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Bolsover District Council

Informal Healthy, Safe, Clean & Green Communities Scrutiny Committee

15th December 2020

Proposed Review: Council's Policy in relation to Sky lanterns, helium balloons and fireworks

Report of the Chair of Healthy, Safe, Clean & Green Communities Scrutiny Committee

This report is public

Purpose of the Report

- To complete a mini-review of the Council's current policy in relation to sky lanterns, helium balloons and fireworks.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 At various intervals in the last three years the Council has received requests from the public for the Council to consider its policy in relation to sky lanterns, helium balloons and fireworks.
- 1.2 The details within the report and background information within the appendices aims to advise Members of the current situation and evidence supporting the need for the review.
- 1.3 Members should be mindful that while there is national legislation in relation to these environmental issues, at a local level we would be limited in what else we can put in place. This is likely to be limited to action on council owned land and property.
- 1.4 The option to lobby at a national level for change would still remain open to the authority.
- 1.5 Sky lanterns and helium balloons
- 1.5.1 The Council has received a number of requests from the public over the last three years for Members to consider

	No. of Comments/Complaints Received
2020/21	7
2019/20	3
2018/19	2
2017/18	2

1.5.2 Attached at appendix 9.1 is a copy of a report to NEDDC Council earlier in 2020 which outlines the issues related to sky lanterns and helium balloons in the locality and draft motions/campaigns by a number of national agencies such as the National Farmers Union and RSPCA. At the time of the report a decision was taken not to progress a similar approach by BDC.

1.5.3 In light of the continued contact to the Council on the issue, there is a suggestion from the Customer Standards & Complaints Officer and Environmental Health officers that this be reconsidered as a positive step the Council can take. The report at appendix 9.1 is considered the starting point and could potentially be replicated exactly or modified to suit local requirements.

1.6 Fireworks

1.6.1 In relation to the release of fireworks the Council has received a number of requests from the public over the last three years for Members to consider:

	No. of Comments/Complaints Received
2020/21	3
2019/20	8
2018/19	0
2017/18	Not currently provided

1.6.2 Attached at appendix 9.2 is an extract from the Council agenda of 13th November 2019, where Cllr Nick Clarke proposed a motion in line with a suggested motion from the RSPCA [view the motion here \(PDF 170KB\)](#):

Extract:

This Council resolves:

- *to require all public firework displays within the local authority boundaries to be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people*
- *to actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people – including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks*
- *to write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays*
- *to encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock ‘quieter’ fireworks for public display*

Cllr Clarke’s motion had two additional elements to those stated above.

1.6.3 Appendix 9.3 is a copy of the minutes from the stated Council meeting and the debate and subsequent resolution of Members.

- 1.6.4 Governance are in the process of retrieving copies of the letters circulated to the UK Government following the resolution of Council in November 2019. These will be circulated in due course. Attached at appendix 9.4, is the full copy from Hansard of the debate in parliament on 2nd November 2020. No further action was taken at the time to propose changes to the existing legislation in the Fireworks Act 2003.
- 1.6.5 Attached at appendices 9.5 and 9.6 are examples of what campaign material was produced by BDC during 2020, in line with the motion agreed in 2019.
- 1.6.6 Given that change at a national level does not appear to imminent, Members may wish to consider what else can be done locally to further limit the environmental impact.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 The Scrutiny & Elections Officer was approached by the Customer Standards & Complaints Officer in relation to the number of comments/requests received by the Council.
- 2.2 Following the motion agreed in 2019 by Council in relation to Fireworks, it is timely to review if any further action can be taken by the Council in lieu of any national change in policy.
- 2.3 Both topics have been suggested as potential review topics previously but not taken forward at that stage.
- 2.4 The report at appendix 9.1 outlines action by NEDDC which is currently not replicated by BDC. Members should consider the evidence to replicate the approach in Bolsover creating a uniform policy/enforcement approach across the Strategic Alliance locality.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 Members may wish to consider additional consultation with BDC members in relation to the issues identified to get a clearer picture of the number of complaints/comments received from residents that have perhaps not been reported officially.
- 3.2 Members may wish to consider additional consultation with Bolsover residents in relation to the issues identified to get a clearer picture of support for the development of new policies and the scale of the associated issues within the District.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Committee Members could choose not to take the proposed topic forward at this stage if they feel there is insufficient evidence or that the impact of scrutiny would be limited.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

5.1.1 None from this report. Should the review be taken forward, Members may agree recommendations that have a financial or risk implication.

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

5.2.1 None from this report.

5.3 Human Resources Implications

5.3.1 None from this report. Should the review be taken forward, Members may agree recommendations that have a human resource implication.

6 Recommendations

6.1 That Members consider taking forward the suggested review topic and produce a scope setting the core objectives, based on the background detail provided in the appendices.

7 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: <i>BDC: Revenue - £75,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Capital - £150,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Capital - £250,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No
Has the relevant Portfolio Holder been informed	No
District Wards Affected	All
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	Ambition: Environment

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
9.1	NEDDC Council report 18052020
9.2	Extract item 7E BDC Council 13112019
9.3	Printed minutes 13112019 1000 Council
9.4	Hansard extract - Fireworks debate 021120
9.5	Firework and bonfire registration scheme form
9.6	Firework and bonfire registration scheme booklet
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Report Author	Contact Number
Scrutiny & Elections Officer	2385

Report Reference –

North East Derbyshire District Council

Council

18 May 2020

Sky Lanterns and Helium Balloons

Report of Councillor Kenyon, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change

This report is public.

Purpose of the Report

- To alert Members of the Council to the risks posed by sky lanterns and helium filled balloons.
- To recommend that North East Derbyshire District Council and Rykneld Homes Ltd introduce a charter to ban the release of sky lanterns and helium balloons on any land or property owned by the Council.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 The release of sky lanterns or helium balloons might look pretty, but they are a serious danger to animals and the countryside.
- 1.2 Sky lanterns and helium balloons are usually used in Britain to mark special celebrations such as weddings, parties and New Year, but many people are not aware of the dangers they can cause.
- 1.3 Essentially, a small hot air balloon made of paper, with an opening at the bottom where a candle is suspended, sky lanterns, or Chinese lanterns as they're also known, can float for miles before they fall to the ground, causing a danger to animals and a fire hazard.
- 1.4 Helium filled balloons can travel similar distances and also present a danger to animals and litter the environment.
- 1.5 The risks presented include: -
 - 1.5.1 **Litter Nuisance:** Farmers and other landowners have to clear up the remnants of sky lanterns and balloons from their fields. Whilst 'biodegradable' lanterns made from Bamboo are available, they still take months or years to degrade.
 - 1.5.2 **Fire:** Once a sky lantern is lit, nobody knows exactly where it will land. Fields of standing crops, hay and straw stacks, farm buildings housing animals, thatched roofs plus lots more are all at a significant risk of being set alight.

