

Force faces £3 million bill to cover EDL events



POLICING COSTS: A recent EDL march from the Penny Fun in Moortown to the old Lingfield pub.

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West Yorkshire Police has spent more than £3 million in the last four years on keeping the peace at English Defence League demonstrations, new figures have revealed.

Responses to a Freedom of Information Act request show the force has been left with a six-figure bill after protests by the far-right group on seven occasions since October 2009.

The county's police and crime commissioner (PCC) Mark Burns-Williamson has called for increased powers to ban protests by right-wing groups after an event in Bradford last month which cost more than £1 million.

West Yorkshire Police was the only force in the region to provide details of the cost and manpower needed to police EDL demonstrations.

But South Yorkshire's PCC has recently revealed that two rallies held by the group in Sheffield in June and September this year left his county's force with a bill of £1.4 million.

West Yorkshire Police's response revealed details of nine EDL events which have required a policing presence since October 2009, though they do not include last month's rally in Bradford and a recent event in Wakefield.

In October 2009, some 900 EDL supporters joined a rally in City Square, Leeds. A total of 672 officers were required and policing cost £310,000.

After last month's protest in Bradford, which saw 700 EDL supporters visit the city and involved more than 1,000 officers from several forces, politicians called for greater powers to outlaw demonstrations by far-right groups.

Mr Burns-Williamson said: "At the moment, static protests cannot be banned and I continue to call for a change in the law to allow them to be prevented."