, heat and smoke. The remainder of the property was severely damaged by smoke.

The defendant pleaded guilty to reckless arson and was sentenced to 10 months imprisonment.

R v Jack BIRTWISTLE & Henry CLARK

Darwen Moors

Date and Time of call – 30/05/2020 18:45

This incident involved a moorland fire. The defendants had used a BBQ on the moorland which had ignited surrounding dry grass which quickly got out of control. The fire caused a major incident and firefighters spent seven days tackling the blaze.

Both defendants pleaded guilty to reckless arson and received a conditional caution with a requirement to carry out 150 hours unpaid restorative work on the moors.

R v Connah JENKINSON, John O'BRIEN & Joseph McEWEN

20a Waverly Skelmersdale WN8 8BD

Date and Time of call – 26/09/2019 00:44

This incident involved a deliberate fire in a domestic property and resulted in the tragic death of the male occupier. The offenders forced entry into the property before spraying a petrol like substance over the male occupier and around the property then igniting the liquid.

Following a trial at Preston Crown Court the offenders were sentenced on the 22nd January 2021:

Connah JENKINSON was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment for murder including 10 years for arson with intent.

John O'Brian received 15 years imprisonment for manslaughter including 8 for reckless arson.

Joseph McEWEN received 13 years imprisonment for manslaughter including 7 for reckless arson.

R v Sean Anthony FISHER & Liam WILKINSON

11 Vicarage Street, Chorley, PR6 0DW

Date and Time of call –24/06/2020 03:10

This incident involved a domestic property which was occupied at the time of the fire and required the rescue of 3 occupants from a first-floor window. The defendants had poured fuel on the front door and through the letterbox prior to setting it on fire.

Both defendants pleaded guilty to arson with intent to endanger life and were sentenced on Friday 5th March 2021. Liam WILKINSON was sentenced to 9 years and 1-month imprisonment and an extended licence of 3 years on completion of his

initial sentence. Sean Anthony FISHER was sentenced to 5 years 6 months imprisonment.

R v Youth 1 & Youth 2

282 Blackburn Road, Darwen

Date and Time of call – 07/10//2020 01:45

This Incident was a fire in a care home providing accommodation for persons aged 0 - 18yrs who require nursing or personal care. The defendants deliberately ignited a mattress and single bed using an aerosol canister.

On 9th March 2021 both youths attended Preston Magistrates Court and pleaded guilty to arson being reckless as to whether life was endangered. Both defendants have been referred by the court to a Youth Offender Panel which is made up of members of the community. The panel will agree a contract with the defendants, which could involve promises of future behaviour, an apology for the offence or unpaid work. This referral is for 6 months. If this contract is breached, the case can be referred back to the court. A further victim surcharge of £22 was given.

Business Risk

Moderate – Members need to be aware of prosecutions related to fire safety activity and/or arson within Lancashire in order to satisfy themselves that the required robust approach is being pursued.

Environmental Impact

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

HR Implications

None

Financial Implications

None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate:		