

Hundreds break off from Edinburgh Pride in protest

On Saturday 25 June a few hundred of the 15,000 or so people marching in Edinburgh Pride broke off to go to Waverley to support those taking part in the RMT strikes.

The group then marched to the US Consulate to protest the recent overturning of Roe vs Wade.

The decision to leave the official route was made by these people to highlight what they regard as Pride Edinburgh's "abandoning of the historical values of solidarity which Pride should represent". Protesters marched with a banner made by non-binary and transgender people, based on an original 1985 Lesbians & Gays Support the Miners banner taking inspiration from and continuing their legacy of queer solidarity with workers' movements.

Ahead of this year's event, the protesters say Pride Edinburgh's organisers made anti-strike statements against the RMT to Nigel Farage on GB NEWS, in what is regarded as an attempt to sow division between the queer community and the RMT strikers. The protesters say "Pitting queer people against strikers will never work, because the queer community will always stand up for organised labour". The protest group claim that to parade and party to celebrate queer rights a few streets away from workers striking for their own rights goes

against the solidarity Pride stands for. “The fight for queer liberation is the fight for the liberation of all workers.”.



Pride Edinburgh are accused of taking sponsorship from the fossil fuel industry through Exxon-Mobil, something which was highlighted on many placards held aloft in the march. The protesters say that the capitalist project of claiming Pride as a market, to the harm of everyone through climate change, goes against the solidarity Pride stands for. “The fight for queer liberation is the fight for climate justice.”

Pride Edinburgh worked with Police Scotland who the group says has a history of racist violence and have no place at Pride. Without any Police input, the protesters say they made their way to Waverley on open roads, safely. A spokesperson said: “We protect us. Stonewall was a riot against police and state repression of queer and trans working class people of colour in particular. The fight for queer liberation is the fight against racism.”

The protesters also say that Pride Edinburgh “once again

remained inaccessible despite many disabled people calling for better accessibility of the official march route among other demands". They admit that the break off route offered little improvement, but still call on Pride Edinburgh to do better—especially with their huge resources. The fight for queer liberation is the fight for disability justice. From our own observations of the march involving a reported 15,000 people there were many wheelchair users or people walking with sticks.

Pride Edinburgh invited a Conservative MSP to speak, who was booed off the stage to cheers and delight of some of the crowd outside Holyrood. The protesters explain that historically the Conservatives have opposed LGBT+ rights in this country, and their stance on asylum seekers in the UK continues to harm queer people seeking refuge from across the world. "The fight for queer liberation is the fight for migrants' rights".

Pride Edinburgh took place the day after the stripping of the right to abortion in the US. The bloc say that right to bodily autonomy and reproductive rights are intrinsically part of queer liberation. Whether it is access to abortion or access to HRT, restricting bodily autonomy is the restriction of access to healthcare and this harms us all. Seeing the way that these rights have been removed from those in the US is a stark reminder that they are also under attack here too. "The fight for queer liberation is the fight for bodily autonomy".

A spokesperson for the protesters said: "This radical demonstration was not affiliated with any particular group, but was organised by a group of grassroots radical organisations, anarchists, communists, and unions, including members of the Green Anti-Capitalist Front and Industrial Workers of the World. But ultimately it came to be because of solidarity from many, many unaffiliated queer people with a desire for justice.

"Stripping the rights from any of us affects everyone else. An

injury to one is an injury to all. Join a union, stand up for everyone's rights, we need you to join us in reminding everyone what pride stands for. Solidarity forever."

We contacted Pride Edinburgh for a comment. A spokesperson said: "The organising team at Pride Edinburgh were aware of a very small number of radical conservationists who broke off from the main Pride Edinburgh March to proceed to Waverley station.

"They were in disagreement with us on a small amount of funding we received from a staff network. However they chose not to enter discussions with us or listen to our side of the argument, instead issuing a letter of demands to us just 18 hours prior to our event on June 25th instead of the five days they claimed they would issue their letter.

"They have the right to counter protest our march, however we disagree that their voice and demands outweigh those of the others represented at Pride, their demands would have led to the cancellation of the entire event. Pride Edinburgh is free event at the point of contact and 15,000 pride goers attended the March to celebrate diversity and inclusion.

"Their claims the route was not accessible are false, and an access bus was provided. Pride Edinburgh 2022 was produced by a hard-working team of volunteers who produced the event in just three months (instead of the usual nine month organising window) since receiving permission to proceed. Pride is at its heart a protest and counter protests combining together but one groups beliefs and voice should never outweigh those of the others represented at the event."