1.5.3 **Animals and Livestock:** Sky Lanterns can cause suffering or even kill animals and livestock. Balloons present a choking hazard. Not just by fire, sky lantern and balloon debris can cause immense stress and injury. Some of the key dangers are: -

- Animals eating lantern debris which can cause tears or punctures to internal organs leading to a potentially life-threatening situation
- Animals getting splinters in their skin which may cause infection
- Animals becoming trapped or tangled in debris
- Frames of lanterns can contaminate crops which are then unknowingly fed to animals.

1.5.4 **False alarms:** Sky lanterns pose a significant danger to aviation traffic such as planes and helicopters. There are concerns that lanterns can be drawn into aircraft engines and can delay take-off and landing. In addition, lanterns drifting across a night sky have also been mistaken by the public and coast guards for marine distress signals.

1.6 A number of other councils and organisations have backed the campaign and banned the release of sky lanterns and helium balloons on council owned land. Councils taking action include: -

- Lincoln City Council
- Newark & Sherwood District Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Rushcliffe Borough Council
- South Kesteven District Council
- West Lindsey District Council

1.7 Other organisations, including the Peak District National Park, the Countryside Alliance and the RSPCA are calling for bans.

2 **Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

2.1 Sky lanterns and helium balloon releases pose a significant risk of harm to animals and the environment.

2.2 There are many fun alternatives to balloon and sky lantern releases such as tree planting, flag flying, jam jar lights, or even releasing giant bubbles. The RSPCA website has more suggestions.

(<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/litter/balloon-and-sky-lantern-alternatives>).

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 There are no impacts on equality arising from this report, although it is noted that the impact of fires or damage caused by sky lanterns and helium balloons can have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable people in society.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 The alternative option would be to take no action in response to these concerns and issues.
- 4.2 This option has been rejected as it is recommended the Council and Rykneld Homes takes action and sets a positive example with regard to the release of sky lanterns and helium balloons.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

- 5.1.1 None

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

- 5.2.1 None

5.3 Human Resources Implications

- 5.3.1 None

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Council, together with Rykneld Homes Ltd, adopts and promotes a charter as follows: -

North East Derbyshire District Council and Rykneld Homes Ltd has banned the release of sky lanterns and balloons on any land or property owned by the Council.

We are committed to encouraging businesses, communities, landowners and individuals to switch to alternative ways of celebrating and commemorating events.

North East Derbyshire District Council and Rykneld Homes Ltd pledges to: -

- Promote the restriction of the release of all types of helium-filled balloon and sky lantern on property and land owned by the Council. This includes those that are made from bamboo or claim to be biodegradable.*
- Engage with businesses, communities, landowners, schools and individuals to encourage them to sign up to this charter.*
- Raise awareness of safer and more environmentally friendly alternatives that people can celebrate with, through promotion and campaigns.*

7 Decision Information

<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: BDC: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/> NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £250,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please indicate which threshold applies</p>	No
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	No
<p>Has the relevant Portfolio Holder been informed</p>	Yes
<p>District Wards Affected</p>	All
<p>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</p>	All

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
<p>Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)</p>	
Report Author	Contact Number
Ken Eastwood, Head of Service, Environmental Health	01246 217851

d) MOTION FOR TRAINING SESSIONS NOT TO COMMENCE PRIOR TO 6:30PM

Motion moved by Councillor James Watson

I move that from 1 December 2019 onwards, it is resolved that for any day where any member development and/or mandatory Councillor training sessions has been arranged or is to be arranged to take place, that all such sessions are scheduled to commence no earlier than 6:30pm on that day.

e) USE OF FIREWORKS

Motion moved by Councillor Nick Clarke

I move that Bolsover District Council resolves:

To require all public firework displays within the District boundaries to be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people.

To write to the Government urging them to legislate that the law be changed to only allow the sale of fireworks to operators of licensed displays.

To actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people - including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks.

To write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90db for those sold to the public for private displays.

To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock 'quieter' fireworks for public display.

To tighten up the restriction of sales of fireworks in the run up to Bonfire Night to under 18 year olds and to discourage proxy sales of fireworks for those under the age of 18.

COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Wednesday, 13 November 2019 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Tom Munro in the Chair

Councillors Rita Turner (Vice-Chair), Derek Adams, Allan Bailey, Rose Bowler, Jane Bryson, Tracey Cannon, Anne Clarke, Nick Clarke, Jim Clifton, Tricia Clough, Pat Cooper, Paul Cooper, David Dixon, Maxine Dixon, Mary Dooley, David Downes, Steve Fritchley, Ray Heffer, Andrew Joesbury, Tom Kirkham, Duncan McGregor, Clive Moesby, Evonne Parkin, Graham Parkin, Sandra Peake, Peter Roberts, Dan Salt, Liz Smyth, Janet Tait, Ross Walker, Deborah Watson, James Watson and Jen Wilson.

Officers:- Dan Swaine (Joint Chief Executive Officer), Karen Hanson (Joint Strategic Director - Place), Lee Hickin (Joint Strategic Director - People), Sarah Sternberg (Joint Head of Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer), Theresa Fletcher (Head of Finance and Resources & Section 151 Officer), Nicola Calver (Governance Manager) and Thomas Scott (Temporary Governance Officer).

405 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dexter Bullock, Natalie Hoy and Chris Kane.

406 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor James Watson declared a non-significant other interest in agenda item 11 (LGPS Pensions Discretions 2019) and agenda item 12 (Reduction in Debt Charges through the use of reserves). Councillor Watson also indicated non-participation in these decisions.

Councillor Clive Moesby declared a non-significant other interest in agenda item 11 (LGPS Pensions Discretions 2019). Councillor Moesby also indicated non-participation in this decision.

407 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair began his announcements with a mention of the recent passing of Annie Hall, the Former High Sherriff of Derbyshire. He stated that he worked with Annie on a number of occasions, and paid tribute to how kind she was.

The Chair requested that Members complete the Training Needs Survey e-mailed to them by the Governance team.

COUNCIL

He announced that he had recently attended three events to represent the Council: a Remembrance service in Whitwell, the Remembrance Parade in Chesterfield and the Bolsover District Talent Showcase in Shirebrook. He stated that it was an honour to attend the Remembrance events, and the Talent Showcase raised £560 for charity.

The Chair passed over to Councillor Mary Dooley, who wished to mention that a blue plaque was recently unveiled in Pinxton for John King, the inventor of the mine cage safety detaching hook. She thanked Councillors Steve Fritchley and Ray Heffer on behalf of Pinxton Parish Council for attending the unveiling.

The Leader of the Council, was invited to speak and he moved to alter the order of business to defer agenda item 16 (Development Proposal – Whitwell Cluster – B@Home Framework) to a future Council meeting, because he felt Members needed more time to consider the report.

Proposed by Councillor Steve Fritchley and seconded by Councillor Duncan McGregor.

RESOLVED that the order of business be amended to defer agenda item 16, 'Development Proposal – Whitwell Cluster – B@Home Framework' to a future meeting of Council.

408 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Duncan McGregor and seconded by Councillor Derek Adams.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2019 be approved as a true and correct record and be duly signed by the Chair.

