

Fireworks Action Plan

**Promoting the safe and appropriate
use of fireworks in Scotland**

October 2019



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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FIREWORKS ACTION PLAN

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Ministerial Foreword

Last November I announced my intention to launch a consultation on the sale and use of fireworks in Scotland. This followed conversations I had with members of the public and the emergency services regarding concerns about the fear, alarm and damage that the misuse of fireworks can cause.



The 14 week consultation, *Your experiences, your ideas, your views*, opened at the beginning of February and closed in May, having received 16,420 responses. I would like to thank all those who took the time to submit their views and to our stakeholders who supported us to host 29 public events across Scotland which were attended by over 250 people.

The consultation and accompanying nationally representative omnibus survey demonstrate strong support for changing how fireworks are sold and used in Scotland. That is why I am pleased to publish our Action Plan setting out how we will address the concerns expressed and to promote the safe and appropriate use of fireworks.

Much of the legislation relating to fireworks is reserved to Westminster, and I have written to the UK Government to discuss how tighter restrictions can be introduced on the sale of fireworks. However, legislation is only part of the picture and we recognise that there are other ways to take action. Working together with stakeholders and our communities, we can share information, and our knowledge and expertise to ensure people and communities across Scotland stay safe.

This Action Plan includes activities that we are taking forward immediately, including awareness raising campaigns and the promotion of organised public events; and presents longer term actions that will support a cultural change in how we use fireworks in Scotland. I am pleased to announce through this Action Plan that I will establish a Fireworks Review Group. The Group will carefully consider how the current legislation around where and when fireworks can be used can be tightened to help ensure that people can enjoy fireworks safely and appropriately.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank our emergency services and community safety partners for the preventative work and proactive planning they take forward each year in advance of bonfire night; and all the stakeholders and organisations that work all year round to promote the safe and appropriate use of fireworks. I hope the actions set out in this plan can only serve to strengthen your great work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ash Denham', written in a cursive style.

Ash Denham
Minister for Community Safety

Introduction

Fireworks can play an important role in bringing our communities together and the enjoyment of attending organised firework displays in a safe environment can be a wonderful experience.

But it has become clear that our relationship with fireworks in Scotland is not all positive. For some, the noise made by setting off fireworks can be a nuisance, and the disturbance can cause distress to both people and animals. Every year we have seen antisocial behaviour involving the use of fireworks; and the risk of injury caused by the misuse of fireworks remains a real concern.

The '*consultation on fireworks in Scotland: Your experiences, your ideas, your views*' was launched in February to start a conversation with the people of Scotland on how fireworks are sold and used. The consultation was an important step in gathering valuable evidence on a range of opinions and perspectives and covered organised displays, private use by individuals, and inappropriate use.

The public consultation was launched on Sunday 3 February 2019 and ran for a period of 14 weeks, to its close on Monday 13 May 2019. Over the consultation period 29 engagement events were held – 24 open public events, and five events for specific population groups including young people.

A total of 16,420 responses were received from members of the public and stakeholder organisations, clearly demonstrating the high level of interest in this issue across the country.

The consultation was overseen by an External Advisory Group that included representatives from Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Ambulance Service, CoSLA, Trading Standards, the Scottish Community Safety Network, the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and City of Edinburgh Council.

A [full analysis of responses to the consultation](#) has been published; and the consultation was supported by a programme of analytical work to enable the outcomes of the consultation to be considered alongside other forms of evidence, including:

- A [nationally representative opinion poll](#) of people's views on increasing control over the sale and use of fireworks, providing findings that are representative of adults across Scotland; and
- A [rapid review of the existing evidence](#) that considers the impact of fireworks in the context of international legislation and regulations, including evidence relating to injury, pollution, noise and animal welfare.

This Action Plan sets out a series of actions that will be taken forward in response to what we have heard through the consultation. Our aim is to ensure everything possible is being done to ensure fireworks are used safely and appropriately.

