

Protesters fought the law, but the law fought back ... very, very loudly



📷 A protester is arrested at Kingsnorth power station. Photograph: Leon Neal/AFP/Getty Images

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Protesters gathered at [Kingsnorth](#) power station last August may have many reasons to feel aggrieved at their treatment by police. But they might concede that officers had a sense of humour. How else to explain the song police chose to blare out in an attempt to deprive activists of sleep: I Fought the Law and the Law Won.

A report into the policing of last year's [Climate Camp](#) demonstration, to be presented today in parliament, has criticised Kent police for its apparent use of "psychological operations".

To wake protesters during the week-long protest last August, police are accused of using vans to play loud music that included Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries and the theme from 80s sitcom Hi-de-Hi.

On the final day of the protest the van departed and - in what was taken as a smug gesture of triumphalism - blasted out "I fought the law and the law won", the lyrics to the Clash's rowdy cover.

The report, launched by the [Liberal Democrats](#), said the music seemed "an attempt to deprive attendees of sleep".

The report also highlighted the police approach to participants of a "festival picnic" procession mostly made up of families and small children. A helicopter ordered them via loudspeaker: "Disperse now, or dogs, horses and long-handed batons will be deployed."

Allyn Thomas, Kent's assistant chief constable, said last night the operation, which he oversaw, was "very successful" but conceded the helicopter message threatening anti-riot techniques had been a mistake. He added: "We are also aware of one occasion when officers played music loudly and inappropriately. The police team was quickly identified and sent back to their home force."

Kent police have come under repeated criticism for their heavy-handed approach to policing the event, a protest against the planned £1bn coal-fired power station at Kingsnorth by energy firm E.ON.

Officers from 26 forces were drafted in to help mount a £5.9m operation. Home Office minister Vernon Coaker, who initially said the response had been "proportionate", later apologised to MPs after it emerged the 70 police officers he claimed had been injured in clashes with protesters had suffered unrelated ailments - including bee stings and a toothache.

Kent police also confirmed yesterday it had launched an "internal investigation" after the Guardian found the force had placed journalists covering the protests under surveillance.

The report found protesters were threatened with arrest after invoking their right to not to disclose personal details. They were also subjected to repeated searches, and police seized more than 2,000 items, including a clown outfit, cycle helmets, tent pegs and board games. The confiscation of the camp's supply of soap was justified by police "because protesters might use it to make themselves slippery and evade the grip of police", the report says.

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