

OFFICIAL Sensitive (When completed)

MG11

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

Criminal Procedure Rules, r 16.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9

URN

Occurrence Number: 47240212641

Statement of: [REDACTED]

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: Police Officer

This statement (consisting of 3 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: [REDACTED]

Date: 25/11/2024 14:36

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☒

This statement was written on the 22nd November 2024 and is from my recollection of the events.

I am a Neighbourhood Police Sergeant of Sussex Police working from Haywards Heath Police Station. On the 26th and 27th October 2024 I was required to attend and co-ordinate the police attendance to The Saint Hill Church of Scientology Annual Conference. As part of this conference I was aware of planned protest that was to occur outside the grounds. The role of the police in a protest is to remain impartial and protect the rights of the person to convey their right to freedom of speech whilst also ensuring the protest is peaceful and causes minimal disruption to the public.

On the 26th October 2024 I was on duty and in full uniform in callsign [REDACTED] was provided some contact details for the two stakeholders to contact to facilitate a peaceful protest from both sides. [REDACTED] was the head of security for Saint Hill. [REDACTED] was the lead protestor.

I communicated with both parties. [REDACTED] was due to arrive at around 1400 hours to Saint Hill along with some other protestors. I attended along with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

On attendance I could see a clear bit of clear offroad section to the left of the main entrance to Saint Hill that was a suitable place to be occupied by the protestors. There was some metal fencing that had been put on a piece of the offroad section separating where it became paved. Playing on a speaker from Saint Hill was a continued loop of bag pipes. I was made aware that [REDACTED] and other protestors stood at this location previous years. I went and met with [REDACTED] who introduced me to a number of staff at Saint Hill and discussed the event plan for the evening. I was shown the outside of the site which was a narrow single carriageway road with some off road verge that ran parallel with the road of Saint Hill and the wall. There was a number of cars parked along the verge of this road however I cannot confirm whether the

owners of these vehicles were for Saint Hill or for the Rugby Club that is situated around 100 metres down the road. At the club there is a car park that could hold around 100 cars. We stationed our police vehicles here and I planned to have two groups of officers on either side outside the main entrance for Saint Hill on rotation.

[REDACTED] arrived with a handful of other people around 1400 hours. The protestors wore hi vis jackets and some had large signs on sticks. I spoke with [REDACTED] and discussed what his plan was today. [REDACTED] made it clear that he was recording a live stream which he did from a phone on a selfie stick and he recorded much of the protest. From my recollection [REDACTED] was not happy regarding the metal fencing as it obstructed the public right of way, he also made comments regarding the vehicles on the verge and the volume of the bagpipe music. I liaised with Saint Hill who agreed to stand the barriers aside and turn down the music if the protestors stood on the same side together and stopped chanting at people who walked past. The chants being shouted was THE ABUSE HAS TO STOP and STOP THE ABUSE. I only heard this a couple of times during my involvements and I had no reports from any members of the public that it was causing an issue. After some negotiation I had both sides reach this agreement. The protestors occasionally walked across the main entrance to the otherside. For much of the day there was a steady stream of cars entering Saint Hill along with a number people walking down the road to enter the grounds.

The protest lasted until around 1900 hours where I was informed they would be leaving for the day and returning again tomorrow.

The next day Sunday 27th October I attended The Church of Scientology again with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] joined us later in the afternoon as they were stationed elsewhere. We arrived at a similar time I spoke with Saint Hill regarding any feedback from yesterday and the plan. [REDACTED] attended around 1400 hours and setup on both sides of the gates. There was similar mentions of the bag pipe music being played loudly, obstructions to the road by parked vehicles and security staff walking in front of the protestors to stop people seeing them. I do not recall anything of note on this day. The protestors left around 1930 and we left shortly after this.

Throughout my interactions all parties from both sides were polite and respectful. The site itself is a narrow country road not designed for a large amount of foot traffic. There is not a lot of space for someone to protest and any person standing on the road would cause some disruption to traffic. Mostly the protestors used their signs to convey their point with the occasional reference to STOP THE ABUSE. The protestors were not aggressive and no arrests were made.

My interactions covering the above were recorded and produced below.

26/10

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**MG11**

[REDACTED] 01 14:09

[REDACTED] 02 17:11

27/10

[REDACTED] 03 14:58

10/2017

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