409 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8, members of the Public were able to ask questions to an Executive Member about the Council's activities for a period of up to 15 minutes.

i) Question submitted to Portfolio Holder for Environmental Impact Councillor Nick Clarke by Mr. Atkin:

In view of the mounting international controversy over the safety of 5G communications, does BDC have a policy on the subject?

Mr. Atkin gave some context in support of his question. He told Members how 5G technology was being rolled out in places all over the world, but a number of people had raised serious health concerns about using it. He added that if Bolsover District decides to introduce it, Members should research it before making a decision. Mr Atkins felt it was weapons-grade technology and the impact on humans and nature could be disastrous.

Mr. Atkin referred to instances all over the world of people reacting to the potential risks of 5G: a Senator in the United States of America admitted how the dangers of 5G had not been researched properly, and Japan had banned it outright. He concluded by stating that his question about Bolsover District Council having a policy on rolling out 5G was in view of all of these concerns.

COUNCIL

Councillor Nick Clarke thanked Mr. Atkin for his question, and stated how he did not believe there was any formal Bolsover District Council policy relating to 5G technology.

Councillor Nick Clarke agreed with the concerns expressed by Mr. Atkin, and added that the need for more worldwide research into 5G technology was clear, particularly in light of WHO (World Health Organisation) conveying their concerns about 5G on a number of occasions. In concluding his response, Councillor Nick Clarke stated that he felt there should be a moratorium on any decisions or motions the Council might take on 5G technology in the future, until better research on the risks had been carried out.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

No supplementary question was submitted.

ii) Question submitted to Portfolio Holder for Environmental Impact Councillor Nick Clarke by Ms. Gilbert:

Has BDC received any planning applications from any communications company for the erection of any 5G masts or antennae?

Councillor Nick Clarke thanked Ms. Gilbert for her question, and explained how the planning applications for the masts themselves were part of an infrastructure commission that Bolsover District Council was not a part of. However, he added that Bolsover District Council would voice its concerns about 5G risks to the commission, and the public would be made fully aware of any future decisions the Council might take relating to 5G technology.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

No supplementary question was submitted.

(Chief Executive Officer)

410 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9, Members of Council were able to ask questions about the Council's activities to either the Chair of the Council, Chairman of a specific Committee or a relevant Portfolio Holder.

No questions were submitted by Members under Procedure Rule 9.

411 MOTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, Councillors were able to submit Motions on Notice for consideration at meetings of Council.

a) The following motion was submitted for consideration by Councillor Clive Moesby:

The Council are in receipt of a letter calling for a recognition of residents' concerns in relation to international developments in relation to nuclear weapons.

COUNCIL

Below is the letter for reference:

We write as citizens, concerned at international developments which have no national or local barriers: which impinge on, and threaten, us all.

We note:

- The withdrawal of the USA from the International Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1970*
- The withdrawal of the USA from The Paris Climate Agreement of 2015*

Each of these agreements had been achieved only after extensive and prolonged discussions, at International, Bi-lateral and local level. Each of these agreements resulted from world-wide pressure from peoples everywhere.

We believe that the time has come when the peoples most concerned by the consequences of these decisions must okay their part in reversing these developments.

We further note:

We are not alone. Major powers, including Germany, China and Russia have declared their intention to implement their part in those agreements, - though as a result of President Trump's announcement, Russia too is withdrawing from the Non-proliferation Agreement.

Major Cities and States in the USA, including California and New York, have developed their own climate policies to meet those which President Trump has rejected.

Here in the UK, we have a history of local desire to play a part in these issues – expressed by the Derbyshire County Council's 'Nuclear-Free Zone' initiative at the time of the Cruise Missile crisis.

These examples show that we cannot leave our futures in the hands of the leaders who may be unworthy of such confidences. They show that popular pressure is needed to alert out populace of the dangers, and to get that awareness reflected in government decision making.

We are in a dangerous place, where the electorate and the peoples of the whole world are disfranchised from decisions which govern the quality or even the possibility of life on earth. We can work to lessen these dangers.

We appeal to Chesterfield Borough Council, North-East Derbyshire District Council, Bolsover District Council, and the Derbyshire County Council, to use their powers to act on these issues.

*If you will join us, we may be able to make the world a less dangerous place.
For further information, please contact us.*

Yours faithfully

Lyn Pardo (Secretary) lynpardo@phoncoop.coop

Joe Clark (Chair Person) clamak@tiscali.co.uk

COUNCIL

In response I move that the Council note its previous representations to HM Government requesting Bolsover to be declared a nuclear free zone in 1982 and reaffirms its position on this matter.

Councillor Steve Fritchley duly seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Steve Fritchley
RESOLVED that previous Council representations to HM Government be noted and that position is reaffirmed.

(Chief Executive Officer)

b) The following motion was submitted for consideration by Councillor Tricia Clough:

This Council demonstrates support for all women born in the 1950s who have unfairly borne the burden of increases to the State Pension Age (SPA) by the Pensions Act of 1995 and 2011 by:-

i) Calling upon the Government to make fair traditional State Pensions arrangements for all women born in the 1950s, who have unfairly borne the burden if the increase to the State Pension Age (SPA) with lack of appropriate notification.

ii) Identifying a named person as a champion for those women affected by state pension changes

iii) Notifying any interested parties as to council events where they may participate in educating and advising women about state pension changes.”

3.8 million Women had significant pension changes imposed on them by the Pensions Acts of 1995 and 2011 with little or no personal notification of the changes. 6,100 of these women affected live in the Bolsover District. Some women received as little as two years’ notice of the increases to their state pension age. Many had no notification at all.

Within the Bolsover District there are many women living in hardship purely because of the decade they were born in and the fact that successive governments gave inadequate notice of changes to their state pension age, not once but twice. Some women had already left the Labour Market, caring for elderly relatives or grandchildren – the sandwich generation. Others had been made redundant. Almost all were expecting their pension at 60. Instead they have had up to six years extra added which in real monetary terms means a loss of £48,000.

Of those who continue to work, many struggle mentally and physically. Some suffer discrimination in the workplace and feel guilty that the younger generation would be better equipped to carry out their roles. Others struggle to find employment and the proposition that there would be apprenticeships for women of this generation has proved nonsensical. Many women were ineligible for Job Seekers’ allowance so had to watch their hard-earned savings dwindle away. At least one women in this district left work to care for her terminally-ill husband. After his death she attempted a Job Seekers’ scheme. It was physically too demanding so she had to sell the family home quickly in order to survive.

COUNCIL

We know that very little information was available for 1950's women when the 1995 Act was passed. A few small articles in financial papers and the occasional news item. As a full time worker with a husband, teenage daughter, four foster children, numerous pigs, piglets, chickens and pets, my reading matter was 'Bob the Builder' and I was tucked up in bed well before the '9 O' Clock News'. Letters did not go out until 2010 and then only for a small cohort. Following the 2011 Act more letters were sent but not to all affected. Women MPs from both sides of the house have stated they received no letter. Judges and lawyers were unaware as divorce settlements were agreed on the pension age being 60. Even the DWP's own website proclaimed the same until 1950s women pointed out the error.

