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Police and Crime Commissioner
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26th June 2024

Dear Simon,

Thank you for your letter relating to an incident at Roseberry Topping over the weekend.

As the public's voice in policing, I acknowledge and understand the concerns raised by communities about the incident. As stated publicly, I required further information about the incident myself to seek assurances on behalf of Cleveland's communities.

The incident's Gold Commander, Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Richard Baker, provided me with a detailed rundown of the incident from beginning to end.

From this briefing, I would reassure you and the public that a comprehensive police response took place, involving firearms officers and use of the National Police Air Service.

For me, this highlights just how seriously Cleveland Police took the reports and I'm assured they responded as the public would expect them to.

The force has since issued a further statement from ACC Baker about the reality of what confronted officers at the summit of Roseberry Topping.

In their original calls to police, the public had described the weapon as a blue plastic 'fake' gun. As officers approached the scene, it was clear this was indeed the case.

As described in ACC Baker's statement, the item was seized, and officers explained to the man that he could have been arrested under Section 19 of the Firearms Act.

It is clearly not a wise decision to take such an item on what appeared otherwise to be a peaceful, cultural event, involving families with small children. I am assured that officers made this clear to the male.

Whilst there were no reports that the individual was behaving in a threatening manner, I recognise that some people – including Mr Ransom - may have found the sight of the imitation firearm distressing.

To address your concerns about the use of arrest powers, in ACC Baker's briefing he stressed:

"...an arrest itself should not be used as a punishment. An arrest must always be justified and based on an officer suspecting that a criminal offence has or is about to be committed, and then that an arrest is necessary in the circumstances for a number of reasons set out in law. The highly experienced firearms officer's assessment is that this was not appropriate in these circumstances, and I support their decision-making and rationale."

It is not my place or position to question the operational decision-making stated above, nor would I seek to do so.

I am grateful to the officers and staff involved in the incident for their swift response to this incident, and their continued dedication and commitment in keeping our communities safe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Matt Storey
Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner