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Britain First Protest Draws Large Crowd in Manchester City Centre Amid Counter-Demonstrations

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Hundreds of protesters gathered in Manchester city centre on Saturday as Britain First held a planned march, drawing counter-demonstrations and a visible police presence. Officers from Greater Manchester Police (GMP) were deployed in significant numbers to maintain public order and ensure the safety of participants and the wider public.

Protesters began assembling outside Manchester Piccadilly railway station before moving through the city centre. Images from the scene showed police forming lines alongside protest groups to manage interactions between opposing sides. The demonstration was met with a counter-protest organised by Stand Up To Racism, a group known for opposing far-right gatherings.

Manchester City Council confirmed that GMP had put in place a “robust operational plan” to oversee the day’s events. A spokesperson noted that the plan prioritised public safety while allowing lawful demonstrations to proceed. The council also stated that a number of other routine protests were expected across the city on Saturday, with some potentially taking place at multiple locations throughout the day.

In a statement, Greater Manchester Police said: “We respect and facilitate the right to lawful protest. As ever, appropriate plans will be put in place with the organisers and local partners to minimise disruption for those who live, work, and visit our city centre.”

The force also reiterated its commitment to ensuring that protests do not escalate into public disorder and that officers would remain on the ground as needed throughout the day. Despite the high turnout and heightened tensions, early reports suggested the situation remained largely under control.

Events such as these often reignite debate around free speech, policing resources, and the rights of groups to assemble in public spaces. While views between protest groups differed sharply, the day was shaped by a clear emphasis on maintaining civility and upholding legal boundaries.

The protest and counter-demonstration underscore Manchester’s position as a focal point for political expression, with both supporters and opponents of Britain First making their voices heard through peaceful, organised activity.