These women have worked hard and contributed positively to society. They paid their taxes and national insurance with the expectation that they would be financially secure when reaching 60. It is not the pension age itself that is in dispute – it is widely accepted that women and men should retire at the same time (although one could argue that this generation who sought equality rarely received it in monetary terms). The issue here is that the rise in the women's state pension age has been too rapid. It has happened without sufficient notice being given to the women affected, leaving them with no time to make alternative arrangements.

We are now in a situation where one woman, through no fault of her own is having to walk five miles each way to access a computer to complete job applications. No bus pass until you reach State Pension age now. Another walks a similar distance on a Saturday to purchase the 10p reduced loaves to keep her going. Across the country there are women living in vans being unable to pay rent. And, of course, there are those who never received a penny of their pension. My friend Sue, a nurse for forty years contracted motor neurone disease. She campaigned for her pension tapping on her keyboard right until her final days.

But it is not only the women that are affected. It goes across the generations. Listen to these words from Heather: - "My mum was a WASPI woman. She died in January at the age of 62.

In the years before she died she had to fight for ESA and PIP as though she was a scrounger and didn't deserve the air she breathed. It took a huge toll on her mental health. She lived in real poverty and when she was dying in a hospice bed the main thing she was worried about was who was going to pay for it (thanks St Cuthbert's Hospice and out NHS).

I'll never forget the battles she had to fight." On 3rd October 2019, one group of 1950s women were unsuccessful in their High Court Judicial Review. (Case no: CO/3174/2018) In their conclusion, the judges wrote 'We are saddened by the stories we read in the evidence lodged by the Claimants. But our role as judges in this case is limited. There is no basis for concluding that the policy choices reflected in this legislation were not for the Government. We are satisfied that they were. In any event they were approved by Parliament. The wider issues raised by the Claimants, about whether these choices were right or wrong or good or bad, are not for us; they are for the members of the public and their elected representatives'

So in summary, I ask Council, as elected representatives, to support the Motion for all 1950s women grotesquely disadvantaged by the 1995 and 2011 Pension Acts.

COUNCIL

Councillor Anne Clarke duly seconded the motion, and conveyed her belief that Iain Duncan Smith (when he was Secretary of State for Work and Pensions) and others in Central Government had refused to engage with women about their state pension ages. She added that because many women in the UK born in the 1950s were sometimes having to fund their own children and parents at the same time, the pension changes were an unfair burden on them. She reported that many women in the UK born in the 1950s had died waiting for their state pension because of the changes, and homelessness amongst the over 60s had increased in that time by 39%.

Councillor Anne Clarke felt that the submitted motion was a great opportunity for the Council to follow the examples of Unison and CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) by supporting all of the women affected by the state pension changes.

Councillor Peter Roberts reported that Central Government's estimated figure to completely reverse the state pension age changes made in 1995 and 2011 was £215 billion, which he felt would be a significant amount for them to spend. He expressed his belief that the motion should include more mention of men's state pension changes, because its focus on women could amount to inequality.

Councillor Janet Tait made reference to the campaign against the changes by WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality), and added that women born in the 1950s were at a significant disadvantage because they were not given any notice of the changes by Central Government.

Councillor Tricia Clough expressed her belief that women's state pensions were well below men's state pensions, and the actions of Central Government in recent years to change pension ages had added six additional years to the age that some women could claim, whilst men of the same age only had one additional year. She explained that this was why the motion was aimed at women in particular.

Moved by Councillor Tricia Clough and seconded by Councillor Anne Clarke

RESOLVED

- i) To call upon the Government to make fair traditional State Pensions arrangements for all women born in the 1950s, who have unfairly borne the burden of the increase to the State Pension Age (SPA) with lack of appropriate notification.
- ii) To identify a named person as a champion for those women affected by state pension changes
- iii) To notify any interested parties as to council events where they may participate in educating and advising women about state pension changes.

(Chief Executive Officer)

c) The following motion was submitted for consideration by Councillor Steve Fritchley:

That the Council adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism which is as follows:-

"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish

COUNCIL

or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

The Leader spoke on his motion further, believing that adopting this definition of antisemitism would be a fitting tribute to every person who lost their lives as part of World War II, and all other wars as well.

Councillor Duncan McGregor duly seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

Moved by Councillor Steve Fritchley and seconded by Councillor Duncan McGregor
RESOLVED the working definition of Anti-Semitism be adopted.

(Monitoring Officer)

d) *The following motion was submitted for consideration by Councillor James Watson:*

I move that from 1 December 2019 onwards, it is resolved that for any day where any member development and/or mandatory Councillor training sessions has scheduled to commence no earlier than 6:30pm on that day.

Councillor Allan Bailey duly seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor James Watson spoke on his motion further, explaining its relationship to another motion he submitted to Council on 17th July 2019, which proposed that from the municipal year 2020/21 onwards, some Council and Standing Committee meetings be scheduled to begin from 6.30 p.m. That motion was amended and carried to instead read “that Council consider [meetings after 6.30 p.m.] in advance of the next electoral cycle commencing in 2023.”

Councillor James Watson explained that his motion on 17th July 2019 was submitted with the purpose of recognising Members who were in full-time or part-time employment beyond their Council work. He added that in his opinion, the reason the Members of the Labour Group did not vote for that motion at the 17th July 2019 Council meeting was because they had independent incomes and property portfolios, so were not concerned about honouring work commitments.

The Chair informed Councillor James Watson that it was inappropriate to refer to the personal business of individual Members. Councillor James Watson acknowledged the Chair’s advice, but wished it to be recorded in the minutes that he had made reference to a Group rather than an individual.

Councillor James Watson explained his reasons for submitting the current motion. He believed that Member development sessions and Member training events should be scheduled later to allow as many Members to attend them as possible, and not giving them the opportunity would mean some Members weren’t given vital guidance and advice relating to the Code of Conduct.

On being put to the vote, the motion was not carried.

COUNCIL

e) The following motion was submitted for consideration by Councillor Nick Clarke:

I move that Bolsover District Council resolves:

To require all public firework displays within the District boundaries to be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people.

To write to the Government urging them to legislate that the law be changed to only allow the sale of fireworks to operators of licensed displays.

To actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people - including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks.

To write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90db for those sold to the public for private displays.

To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock 'quieter' fireworks for public display.

To tighten up the restriction of sales of fireworks in the run up to Bonfire Night to under 18 year olds and to discourage proxy sales of fireworks for those under the age of 18.

Councillor Tom Kirkham duly seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

AMENDMENT

Councillor Andrew Joesbury proposed an amendment to the motion to add a new paragraph to the end, reading: "To write to the Government for a blanket ban on all firework sales to private individuals."

Councillor Andrew Joesbury spoke on his amendment, believing that there were multiple fire incidents all over the country on every Bonfire Night, and he felt the Government had done little to address it.

Councillor Dan Salt duly seconded the amendment.