**Consultation on fireworks in Scotland:
Your experiences, your ideas, your views¹**

Headline Findings

The consultation demonstrates strong support for a change in how fireworks are sold and used in Scotland:

- Almost all of those who responded to the consultation (94%) said they would welcome increased controls on the sale of fireworks.
- Over three-quarters of those who responded to the consultation (87%) said they would welcome a ban on the sale of fireworks.
- Most of those who responded to the consultation (92%) felt there should be more control on how they can be used.

This message is backed up by findings from a nationally representative opinion poll that provides findings representative of people across Scotland:

- A majority of adults in Scotland (71%) feel there should be more controls over the sale of fireworks.
- Over half of adults in Scotland (58%) would support a ban on the sale of fireworks.
- A majority of adults in Scotland (68%) feel there should be more control on how fireworks can be used in Scotland.

¹ It should be noted that consultation responses are not representative of the wider population, and it is often those with the strongest views on a subject who choose to respond. The findings from the nationally representative opinion poll, which can be generalised to the Scottish population, show a similar picture to the consultation, but with lower proportions of respondents supporting potential changes.

Our Vision

We want to ensure people are, and feel, safe in their communities. This ambition is embedded through our [National Performance Framework](#), and our [Justice Vision for Scotland](#).



Firework displays can provide an opportunity to bring communities together and help maintain ties and friendships – all of which are vital in contributing to a sense of community. However, the misuse of fireworks can cause distress and harm, both physically and mentally, and can have a negative impact on our relationship with the community in which we live.

The consultation has demonstrated that there is a clear desire for change in how fireworks are sold and used in Scotland. However, our relationship with fireworks is longstanding and introducing a change to the culture in which fireworks are sold and used will not be achieved quickly. Nor will it be achieved through changing legislation or regulations in isolation. Instead, it will require concerted effort and action by all service providers, working together with our communities to improve awareness and understanding on the appropriate use of fireworks, to positively influence responsible behaviour, and to support communities to have greater control in how fireworks are used in their local area.

To take forward what we heard through the consultation, on 7 October 2019, **the Minister for Community Safety hosted a roundtable discussion with key stakeholders** to discuss the findings and share ideas on potential ways forward. The roundtable included representatives from the emergency services, the Scottish Society for the Protection of Animals, Local Authority Licencing, Trading Standards and Community Safety representatives, the National Health Service and the firework industry. The willingness of partners to work together to share knowledge and experience and to collectively identify potential solutions emerged strongly from this discussion.

It is this partnership approach that will be key to progressing and implementing any change in our relationship with fireworks in Scotland.

Our Actions

To promote the safe and appropriate use of fireworks the Scottish Government will take forward a number of actions with national and local partners. Collectively these actions will introduce a change in our relationship with fireworks in Scotland.

Awareness Raising and Communication

The value and importance of awareness raising emerged as a key theme from the consultation and the evidence review highlighted that such campaigns have the potential to reduce the number of firework related injuries. It is clear there is scope to improve our knowledge and understanding of the safe and appropriate use of fireworks, and we are committed to working with our partners to achieve this.

On 14th October, working with Crimestoppers, local community safety partners, and Police Scotland Youth Volunteers we **launched the 'Firework Rules and Regulations Campaign'**.

Targeted at communities where there have been high levels of fireworks misuse this campaign engages with local residents and schools and is designed to improve knowledge and understanding of the rules and regulations around where and when fireworks can be used. It also promotes an anonymous reporting option for people when they have a concern or wish to report firework misuse. Communities that have been involved in the campaign this year include: Pollokshields and Easterhouse in Glasgow; Muirhouse/Pilton and Craigroyston in Edinburgh; and Blackburn in West Lothian.

The impact of this campaign will be reviewed and lessons will inform any future community awareness raising campaigns.

On 21st October, working with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and the Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals we launched a campaign to improve people's awareness and understanding of the impact that the legitimate use of fireworks can have on people and animals. The campaign encourages people to attend organised public displays, and is supported by a published list of public firework events across the country which is publically available on the SFRS website. This is supported by a programme of communications run across social media, local press and radio.

