

Police Scotland allows officers to 'take the knee' during BLM protests

Police Scotland officers have been permitted to 'take the knee' in solidarity with protesters at Black Lives Matter rallies this weekend.

Assistant Chief Constable Kenny MacDonald confirmed that national guidance had been circulated to officers ahead of a string of anti-racism demonstrations and said officers are permitted to show their support for the movement if it is "operationally appropriate".

He said: "Like many people in Scotland, indeed across the world, I am shocked and distressed about the dreadful death of George Floyd and the subsequent events in the United States.



“Racism in all its forms is disgraceful and unacceptable. Those events do not reflect our style of policing in Scotland and we continue to value the strong bond of trust with all our citizens and communities.

“We are aware of Take The Knee, a global initiative which takes a stand against racism. Officers can take part, if doing so is both operationally appropriate and in keeping with Police Scotland’s core values and high levels of professionalism.”

The policy differs from the Metropolitan Police whose Commissioner by Dame Cressida Dick has told officers not to take the knee during BLM protests.

She said: “We encourage our officers to talk to people” but added that although she understands the sentiment behind

officers taking the knee, “we won’t be kneeling during protests” in the UK.

Ms Dick also said that she would ask people to share solidarity with BLM “in any other way than gathering on the streets” referencing the dangers of mass gatherings during the coronavirus pandemic.

A protest is planned for Holyrood Park this afternoon as politicians urged people to avoid mass gatherings and adhere to two-metre social distancing rules in public places.

Today’s event had originally been planned to take place in Princes Street Gardens, but organisers asked those interested in attending to instead join them in Holyrood Park.

Speaking yesterday, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said: “I want to urge you to make your voices heard. We all feel very strongly about this, but I want to ask you to do so safely.

“Coming together in mass gatherings right now is simply not safe – it poses a real risk to health and it poses a real risk to life.”

She added: “Please for the safety of all of us, do not attend large gatherings – including protests – of more than six people this weekend.”