Councillor Anne Clarke believed it was important to consider the effect fireworks could have on veterans who might have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. She added that fireworks can also have a significant impact on pets.

Councillor Duncan McGregor advised that the second resolution within the original motion ("To write to the Government urging them to legislate that the law be changed to only allow the sale of fireworks to operators of licensed displays") already covered Councillor Andrew Joesbury's amendment. Councillor Andrew Joesbury, with the agreement of the seconder Councillor Dan Salt agreed to withdraw the amendment.

ORIGINAL MOTION

On being put to the vote, the original motion was carried.

COUNCIL

RESOLVED that

- i) all public firework displays within the District boundaries to be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people.
- ii) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to write to the Government urging them to legislate that the law be changed to only allow the sale of fireworks to operators of licensed displays.
- iii) a public awareness campaign be actively promoted about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people – including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks.
- iv) the Chief Executive be requested to write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90db for those sold to the public for private displays.
- v) local suppliers of fireworks be encouraged to stock ‘quieter’ fireworks for public display.
- vi) the Authority tighten up the restriction of sales of fireworks in the run up to Bonfire Night to under 18 year olds and to discourage proxy sales of fireworks for those under the age of 18.

(Chief Executive Officer)

412 REPORTS ON URGENCY DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE EXECUTIVE

When appropriate, meetings of Council can receive a report from the Executive detailing any Key Decisions taken under special urgency provisions or Key Decisions exempt from Call-in.

There were no urgency decisions to report to this meeting of Council.

413 RECOMMENDED ITEMS

Change to the Constitution – Joint Employment and Appeals Committee – Bolsover only appointments

The Council gave consideration to a mid-year change to the Constitution in relation to Member panels for interviewing and appointing Bolsover only members of SAMT.

A report had been submitted to the Standards Committee on the 23rd September 2019 in relation to the options for the interview panel and the recommendations were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. It was suggested by Standards Committee that the following wording be added to the JEAC Terms of Reference for Bolsover only posts.

“Where the Authority determines to recruit to a Head of Service or Director post outside the Strategic Alliance or determines to take any disciplinary action in relation to such a post the Member panel will be called the Employment and Appeals Committee and will

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comprise the four Members of the JEAC, and, where there are two Leaders of the Opposition of groups of equal size, both Leaders of the Opposition will be Members of the Employment and Appeals Committee – increasing the size of the Committee to 5.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury

RESOLVED that the recommendations from the Standards Committee to amend the Terms of Reference for the Joint Employment and Appeals Committee for Bolsover only posts be approved.

(Monitoring Officer)

414 CHANGE OF COMMITTEE SEATS

The Chair explained a proposal to agree the replacement of Councillor Janet Tait by Councillor Rita Turner on the General Licensing Committee and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committees.

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Mary Dooley.

RESOLVED that Councillor Rita Turner be replaced by Councillor Janet Tait on the General Licensing Committee and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committees.

(Governance Manager)

415 LGPS PENSIONS DISCRETIONS 2019

A series of changes had been made to the discretions available to the Local Government Pensions Scheme (LGPS), which came into effect from 1st April 2014. Under the LGPS regulations, employers were required to formulate, publish and keep under a review a policy statement in relation to the exercise of a number of discretions that were available. Members gave consideration to a report which proposed policy and approach on these discretions.

It was noted that the Councils proposed position was based on the discretions approved by Derbyshire County Council, and attached, at Appendix 1 to the report, was a list of discretions for which employers must consider in a policy statement under the scheme.

Having considered the proposals put, Members agreed the publication of the Councils position.

Moved by Councillor Duncan McGregor and seconded by Councillor Steve Fritchley.

RESOLVED that the policy and approach on the discretions the Council had to make be published in respect of its discretions under the LGPS.

(Section 151 Officer)

416 REDUCTION IN DEBT CHARGES THROUGH USE OF RESERVES

Councillor Clive Moesby presented a report proposing that that Council agree to re-finance the Capital Programme from reserves of £3.937m rather than borrowing. He explained how this would make substantial savings through reduced debt charges.

COUNCIL

Councillor Graham Parkin enquired if the interest rate on the reserves was less or more favourable than the cost for borrowing. The Section 151 Officer explained that the rates were immaterial as the money in question would not go out of the Authority. If it did go out of the Council, the interest rate would be whatever the base rate was at that time.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Steve Fritchley.

RESOLVED that the Council re-finances the Capital Programme from reserves of £3.937m rather than borrowing, to make substantial savings through reduced debt charges.

(Section 151 Officer)

417 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Duncan McGregor

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the stated Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and it is not in the public interest for that to be revealed. [The category of exempt information is stated after each Minute].

418 HEAD OF SERVICE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

Members gave consideration to a report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources which sought approval to establish the post of Head of Service – Finance and Resources (including S151 statutory responsibility) for Bolsover District Council, to disestablish the Joint Head of Service – Finance and Resources post and also Chief Accountants post and to appoint a dedicated Head of Service – Finance and Resources (including S151 statutory responsibility) for Bolsover District Council.

Members gave consideration to the report and the rationale detailed within.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Steve Fritchley

RESOLVED that

- 1) the post of Head of Service – Finance and Resources (including S151 statutory responsibility) for Bolsover District Council be established
- 2) both posts of Joint Head of Service – Finance and Resources and Chief Accountant be disestablished and
- 3) Theresa Fletcher be appointed as Head of Service – Finance and Resources (including S151 statutory responsibility) for Bolsover District Council.

(Chief Executive Officer)

(**Recorded Vote:** Councillor James Watson – Abstention)

COUNCIL

419 PROPOSED ADDITION TO MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

At its September meeting the Executive approved to increase capacity within the Senior Management Team by adding a Bolsover only Director of Development and a Bolsover only Assistant Director of Development to the Bolsover establishment. Members gave consideration to the report to formally establish these two positions to ratify the interview process and to make the formal appointments as a result of recent recruitment exercises. In addition, the report requested to disestablish the post of the Joint Head of Property and Estates.

Having considered the content of the report Members were satisfied to make the following agreements:

Moved by Councillor Steve Fritchley and seconded by Councillor Duncan McGregor

RESOLVED that

- 1) the posts of Director of Development and Assistant Director of Development as outlined in the appendices to the report and on the terms and conditions outlined within the Leaders report to Executive be established,
- 2) the appointment of the panel to interview the Director of Development be ratified as set out within the report,
- 3) the appointment of the panel to interview the Assistant Director of Development be ratified as set out within the report,
- 4) that Grant Galloway be appointed to the post of Director of Development for Bolsover District Council,
- 5) that Chris Fridlington be appointed to the post of Assistant Director of Development for Bolsover District Council; and
- 6) the post of Joint Head of Property and Estates be disestablished.

(Chief Executive Officer)

(Recorded Vote: Councillor James Watson – Abstention)

420 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL - WHITWELL CLUSTER - B@HOME FRAMEWORK

At the commencement of the meeting it was resolved that the Development Proposal – Whitwell Cluster – B@Home Framework be deferred to a future meeting of Council.