Moving forward we will look to publish this list of organised displays on an annual basis and identify the best platform to share this information with communities across Scotland.

The consultation identified that the activity of buying fireworks provides an important opportunity for sharing messages around using fireworks safely and responsibly. In the year ahead we will **work with key stakeholders to improve the information and advice given when purchasing fireworks from retailers**. This could include proactively providing safety advice drawing on the [fireworks code](#) with every firework purchase, and providing more detailed information on which fireworks are suitable for their intended use.

The expertise and experience of the fireworks industry and retailer organisations will be essential in developing this advice and our aim will be to have this available for distribution at the point of sale ahead of bonfire season 2020.

Support to Publicly Organised Displays

In acknowledging that fireworks can bring communities together when they are used responsibly, at the right time and in the right place, the consultation identified generally positive support for organised public displays.

Throughout the consultation we heard many excellent examples of public firework events organised by local authorities, community councils and other organised community groups.

Kilwinning Community Fireworks Event

The Kilwinning community bonfire night event is aimed families within the community and has been running for eight years. The event has grown in its attendance each year and 2018 bonfire event had estimated 16,000 in attendance.

The event has funding from the housing association and is aiming to reduce private displays by encouraging people to attend the community event. The event has adapted over the years to suit the needs of the whole community and has introduced a 'quieter display' at 6pm followed by the main display at 7pm. This allows for families with smaller children, those with animals or sensory issues to attend the event and enjoy the quieter fireworks display before the main display which may not be appropriate.

Portgordon Annual Display

The family fireworks event has been running for 25 years and attendance is growing each year. The event also hosts food and drinks venders as well as a variety of entertainment stalls.

The event relies on the local community and many local groups come together to provide local volunteers to help steward the event and a special fireworks coach is put on to help ease the traffic which loops a route throughout the evening. Additional parking is set up and along with two dedicated disabled parking areas. The event is promoted within the community by posters in local businesses, schools and community centres. Money raised at the event has paid for local CCTV, including installation for the local area, and installation for a defibrillator at the local school.

It is clear however, that in promoting attendance at organised events there is opportunity to provide tailored guidance and advice on the processes and procedures that need to be followed to hold a safe display. In the year ahead, we will **develop guidance for local community organisations who are looking to organise and run their own displays.**

Building on safety guidance already available, this Scottish-specific guidance will help support local groups to set up and run their own displays safely; and share positive examples of community-led displays where this already happens. This will be publicly available ahead of bonfire season 2020.

Support to Local Communities

The dangerous and antisocial behaviour associated with fireworks is unacceptable, and local community safety partners continue to do everything possible to prevent and reduce the number of such incidents. We will **continue to support local partners to engage in prevention and diversionary measures** targeted specifically at those more likely to be involved in antisocial behaviour. A significant number of actions are underway in preparation for bonfire night 2019, and some of these are summarised in the table below.

Examples of Local Practice

- **Pollokshields Restorative Justice:** A restorative justice week took place in Pollokshields with 10 local young people who are believed to have been involved in disturbances in the areas last year, delivered jointly by Police Scotland and SFRS. This focussed on the consequences of firework related antisocial behaviour with inputs from community victims and the Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to encourage behaviour change among this group.
- **Youth Intervention Letters and Visits:** Edinburgh Council Family and Household Support, working alongside Police Scotland, visited all young people in North Edinburgh who were identified as being a potential concern over the bonfire period. Letters were hand delivered to parents/carers and advice was given around the potential consequences of antisocial behaviour over the bonfire period.
- **Diversionary Activities for Young People in Blackburn:** Two young people in Blackburn have been trained as ambassadors for the Shell Twilight Basketball project. These sessions started in early October and are free for young people to attend offering not only basketball, but also varied positive activities over the bonfire period and beyond. The young people who attended the residential training weekend and additional training sessions have been equipped with key transferable skills that will enable them to not only deliver sessions but can also be used out with the project. The newly trained ambassadors are able to pass on previous experience of the troubles around bonfire season, and interact on a more proactive level with young people as they have hands on experience relating to antisocial behaviour in the area.

