

Police 'disappointed' as large numbers ignore advice and attend protest

Police were disappointed that a large number of people chose to ignore advice to find alternative methods to protest this weekend.

Thousands of protesters have turned out to an anti-racism demonstration in the capital despite pleas from the first minister, police and MSPs to find safer ways to express their support.

Assistant Chief Constable Kenny MacDonald said: "Our advice this weekend was, and remains that people should find alternative methods to protest rather than attending mass gatherings. We discouraged attendance at these events across the country to minimise risks to public safety and health.



Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

"I am therefore somewhat disappointed that large numbers of people chose to ignore this advice and attended these events across Scotland.

"However, I would like to thank those who did attend for adhering to the physical distancing measures where possible, and protesting in a peaceful manner.

"An appropriate policing response was put in place for the events and in the main they passed without incident.

"We would encourage everyone to continue to follow the Scottish Government's regulations and guidance to aid the collective effort to protect the NHS and save lives."

Despite the progress made in containing the virus, mass gatherings remain banned under the lockdown.

Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf also expressed his frustration but backed the police's hands off approach.

Earlier today he told Good Morning Scotland: "I'm frustrated first and foremost.

"I haven't seen my parents for three months, they've missed their grandchild's first birthday.

"Trust me, if I could see them, I would love to be able to see them, but I can't."

"I understand the frustration, but what I would say to people is, what else would you expect the police to do?

"If thousands of people were gathering, the police explain, they encourage and where appropriate, they enforce the law, but they can't go in heavy-handed into a protest.

"We saw some scenes across the world where that heavy-handedness was met with more violence.

"That would have been entirely the wrong approach."