The meeting concluded at 10:59 hours.

Hansard extract

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-02/debates/F982D230-02C0-4A8B-8A60-D0C51F952944/Fireworks>

Fireworks

Volume 683: debated on Monday 2 November 2020

Fireworks

[Relevant documents: First Report of the Petitions Committee, Session 2019, Fireworks, HC 103, and First Special Report of the Petitions Committee, Session 2019–21, Fireworks: Government Response to the Committee’s First Report of Session 2019, HC 242.]

16:30:00

David Mundell (in the Chair)

I remind hon. Members that there have been some changes to normal practice in order to support the new call list system and to ensure that social distancing can be respected. Members should sanitise their microphones using the cleaning materials provided before they use them and respect the one-way system around the room. Members should speak only from the horseshoe, and may speak only if they are on the call list. This applies even if debates are under-subscribed. Members cannot join the debate if they are not on the call list. Members are not expected to remain for the wind-ups, and there is less of an expectation that they will stay for the two speeches after they have spoken. This is to help to manage attendance in the room. Members may wish to stay beyond their speech, but should be aware that in doing so, they may be preventing Members in the Public Gallery from moving to a seat on the horseshoe.

16:31:00

Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab)

I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petition 276425, relating to the sale of fireworks.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Mundell, and an honour to lead for the Petitions Committee on this debate.

Once again, we are having this debate in the run-up to 5 November, when we mark the foiling of the gunpowder plot in 1605. As we speak, we are only metres away from where Guy Fawkes tried to blow up the Palace of Westminster and kill King James I. First, I thank Elizabeth Harden, who set up this petition, and the people who have signed it and other petitions like it over many years. Many colleagues have requested a chance to speak in this important debate, but due to the restrictions on numbers in Westminster Hall and other proceedings, they are unable to make their constituents' voices heard. I stand here to represent many of their views.

This is an emotive subject, and I have been contacted by hundreds of people about it. No one can deny that a well organised firework display is something that a lot of people look forward to as the nights draw in, but the distress and danger that fireworks can cause to people with disabilities or health conditions, and to small children, wild animals and pets, must be considered throughout this debate. Marj Williams, my constituent and friend from the village where I live, Pontarddulais, has emailed me to express her frustrations about Guy Fawkes night and to suggest that, if we cannot stop the sale of fireworks altogether, they be sold for licensed events only, rather than to the general public, and that such events be restricted to one night only, not four or five consecutive nights.

I am sure all MPs have received emails from constituents outlining the terrible effect of unplanned fireworks being set off, often as early as October. I am afraid that this year, as we are living through the second wave of coronavirus, the consequences of the sale of fireworks and the increase in home displays will be the worst ever. We have rightly seen organised displays cancelled, but not a ban on the sale of fireworks to the general public. Some responsible outlets and supermarkets have made the decision not to sell fireworks for themselves, but the fact that the sale of fireworks has continued means that there has been a rise in firework-related antisocial behaviour, and there will be, I am afraid, more accidents.

The figures on injuries caused by fireworks are stark. There were nearly 2,000 visits to A&E linked to fireworks in 2018-19. In 2018, 4,436 individuals attended A&E because of an injury caused by a firework. NHS England

states that in the past five years there have been almost 1,000 hospital admissions related to the discharge of a firework. Interestingly, in 2019, some 35,000 people sought advice from the nhs.uk website on how to treat burns and scalds; the figure peaked at more than 2,800 visits on 4 November.

What can we expect this year, when organised displays will not be happening? It is bound to lead to an increase in demand on emergency services at a time when we should be protecting our NHS. It is just irresponsible. How can we morally justify the sale of fireworks in a pandemic? I am not alone in my concerns about the impact of an increase in home displays on or around 5 November on the emergency services and the NHS.

Of course, nobody plans to have an accident, but when individuals, however experienced with fireworks, take any risk with them, there is a direct effect on services that are already under a huge burden and strain. Under normal circumstances, at this time of year, especially on 5 November, accident and emergency departments are under extreme pressure. The facts are the facts: fireworks are potentially very dangerous. If we want to be seen to be acting responsibly, the Government should ban the sale of fireworks, especially this year.

These safety concerns extend to wildlife and our natural spaces. Without safeguards and professional organisation, the risk of damage to land, livestock and wildlife from errant fireworks will be hugely increased. In my constituency, a couple of years ago, I saw a horse lose its life from the stress caused by fireworks continually going off. That is just unacceptable.

There are solutions to this ongoing issue. The petitions inquiry gave three recommendations to the Government. The first is that we create a permit scheme, run by local authorities, which would limit the number of firework displays in an area. The second is that we create a national awareness scheme about the responsible use of fireworks and their impact on veterans and those with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab)

Up and down the country, our constituencies are starting to sound like war zones. My constituent, Richard Smith, a veteran who has given so much to this country, suffers particularly acutely at this time of year. He is an advocate for organised, licensed events, as well as tougher penalties, such as fixed-penalty notices. I would like to hear the Minister's response to that suggestion. I thank my hon. Friend for securing such an important debate.

Tonia Antoniazzi

I thank my hon. Friend for his comments about his constituent, because this issue is of great concern. The noise fireworks give off when they are used, not only in displays, frightens people. It is really quite unacceptable. That is why the call for fixed-penalty notices is important.

Thirdly, we need to rethink how fireworks are packaged, so that we limit their appeal and availability to children, and to others who behave badly and do not respect them. There is also a silent fireworks campaign, started by councillors in Pembrey and Burry Port, a town near my Gower constituency. The campaign suggests that if the sale of fireworks to the general public is to continue, those fireworks should be silent, so as to reduce antisocial disturbance to residents, pets and ex-armed forces personnel, of whom we have spoken.

Is it really beyond the wit of man to implement these recommendations, and to protect the most vulnerable in our communities and our pets and animals, who have no voice in this important matter? One need only look at social media to see the impact on animals at home whenever fireworks are set off, whatever the occasion, throughout the year. It is our responsibility, as Members of Parliament, and the responsibility of the Government to ensure that people and pets do not suffer. The Government's response to the Petitions Committee inquiry was wholly inadequate. I hope that the Minister will take on board the strength of feeling about this issue in his response.

16:39:00

Elliot Colburn (Carshalton and Wallington) (Con)

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Mundell. I am a member of the Petitions Committee, and this is an excellent opportunity for us to share the petitioners' concerns in Parliament. I thank the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for her opening remarks.

I also thank the 338 Carshalton and Wallington residents who signed the petition, the many more who sent me emails about it, and those who took part in my snap Facebook poll overnight on this issue, which was prompted, funnily enough, by my arriving home quite late to hear fireworks being set off. I will say a bit more about that later. Just before rising to speak, I checked the online poll, in which I asked my constituents what they think about the petition, and no fewer than 680

said that they would like a total ban on the sale of fireworks or at least some restriction, whereas 210 said that they do not think change is necessary, and they would not be happy to see any restrictions on the sale of fireworks, so there was quite a healthy majority for the first option.

