

The logo for the Liverpool Black Leadership Forum (LBLF) is centered at the top of the page. It consists of a blue rectangular box with the text "Liverpool Black Leadership Forum" in white. To the right of the box are three overlapping grey circles of varying sizes, arranged in a slightly curved line.

Liverpool Black Leadership Forum

On Wednesday 26th November Chief Inspector Helen Corcoran of Merseyside Police attended a Liverpool Black Leadership Forum (LBLF) meeting to provide information relating to a BNP leafleting campaign in Liverpool City Centre, scheduled for Saturday 29th November. It was announced that a counter demonstration was also planned by anti-BNP activists for the same date, in Liverpool Town Centre.

Chief Inspector Corcoran reported that, according to the BNP, the leafleting campaign was said to be in response to the arrest of 13 BNP activists in Liverpool City Centre on the previous Saturday, 22nd November.

The 13 BNP activists were arrested because Merseyside Police had reason to believe that the material being distributed was “capable of incitement to racial hatred”. This is an offence under the Public Order Act 1986, Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended) and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which makes the publication of material that incites racial hatred an arrestable offence.

Chief Inspector Corcoran also reported that the 13 BNP activists were bailed until February 2009 while the Force awaits an opinion ruling by the Attorney General in respect of whether the published material does indeed fall under the “incitement to racial hatred” definition.

Members of the LBLF questioned whether the BNP activists would be arrested (again) if they returned to Liverpool to distribute the same leaflets. Chief Inspector Corcoran answered that she was not in a position to answer that question because it depended on the verdict of the Attorney General as well as on the specific opinion of the Police Officers in command on the day.

A further question raised concerned whether the BNP had sought permission from Merseyside Police to demonstrate in Liverpool. Chief Inspector Corcoran answered that neither group (BNP nor anti-BNP) had sought permission to demonstrate and the time had elapsed for such a permit to be requested and approved. However, she stated that Merseyside Police would do its best to accommodate the two demonstrations but public order offences committed by anyone on the day would be punished accordingly, under the powers vested in the Police Force.

The LBLF announced that it would support the anti-BNP demonstration on Saturday, 29th November and members of the group would be on hand to assist in ensuring that the demonstration was conducted in a clam and professional manner. We planned to ensure that our challenge to the BNP was neither adversarial nor violent.



The demonstrations were held but various questions arose out of events on the day. The circumstances that resulted in these questions have the potential to damage the much improved relationship between Merseyside Police and communities that oppose racism and fascism. The LBLF have therefore requested a meeting with senior officers of Merseyside Police to seek answers to these questions.

That request has been accepted and the LBLF will meet with Merseyside Police on Monday 8th December, 6-8pm, at the Kuumba Imani Centre, Princes Avenue. Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne who had overall responsibility for Merseyside Police's management of the demonstration activities; Chief Inspector Helen Corcoran; Superintendent John Martin and Chief Superintendent Tony Doherty are expected to be present at the meeting.

The questions the LBLF intends to ask include:

1. Who provided the information to the Police that the BNP would not be visiting Liverpool on that day?
2. What did the Police do to validate this information?
3. Why was the decision made to pass on that information at that particular time?
4. An organiser of the event and member of LBLF stated that she was told by the police that the BNP activists had been rounded up, escorted to Lime Street station and ordered to leave. Can this statement be validated or refuted?
5. Why was the BNP allowed to congregate in **several** places in Liverpool, including on the steps of St Georges Hall and within Church Street?
6. It was reported that the BNP also had two floats driving round with loud speaker asking the public to vote for them and reasons why. It is alleged that this coincided with the time they were speaking close by at St George's place and was facilitated by the Police. Is this correct?
7. Will the Police be doing anything to appeal the decision that the distribution of published material was/is not a criminal, arrestable offence?

Finally the LBLF would like to state that we are unable to condone the BNP and their activities relating to racist propaganda. We are committed to ensuring that the people of Liverpool regardless of their race, background or political beliefs are able to go about their day to day business without the fear of being indoctrinated with philosophies that encourage hate amongst racial groups.

We are also deeply concerned that our young people are being exposed to such blatant racism at a time when we as a City should be joining forces to show all our young people that we are committed to ensuring that they are given all the support we can



muster and they are provided with positive role models and an opportunity to reach their full potential.

The diverse communities of Merseyside are committed to the City-region, people and more importantly its young people.

The BNP's insistence on coming to this City is a negative and divisive attempt to undermine all the good work this City and its residents have undertaken in recent years to ensure that our richly diverse communities are able to speak with one voice.

We do not welcome the BNP in Liverpool. However we do welcome a balanced and inclusive voice to speak for the advancement of all our communities. It is our intention to communicate with the Police and other organisations that have a vested interest in achieving these aspirations.

Cllr Anna Rothery
Chair

Garrick Prayogg
Vice- Chair

Garth Dallas
Press and Communications