We continue to learn from the engagement and preventative activities that take place each year, and we will work with our emergency services and other partners to share practice and manage the risk and occurrence of any antisocial behaviour involving fireworks.

Engaging young people in awareness raising and better understanding the impact of the inappropriate use of fireworks will be key to changing our relationship with fireworks over time. We will work with our emergency services through **incorporating information and guidance on firework misuse into Scottish Fire and Rescue Service youth engagement activities.** This will include schools' educational material and modules on the FireSkills course and the new Youth Volunteer Scheme²; and we will **explore the opportunity to include this within the Police Scotland Youth Volunteer Scheme (PSYV).**

These youth schemes will provide an excellent opportunity for young people to provide educational input within their local areas and share messages with other young people on the impact and consequences of firework misuse.

Communities that work together with local partners can identify effective and sustainable solutions to the problems they are experiencing. Working in partnership with the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC), **we will support local residents in Blackburn to undertake a firework related research project in West Lothian.** This project will help residents identify positive change and tangible actions in relation to how fireworks are used in Blackburn.

We will carefully evaluate the impact of this project and consider whether and how this approach can be adopted in other areas to improve how fireworks are used within our communities.

Legislative and Regulatory Change

The consultation and nationally representative omnibus survey demonstrate strong support across Scotland for the introduction of greater restrictions on the sale and the use of fireworks.

Legislation on the sale of fireworks is primarily reserved to Westminster. We will continue to discuss with the UK Government how current regulations on the sale of fireworks can be strengthened. One opportunity we would like to explore further is the **introduction of comprehensive licencing system for individuals wishing to purchase fireworks**, which could include requiring those who wish to use fireworks outwith publicly organised displays to meet certain conditions, including mandatory

² FireSkills is a flexible youth engagement programme that provides a unique learning experience for young people. Run from local Fire Stations, courses are tailored to meet requirements of the young people involved, supporting a reduction in service demand and developing core-skills of those involved. In late 2019, SFRS will formally launch its new Youth Volunteer scheme. The weekly scheme will use fire-fighter drills and community safety engagement activities to assist young people to make positive choices as they emerge into adulthood.

safety training. Such a system would also ensure there is greater traceability and accountability among those purchasing and using fireworks in Scotland.

Legislation on where and when fireworks can be used is devolved to the Scottish Parliament, and the Scottish Government is committed to **carefully considering how these regulations can be tightened to ensure the safe and responsible use of fireworks**. Following a review of the legislative powers available, the opportunity to explore a number of options has been identified:

- **Opportunity to introduce restrictions on the use of fireworks on private property.** This has the potential to have a significant impact on the volume of fireworks being set off, and the associated noise and disruption caused to people and animals.
- **Opportunity to tighten the dates and times when fireworks can be set off.** Current regulations restrict the time fireworks can be set off, typically between 11pm and 7am and introducing further restrictions has the potential to reduce the volume of fireworks being set off and associated noise and disturbance.
- **Opportunity to introduce a notification system before fireworks can be used.** This would require those intending to use fireworks to notify a relevant authority, including the surrounding community, in advance of fireworks being set off. This would have the potential to lead to a reduction in the volume of fireworks being set off, and would ensure those who need to take preventative measures before firework displays, such as those with livestock or people with sensory issues adversely affected by fireworks, are able to do so.
- **Opportunity to introduce ‘no firework’ areas or zones.** This would introduce additional restriction on fireworks being used in certain locations such as near hospitals, retirement homes and / or animal shelters. This would lead to a reduction in the noise and disruption caused by fireworks among those who are more likely to be adversely affected.
- **Opportunity to introduce restrictions on the times fireworks can be sold.** This could involve setting a shorter time window in which fireworks can be purchased from retailers as well as potential limits on the volume of fireworks that can be purchased.
- **Opportunity to introduce mandatory conditions at point of sale.** This could include requiring those who wish to purchase fireworks for use outwith publicly organised displays to meet certain conditions. While it would not be possible to introduce a comprehensive licencing system on the sale of fireworks, as this is reserved to Westminster, there is scope to introduce some mandatory conditions under devolved legislation.