I totally agree with the hon. Lady's opening remarks. When I was growing up, there was many a wonderful firework display on Guy Fawkes night in my Carshalton and Wallington constituency. For example, local scout groups put on displays—I was a member of the 6th Carshalton scout group—and the Round Table Carshalton fireworks night takes place every year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Paul Scully)

indicated assent.

Elliot Colburn

The Minister is nodding; he used to live next to the park where that display takes place, so he knows it very well. The Round Table does a fantastic job and puts on a great event.

However, I have heard from many constituents tales of what can happen when fireworks go off. I have also heard the concerns of various organisations, particularly animal charities. Animals are one of the primary reasons why people have concerns about the general sale of fireworks. Speaking from personal experience, my older golden retriever, Willow, is quite frightened of fireworks and cannot settle down when she hears them going off. It is upsetting to see her in that state.

There have also been concerns about antisocial behaviour. I mentioned that I heard fireworks going off last night, and this morning it came to my attention that it is rumoured—I have not had confirmation from the police yet—that a group of young people were letting off fireworks in the pedestrianised Wallington Square, which caused significant damage, as well as distress to the residents living near the high street. That behaviour is not only a nuisance but highly dangerous, as the hon. Member for Gower highlighted clearly.

A number of solutions to this ongoing issue have been suggested, both in the petition and by residents who have contacted me, and I want to touch on a few of them. The first, and perhaps the most extreme, is a total ban on the sale of

fireworks in the United Kingdom, which would essentially bring an end to firework displays in the UK. I think that is a bit too heavy handed, and I am sure we can find a more balanced approach. There is a range of other suggestions, especially to do with licencing, including the idea that we sell fireworks only to those holding formal events, that we regulate noise, and that we limit the dates on which fireworks can be set off. The Government will have considered those suggestions in their call for evidence in 2018, and the petition calls for some of those measures to be taken.

Colleagues will want to explore those options in more detail, so to allow them to speak, I will draw my remarks to a close. The Government are considering evidence that they started to collect in 2018, and are looking at the Scottish Government's consultation and the Petitions Committee's inquiry. I look forward to seeing what they have to say in response to those two pieces of work. Ultimately, I hope that they can find a balanced approach that allows us to continue to enjoy these events, particularly on Guy Fawkes night, and ensures that we address the concerns that our constituents have raised.

16:44:00

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP)

It is nice to see you in the Chair, and to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Mundell, seeing as you are my constituency neighbour.

I thank the Petitions Committee and Elizabeth Harden for the petition, the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi), and of course the 845 people in my constituency of East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow who took the time to sign it. It is an extremely important petition; I stand to be corrected, but I think it is the one that the highest number of my constituents has signed.

It is extremely important that we consider the impact on our NHS of inadvertent injuries to children during Guy Fawkes night celebrations, and the impact on assistance dogs and those with disabilities. I declare an interest as the chair of the all-party parliamentary group for disability. I also have to declare an interest as the mother of Rossi, my little French bulldog, who becomes extremely unsettled—almost terrified—every year at this time, when he hears the loud bangs. He takes to hiding under my bed. Rossi is the mascot on the Twitter page of the all-party parliamentary group on dog advisory welfare, which I chair. I thank everyone who has been in touch with me in relation to those roles, as well as constituents who have lodged their concerns with me ahead of today's debate.

It is clear that easy access to fireworks and poor enforcement of legislation is having a detrimental impact on both domestic and wild animals, and particularly pet dogs. I have received briefings from the Dogs Trust, Cats Protection, Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, Blue Cross, the Kennel Club and the British Veterinary Association, to name but a few organisations that are concerned about the impact of fireworks and feel that it is important that we have this debate.

The Dogs Trust and the Blue Cross call for further restrictions on the sale of fireworks. They would limit them to licensed, organised public events only, at certain times of the year. They say that quieter fireworks are not an absolute solution to the problem, as close proximity and prolonged exposure can have a negative impact on the welfare of animals. However, lower-decibel fireworks should be used to reduce the number of animals affected.

Cats Protection, Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, and the British Veterinary Association call for a review of fireworks legislation and its impact on animal welfare, with a view to introducing further restrictions on the use of fireworks. In a 2018 Dogs Trust survey of 2,000 members of the public, 89% of respondents agreed that pets are distressed by fireworks; 79% said that they tried to keep their pets inside to limit that distress; and over 50% believed that fireworks should be restricted to official displays.

A Blue Cross survey found that 70% of UK pets were affected by fireworks. Dogs topped the list at 64%; they were followed by cats at 42% and horses at 17%. Owners reported their pets trembling with fear and being physically sick, while 45% said the unexpected bangs and noises made their pets hide away for hours, just like my Rossi. Some 21% said that their pets were scared to go outdoors for days afterwards; that shows the long-term impact of firework displays.

I note an article about Brody, a little dog who lost his ear after malicious teenagers set off fireworks next to his head. A grandmother had to chase them away. He was eventually found hiding down a manhole with maggots in his wound. Thankfully, he was rescued and taken to safety. The impact of fireworks cannot be underestimated.

Peter Egan, a patron of the all-party parliamentary group on dog advisory welfare, sent me his views ahead of today's debate:

“Fireworks are terrible for animals. Many dogs and cats are simply terrified, not least because of their acute hearing and sense of smell, which is so much more sensitive than ours.”

Wildlife suffering is rarely discussed, but he recalls the terrible case of the Bideford starling roost; startled birds were reported to have been injured and killed after flying into buildings and the river, and were even trampled to death. He said there is also a significant risk of terrible physical injuries to people; he himself was hit by a firework when he was just nine, and still has the scar. Peter says that fireworks are simply a waste of money and that he would prefer it if people donated their firework money to the NHS, particularly this year.

Ellen Watson, a House of Commons Clerk, has spoken on social media about how she was left vulnerable when her guide dog Skipp was terrified by fireworks. Ellen’s Twitter plea was simple and clear, and her words encapsulate the feelings of people across the UK:

“Not only do fireworks cause extreme distress for dogs & humans, they pose risk to disabled ppls safety. This has to stop. Fireworks NEED to be regulated.”

She added:

“Dogs are often life changing or life saving for people (especially assistance dogs).”

I will touch briefly on the impact on those who have post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly our veterans—I declare an interest as my husband is a veteran. We really cannot underestimate that issue, either, and, particularly at this time of year, when remembrance events are upon us, we must consider the impact on our veteran community. Kerry Snuggs, a former police officer, has post-traumatic stress disorder and, like veterans, she has spoken about the impact of fireworks night:

“Fireworks night is a trigger for many. Those who have served in armed forces and emergency services will have seen so many traumatic incidents that at any point the brain may just say enough is enough. Please consider those suffering with PTSD this fireworks day”.

