

PSNI Written Submission to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has been involved in extensive engagement with DAERA officials at both strategic and operational levels on matters pertaining to EU Exit and the implementation of the Ireland/ Northern Ireland Protocol. This engagement began in anticipation of the EU Exit transition period, during transition and continues at the present time, with the aim of providing reassurance and support in relation to DAERA's functions at Northern Ireland's designated points of entry.

The dissemination of regular threat assessment updates has also an important part of this engagement. PSNI have also provided timely security and crime prevention advice to DAERA and other partner agencies in support of their protocol functions and in the construction/ adaption of associated infrastructure.

Evidence Timeline:

1. On 21st January 2021, Assistant Chief Constable McEwan convened a Partners meeting in relation to graffiti in Larne which stated all border post staff are targets. Operational activity was increased to provide suitable support and reassurance.
2. On 1st February 2021, Assistant Chief Constable McEwan issued a statement outlining the PSNI's position: *"The safety of staff working at points of entry is of the utmost importance to us. Where we have any credible information we will share that with our partners and take appropriate action. We have increased patrols at Larne Port and other points of entry in order to reassure staff and the local community."*
3. ACC McEwan chaired a partners meeting on 2nd February where he provided a verbal briefing re the PSNI threat assessment in relation to staff working at Border Control Points. An assurance was provided to distribute this assessment in writing to the participants in writing.
4. On 2nd February 2021, in a media facility after the meeting with partner agencies including DAERA representatives, Assistant Chief Constable McEwan said *"Earlier today I held a productive meeting with key partner*

agencies including officials from the DAERA, local Councils, Department of Justice, Northern Ireland Office, Border Force and Belfast Harbour Police. I am concerned about signs of tension within the community in recent weeks. We've seen graffiti at various sites and other forms of intimidation on social media. Our investigations into these incidents are ongoing. In relation to an anonymous piece of information claiming paramilitary involvement in threats, I have briefed partners that we have no information to substantiate or corroborate these claims at this time. Keeping people safe is our priority and the safety of staff working at points of entry is of the utmost importance to us. We will continue to work closely with our partners to provide them and their staff with support. We have increased patrols at the points of entry in order to reassure staff and the local community”.

5. A written threat assessment was distributed to partner agencies including DAERA, by email on 4th February 2021. This threat assessment has been subject to regular reviews.
6. An update to this assessment was provided to partner agencies including DAERA, by email on 8th February 2021, outlining no change. This was also discussed at the meeting with partner agencies on 9th February 2021.
7. At the request of DAERA Permanent Secretary, Dr Denis McMahon, a further update was provided to Dr McMahon on 9th February 2021 outlining no change to the Threat Assessment issued on 4th February 2021.
8. Throughout February and March 2021, regular updates have been shared with partner agencies by email and verbally in meetings and have indicated no change to the threat assessment of 4th February 2021.
9. These updates and partner meetings are continuing at the present time. The current threat assessment remains unchanged.