

Faslane 365

Legal Observers Briefing

Your role basically involves making sure everyone at the action has a Bust Card, recording details of those arrested (and passing this on to the Trackers) and generally noting any information which might be useful in court.

You will need enough people so that you can have a least two people acting as Legal Observers at each gate you are covering at all times. You can help out with other support roles but if the police move in to make arrests then you have to be there on the spot prioritising legal observing.

We have no idea how the police are going to react to Faslane 365. They may cordon off the blockade and warn anyone not wanting to be arrested to leave the area. Strathclyde Police are familiar with the role of Legal Observers and they *might* allow a number of you to stay inside any cordon and watch — they might not. To try and maintain some recognition of the status of Legal Observers we suggest that you wear some kind of tabard or armband which has “*Legal Observer*” on it.

Legal Observers are **not** Police Liaison. Your job is to record what happens, not represent the group in discussions. If, however, you need to liaise on your own behalf (e.g. about staying near enough to see arrests if there is a police cordon) then talk to the senior officer present.

While it will be possible to swap roles, e.g. to be a Legal Observer one day and a blockader the next day, we ask that you are clear what role you have at any time. If you stop Legal Observing then make sure the person who has taken over is fully briefed. Please don't just throw your tabard at someone and jump into a lock-on! The police will definitely stop Legal Observers being near to arrests if they think they are going to join in the action.

The most crucial thing is getting the names of people being arrested. Make the most of opportunities to get to know the names of everyone in your group. If you know people by nicknames check that you know the name that they will be giving to the police.

If arrests start try to position yourself where you can get a good view of what is going on.

If you can, also note down:

- Is a warning given? Who by? At what time?
- Are people being cut out of lock-ons? Who by? How long does it take? Are the police being careful?
- Is there traffic actually present which is being stopped? Is it just base traffic or is there local traffic also held up? Can through traffic get past?

Much of this is not needed but occasionally people want to challenge the police version of events in court or make a complaint about police behaviour and your record might be important. Note the times of anything significant.

From the beginning of the action it is useful to have a general record of the atmosphere, of how the police respond, how many are there, when specialist cutting teams arrive, at what stage police cordons are established etc. If nothing else this would be very useful for groups who come to blockade after you.

If the police cordon off the people who are blockading then try to stand as near as you can without risking arrest yourself. Shout out to the people inside the cordon that you are there and tell them how much you can see. They need to know that they need to keep you informed if you can't see what is going on.

If people are being cut out of lock-ons the MOD police cutting team usually establish a 'sterile area' around where they are working. This might just be a cordon of police officers but they often erect temporary fencing with plastic sheeting attached. This takes a great deal of time and faffing about so makes the blockade last longer. Sometimes Legal Observers can see underneath or around the fencing, or over it if you are tall, but you might need a running commentary from inside.

If the police keep people a long way back from the blockaders then see if you can stand near to the vans where people will be taken. How close you can get depends on the officers in charge but you should at least be able to see who is being taken away.

It is also an opportunity to ask which police station people are being taken to. Men and women are usually put in different vans and taken to different stations (unless there are only a few arrests). The likely ones to listen out for are: Dumbarton, Clydebank, Maryhill, Stewart St, Baird St, Greenock and Govan (now known as Helen St).

It is up to you at what point you phone in the names of those arrested to the Trackers. They don't need them instantly so if your mobile signal is not good it is better to stay and keep an eye on the arrests. When you get a chance tell the Trackers the names of people arrested and who has been put into the same van. Alert them to anyone who has injuries.

Legal Observers need to stay at the gates until everyone leaves. Let the trackers know when your group has stopped blockading. Keep your notes safe as details may become important later.

Check-list of things to have with you

- ✓ Spare Bust cards.
- ✓ Spare Legal Registration Forms.
- ✓ Mobile phone with fully charged battery and credit (and if possible spare battery).
- ✓ Contact list of other support people.
- ✓ Notebook or clipboard and spare pens and pencils¹.
(Tip: greaseproof paper and a permanent marker survives even Scottish rain!)
- ✓ Plastic bag or wallet to keep notes dry.
- ✓ Tabard or armband.
- ✓ Plenty to eat and drink and appropriate clothing of course.....

¹ While you can use a 'Dictaphone' type device, you should always have a notebook and pencil in case. Also, it's easier to do the list of names in a notebook so you can read them off or give the sheet to whoever is ringing them in to the trackers.