



Public Order Act 1986

1986 CHAPTER 64

PART II

PROCESSIONS AND ASSEMBLIES

14 Imposing conditions on public assemblies.

- (1) [^{F1}Subsection (1A) applies if] the senior police officer, having regard to the time or place at which and the circumstances in which any public assembly is being held or is intended to be held, reasonably believes that—
- (a) it may result in serious public disorder, serious damage to property or serious disruption to the life of the community,
 - [^{F2}(aa) in the case of an assembly in England and Wales, the noise generated by persons taking part in the assembly may result in serious disruption to the activities of an organisation which are carried on in the vicinity of the assembly,
 - (ab) in the case of an assembly in England and Wales—
 - (i) the noise generated by persons taking part in the assembly may have a relevant impact on persons in the vicinity of the assembly, and
 - (ii) that impact may be significant, or]
 - (b) the purpose of the persons organising it is the intimidation of others with a view to compelling them not to do an act they have a right to do, or to do an act they have a right not to do,

^{F3} ...

- [^{F4}(1A) The senior police officer may give directions imposing on the persons organising or taking part in the assembly—
- (a) in the case of an assembly in England and Wales, such conditions as appear to the officer necessary to prevent the disorder, damage, disruption, impact or intimidation mentioned in subsection (1);
 - (b) in the case of an assembly in Scotland, such conditions as to the place at which the assembly may be (or continue to be) held, its maximum duration, or the maximum number of persons who may constitute it, as appear to the

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officer necessary to prevent the disorder, damage, disruption or intimidation mentioned in subsection (1)(a) or (b).]

- (2) In [^{F5}this section] “the senior police officer” means—
- (a) in relation to an assembly being held, the most senior in rank of the police officers present at the scene, and
 - (b) in relation to an assembly intended to be held, the chief officer of police.

[^{F6}This is subject to subsections (2ZA) and (2ZB).]

[^{F7}(2ZA) The reference in subsection (2)(a) to a police officer includes—

- (a) a constable of the British Transport Police Force, in relation to a place within section 31(1)(a) to (f) of the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003;
- (b) a member of the Ministry of Defence Police, in relation to a place to which section 2(2) of the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987 applies.

(2ZB) The reference in subsection (2)(b) to a chief officer of police includes—

- (a) the chief constable of the British Transport Police Force, in relation to a place within section 31(1)(a) to (f) of the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003;
- (b) the chief constable of the Ministry of Defence Police, in relation to a place to which section 2(2) of the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987 applies.]

[^{F8}(2A) For the purposes of subsection (1)(a) [^{F9}—

- (a) the cases in which a public assembly in England and Wales may result in serious disruption to the life of the community include, in particular, where it may, by way of physical obstruction, result in—
 - (i) the prevention of, or a hindrance that is more than minor to, the carrying out of day-to-day activities (including in particular the making of a journey),
 - (ii) the prevention of, or a delay that is more than minor to, the delivery of a time-sensitive product to consumers of that product, or
 - (iii) the prevention of, or a disruption that is more than minor to, access to any essential goods or any essential service,
- (b) in considering whether a public assembly in England and Wales may result in serious disruption to the life of the community, the senior police officer—
 - (i) must take into account all relevant disruption, and
 - (ii) may take into account any relevant cumulative disruption, and
- (c) “community”, in relation to a public assembly in England and Wales, means any group of persons that may be affected by the assembly, whether or not all or any of those persons live or work in the vicinity of the assembly.]

(2B) In [^{F10}subsection (2A) and this subsection—

“access to any essential goods or any essential service” includes, in particular, access to—

- (a) the supply of money, food, water, energy or fuel,
- (b) a system of communication,
- (c) a place of worship,
- (d) a transport facility,
- (e) an educational institution, or
- (f) a service relating to health;

“area”, in relation to a public assembly or public procession, means such area as the senior police officer considers appropriate, having regard to the

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nature and extent of the disruption that may result from the assembly or procession;

“relevant cumulative disruption”, in relation to a public assembly in England and Wales, means the cumulative disruption to the life of the community resulting from—

- (a) the assembly,
- (b) any other public assembly in England and Wales that was held, is being held or is intended to be held in the same area in which the assembly mentioned in paragraph (a) is being held or is intended to be held (whether or not directions have been given under subsection (1A) in relation to that other assembly), and
- (c) any public procession in England and Wales that was held, is being held or is intended to be held in the same area as the area in which the assembly mentioned in paragraph (a) is being held or is intended to be held (whether or not directions have been given under section 12(1) in relation to that procession),

and it does not matter whether or not the assembly mentioned in paragraph (a) and any assembly or procession within paragraph (b) or (c) are organised by the same person, are attended by any of the same persons or are held or are intended to be held at the same time;

“relevant disruption”, in relation to a public assembly in England and Wales, means all disruption to the life of the community—

- (a) that may result from the assembly, or
- (b) that may occur regardless of whether the assembly is held (including in particular normal traffic congestion);]

“time-sensitive product” means a product whose value or use to its consumers may be significantly reduced by a delay in the supply of the product to them.

- (2C) For the purposes of subsection (1)(aa), the cases in which the noise generated by persons taking part in a public assembly may result in serious disruption to the activities of an organisation which are carried on in the vicinity of the assembly include, in particular, where it may result in persons connected with the organisation not being reasonably able, for a prolonged period of time, to carry on in that vicinity the activities or any one of them.
- (2D) For the purposes of subsection (1)(ab)(i), the noise generated by persons taking part in an assembly may have a relevant impact on persons in the vicinity of the assembly if—
 - (a) it may result in the intimidation or harassment of persons of reasonable firmness with the characteristics of persons likely to be in the vicinity, or
 - (b) it may cause such persons to suffer alarm or distress.
- (2E) In considering for the purposes of subsection (1)(ab)(ii) whether the noise generated by persons taking part in an assembly may have a significant impact on persons in the vicinity of the assembly, the senior police officer must have regard to—
 - (a) the likely number of persons of the kind mentioned in paragraph (a) of subsection (2D) who may experience an impact of the kind mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) of that subsection,
 - (b) the likely duration of that impact on such persons, and
 - (c) the likely intensity of that impact on such persons.]

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- (3) A direction given ^{F11}... by virtue of subsection (2)(b) [^{F12}or (2ZB)] shall be given in writing.
- (4) [^{F13}Subject to subsection (5A), a person] who organises a public assembly and ^{F14}... fails to comply with a condition imposed under this section is guilty of an offence, but it is a defence for him to prove that the failure arose from circumstances beyond his control.
- (5) [^{F15}Subject to subsection (5A), a person] who takes part in a public assembly and ^{F16}... fails to comply with a condition imposed under this section is guilty of an offence, but it is a defence for him to prove that the failure arose from circumstances beyond his control.
- [^{F17}(5A) A person is guilty of an offence under subsection (4) or (5) only if—
- (a) in the case of a public assembly in England and Wales, at the time the person fails to comply with the condition the person knows or ought to know that the condition has been imposed;
 - (b) in the case of a public assembly in Scotland, the person knowingly fails to comply with the condition.]
- (6) A person who incites another to commit an offence under subsection (5) is guilty of an offence.
- (7) ^{F18}.....
- [^{F19}(8) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (4) is liable on summary conviction—
- (a) in the case of a public assembly in England and Wales, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 51 weeks or a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale or both;
 - (b) in the case of a public assembly in Scotland, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months or a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale or both.]
- [^{F19}(9) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (5) is liable on summary conviction—
- (a) in the case of a public assembly in England and Wales, to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale;
 - (b) in the case of a public assembly in Scotland, to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.]
- [^{F19}(10) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (6) is liable on summary conviction—
- (a) in the case of a public assembly in England and Wales, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 51 weeks or a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale or both;
 - (b) in the case of a public assembly in Scotland, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months or a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale or both.]
- [^{F19}(10A) In relation to an offence committed before the coming into force of section 281(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (alteration of penalties for certain summary offences: England and Wales), the references in subsections (8)(a) and to (10)(a) to 51 weeks are to be read as references to 6 months.]

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- [^{F20}(11) The Secretary of State may by regulations amend any of subsections (2A) to (2C) for the purposes of making provision about the meaning for the purposes of this section of—
- (a) serious disruption to the activities of an organisation which are carried on in the vicinity of a public assembly, or
 - (b) serious disruption to the life of the community.
- (12) Regulations under subsection (11) may, in particular, amend any of those subsections for the purposes of—
- (a) defining any aspect of an expression mentioned in subsection (11)(a) or (b) for the purposes of this section;
 - (b) giving examples of cases in which a public assembly is or is not to be treated as resulting in—
 - (i) serious disruption to the activities of an organisation which are carried on in the vicinity of the assembly, or
 - (ii) serious disruption to the life of the community.
- (13) Regulations under subsection (11)—
- (a) are to be made by statutory instrument;
 - (b) may apply only in relation to public assemblies in England and Wales;
 - (c) may make incidental, supplementary, consequential, transitional, transitory or saving provision, including provision which makes consequential amendments to this Part.
- (14) A statutory instrument containing regulations under subsection (11) may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.]