All of these options would result, to varying degrees, in a reduction in the volume of fireworks that are set off and in turn the associated noise and disturbance caused. While such changes would lead to a longer-term shift in the culture around the sale and purchasing of fireworks Scotland, further consideration needs to be given to how workable and effective these options will be.

In progressing the partnership approach to implementing a change in our relationship with fireworks in Scotland, **a Firework Review Group of key stakeholders will be established** to further consider these options and develop clear recommendations for tightening regulations on where and when fireworks can be used.

The Review Group will start its work imminently with the first meeting due to take place before the end of 2019. The Group will agree a process for the future regulation of the use of fireworks in Scotland, and will recommend a timetable to implement change.

The Group will be externally chaired, and membership will include key organisations with a direct interest including representation from the fireworks industry, Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Trading Standards, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, CoSLA, the Scottish Community Safety Network as well as community representatives.

It is expected the group will present its final recommendations to the Minister for Community Safety in the summer of 2020.

Monitoring Progress

The Scottish Government will continue to work with key partners to better understand trends in relation to firework related incidents in Scotland, including:

- Working with Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Scottish Ambulance Service to collate firework/bonfire incident data to enable a better understanding of any trends in incidents. This will build on the [initial work](#) undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Scotland (HMICS) and Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI).
- Engaging with the work by Care of Burns in Scotland Managed Clinical Network (COBIS) in partnership with the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM), to survey the incidence of firework injuries over the bonfire period (15.10.19 – 12.11.19). This survey will provide detailed evidence of: patient demographics; injury description; causative firework and location of incident. These data will be presented in addition to the Emergency Hospital Admissions data that is collected as standard by NHS Information Services Division.

This national data will be complemented by appropriate and proportionate learning and evaluation processes being put in place for each action that is taken forward, including for the firework display guidance that is developed, for training that is incorporated into youth schemes, and for the action research project in Blackburn. The principle of this learning and evaluation will be to ensure we can adequately measure the impact of each action, but also to ensure continuous improvement in the work that is taken forward. Key data on the reach and impact of awareness campaigns will be considered, and will help to inform the focus of future campaigns.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

SHORT TERM ACTIONS		
Impact of Fireworks Campaign	A national campaign to improve awareness and understanding of the impact the legitimate use of fireworks can have on people and animals.	October to November 2019
Firework Rules and Regulations Campaign	In partnership with Crimestoppers a campaign targeted at communities where there have been high levels of fireworks misuse to improve understanding of rules & regulations and reporting options.	October to November 2019
Publish and Promote Organised Public Events	SFRS have collated and published a list of locally organised public firework displays across Scotland, encouraging members of the public to attend organised events.	October to November 2019
Local Partnership and Emergency Service Response Planning	Scottish Government is working closely with Police, Fire and key local authorities to support the processes being put in place to support Bonfire Seasons 2019.	October to November 2019
MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS		
Develop Advice on Safe and Appropriate Use of Fireworks	Work with key stakeholders to develop advice to be available for distribution at point of sale.	In advance of November 2020
Firework Display Guidance	Develop step-by-step guidance for community groups and organisations who organise and run public firework displays.	In advance of November 2020
Antisocial Behaviour	Incorporate additional training on firework misuse within SFRS youth schemes, including the FireSkills course for young people and the forthcoming Youth Volunteer Scheme; and Police Scotland Youth Volunteer Training.	In advance of November 2020
Action Research	Undertake action research with communities affected by misuse of fireworks to enable them to better influence how fireworks are used in their community and to better influence change.	In advance of November 2020
LONG TERM ACTIONS		
Firework Review Group	Establish a Firework Review Group to consider opportunities for legislative change and agree clear recommendations for tightening regulations on where and when fireworks can be used.	Recommendations to be presented by summer 2020



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