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 14(1) substituted (28.6.2022) by [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 \(c. 32\)](#), [ss. 74\(2\)\(a\)](#), 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F2** S. 14(1)(aa)(ab) substituted (28.6.2022) for word by [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 \(c. 32\)](#), [ss. 74\(2\)\(b\)](#), 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F3** Words in s. 14(1) omitted (28.6.2022) by virtue of [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 \(c. 32\)](#), [ss. 74\(2\)\(c\)](#), 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F4** S. 14(1A) inserted (28.6.2022) by [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 \(c. 32\)](#), [ss. 74\(3\)](#), 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F5** Words in s. 14(2) substituted (28.6.2022) by [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 \(c. 32\)](#), [ss. 74\(4\)](#), 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F6** Words in s. 14(2) inserted (2.7.2023) by [Public Order Act 2023 \(c. 15\)](#), [ss. 16\(2\)\(a\)](#), 35(4)
- F7** S. 14(2ZA)(2ZB) inserted (2.7.2023) by [Public Order Act 2023 \(c. 15\)](#), [ss. 16\(2\)\(b\)](#), 35(4)
- F8** S. 14(2A)-(2E) inserted (28.6.2022) by [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 \(c. 32\)](#), [ss. 74\(5\)](#), 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F9** Words in s. 14(2A) substituted (15.6.2023) by [The Public Order Act 1986 \(Serious Disruption to the Life of the Community\) Regulations 2023 \(S.I. 2023/655\)](#), regs. 1(2), [3\(2\)](#)
- F10** Words in s. 14(2B) substituted (15.6.2023) by [The Public Order Act 1986 \(Serious Disruption to the Life of the Community\) Regulations 2023 \(S.I. 2023/655\)](#), regs. 1(2), [3\(3\)](#)
- F11** Words in s. 14(3) omitted (2.7.2023) by virtue of [Public Order Act 2023 \(c. 15\)](#), [ss. 16\(2\)\(c\)\(i\)](#), 35(4)
- F12** Words in s. 14(3) inserted (2.7.2023) by [Public Order Act 2023 \(c. 15\)](#), [ss. 16\(2\)\(c\)\(ii\)](#), 35(4)

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- F13** Words in s. 14(4) substituted (28.6.2022) by Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (c. 32), **ss. 75(8)(a)**, 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F14** Word in s. 14(4) omitted (28.6.2022) by virtue of Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (c. 32), **ss. 75(8)(b)**, 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F15** Words in s. 14(5) substituted (28.6.2022) by Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (c. 32), **ss. 75(9)(a)**, 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F16** Word in s. 14(5) omitted (28.6.2022) by virtue of Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (c. 32), **ss. 75(9)(b)**, 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F17** S. 14(5A) inserted (28.6.2022) by Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (c. 32), **ss. 75(10)**, 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)
- F18** S. 14(7) repealed (1.1.2006) by Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (c. 15), ss. 111, 174(2), 178(8), Sch. 7 para. 26(8), **Sch 17 Pt. 2**; S.I. 2005/3495, **art. 2(m)(u)(xxvi)**
- F19** S. 14(8)-(10A) substituted for s. 14(8)-(10) (28.6.2022) by Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (c. 32), **ss. 75(11)**, 208(1) (with s. 75(12)); S.I. 2022/520, **reg. 5(i)**
- F20** S. 14(11)-(14) inserted (28.6.2022) by Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (c. 32), **ss. 74(6)**, 208(1); S.I. 2022/520, reg. 5(i)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 14 excluded (E.W.) (1.8.2005) by Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (c. 15), **ss. 132(6)**, 178(8); S.I. 2005/1521, **art. 4(1)**

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- s. 14(8) words substituted by [2003 c. 44 Sch. 26 para. 37\(4\)\(a\)](#)
- s. 14(10) words substituted by [2003 c. 44 Sch. 26 para. 37\(4\)\(b\)](#)

Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 4B inserted by [2023 c. 47 s. 1](#)