To conclude, I thank my constituents once again. As I have said, this is an extremely important and acute issue for them, and they have been in touch with me about it. They feel strongly that the licensing and limiting of public firework sales and use can help people enjoy the spectacle of firework shows, while facilitating compassionate action for families who are affected by firework stress, carers of people with disabilities, veterans with PTSD and the millions of us who own dogs, cats and other companionship animals. Please, let us look seriously at this issue and at the recommendations of the Petitions Committee, and think about how to take them forward. We are here to represent the public, whose views we should consider when legislating on the matter. I say to the public: please, do not be a firework fiend this year. Think about our NHS, the animals that are affected, and those with disabilities and PTSD.

16:52:00

Christian Wakeford (Bury South) (Con)

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Mundell. I thank the Petitions Committee and the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for securing the debate, as well as the 777 constituents of mine who signed the petition.

One of those constituents, Mr Cohen, has raised the issue with me several times. I am incredibly sympathetic to his concerns, and echo his calls for greater protections and regulation. Although many of us enjoy organised firework displays on bonfire night and at the new year, that has unfortunately led to fireworks being set off, for one cause or another, throughout the year.

Just last Friday, as I was sat in my office in the early hours of the evening, fireworks were going off the middle of Radcliffe, with no real celebrations going on—it was just antisocial behaviour, which we clearly need to tackle. While sat in this debate, I have received another complaint about fireworks being set off in Prestwich at half-past 5 in the morning. That highlights the real concerns that many residents have. Fireworks are set off at all hours and in all locations.

Fireworks cause real problems and fear for pet owners, veterans, those who suffer from dementia, and parents—many of us included—of young children. My daughter Lavinia was spooked by fireworks as I was putting her to bed recently, on one of the few nights when I am not in this place and get to spend with her. She was so spooked that rather than her going through her usual bedtime

routine, I had to nurse her to sleep for more than an hour, while she clung to me, cuddling, because she could not get to sleep as she was so worried about the loud noises.

For pet owners, that problem is compounded, because they cannot explain to their animals what is going on. The unpredictable nature of fireworks makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for animals to acclimatise to them. We absolutely should do more to prevent the use of fireworks outside organised displays for events such as Diwali, Chinese new year, bonfire night and new year. Enforcement is clearly not possible. By the time the police get to a location where fireworks are being set off, the perpetrators have absconded

There are, however, ways to tackle illegal firework use, which the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has recommended. We can reduce the time that retailers can sell fireworks to specific dates to fit around the previously mentioned events. We can look at reducing the noise level of fireworks to 90 decibels, as has been recommended, to assist in mitigating the distress to vulnerable groups and animals. The licensing of all public firework displays by their local authority would go a long way to tackling the issue. I would go further and push for all fireworks to be available only for use in licensed public displays, and I would suggest a ban on all pop-up shops selling fireworks.

This is not a bid to reduce the public's enjoyment, but to protect the health and wellbeing of the nation's pets and those most likely to suffer from the inappropriate and illegal use of fireworks. The laws that have been in place for many years are clearly insufficient to address these concerns and need to be updated to protect the most vulnerable, while still allowing licensed public events for the nation to enjoy. The Government must do more to tackle these concerns and the fear experienced by many.

Today's debate clearly shows that although we might argue in the Chamber and Westminster Hall, there is a wide level of cross-party support to try to tackle these issues. Again, I commend the hon. Member for Gower for securing this debate and I am in complete agreement with what she said. I hope the Minister is listening and will take our concerns on board to make sure that we can enjoy such events in a compassionate way, as the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) has said.

16:57:00

Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab)

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for so ably introducing this debate, and I am sorry that I missed her introduction. It is a privilege to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Mundell. I rise to speak on behalf of the 636 people in my constituency of Pontypridd who signed the petition calling for a ban on the sale of fireworks to the general public. This is not the first time the issue has been discussed in this place. Numerous petitions have argued for the greater regulation of fireworks, and yet the Government fail to act and to take the issue seriously.

A few weeks ago, I asked the Leader of the House for a debate to discuss the need for the greater regulation of fireworks. I raised concerns about the impact of fireworks on people with mental illness and on animals and the environment. In a typically dismissive fashion, he said:

“No, I am sorry, but I won’t. I think the regulations are about right and fireworks are fun.”—[Official Report, 15 October 2020; Vol. 682, c. 540.]

I want to use this opportunity to urge the Government once again to take the issue seriously. Don’t get me wrong—I love fireworks and I always have. I even had an organised display at my wedding on new year’s eve. I love bonfire night, too. There is something special about being wrapped up warm in hats, scarves and gloves, with the smell in the air, a hotdog in one hand and a toffee apple in the other, watching the magic of fire and colours light up the night sky to the chorus of oohs and aahs. But like everything special, fireworks should be kept for the once a year celebrations of bonfire night and new year’s eve, and not used as a weapon to terrorise communities throughout the months of October, November and December.

Every year this debate is held and every year hundreds of thousands of people sign a petition such as the one we are debating today, but this year is different for a host of reasons. The coronavirus pandemic means that, sadly, people will not be able to join together to watch organised firework displays as usual. There have been some reports that that is leading to an increase in the number of private firework displays. The Kennel Club has reported that up to 40% of people between the ages of 16 and 34 are planning a private backyard display. We know that many animals, both domestic pets and wild animals, find fireworks terrifying, with some owners reporting that their pets have to be sedated when fireworks are going off. Why on earth should pet owners effectively have to drug their animals to calm them or reduce anxiety?

The noise from fireworks has a significant effect not only on animals, but on people, too. For elderly people or those with mental health problems such as PTSD, fireworks are genuinely distressing. They can trigger flashbacks and leave elderly people terrified to even leave their homes, and private backyard displays can also, tragically, be dangerous. I know only too well the extent of it. When I was younger we had fireworks in my back garden and my father was badly burnt by a rogue sparkler. I am glad to say that we managed to deal with it at home; it was not very serious. All he lost was a T-shirt, but he still has the scar to tell his story. However, I know that for others the tale is not as easy.

Every year, we see horrible reports of people suffering life-changing injuries and burns, and even reports of deaths, when private firework displays go badly wrong. Fireworks are often associated with antisocial behaviour. There have been a number of incidents in south Wales recently where residents have reported young people throwing fireworks at animals and even directly at people. One woman reported that a firework was thrown at her car while she and her children were inside. I cannot imagine how terrifying that must have been, and the Government have a responsibility to do more to protect people from such horrible experiences.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to talk about the fantastic work that my own local authority of Rhondda Cynon Taf has been doing to draw attention to the issue. Unlike the Government, it takes this issue seriously and is conducting a review on the use of council land for firework displays.

There needs to be a public safety campaign on the use of fireworks. If the Government are not prepared to move towards allowing only organised displays, there are many other things that they could do to help keep people safe. If necessary, they could raise the age at which people can buy fireworks, they could restrict sales to certain times of the year, and they could empower councils and the police to take more action to tackle antisocial behaviour using fireworks. The Government urgently need to recognise the broad range of health and safety concerns that have been raised in this debate, and they must take action now before it is too late. Diolch, Mr Mundell.

17:01:00

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP)

It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Mundell, and to join colleagues for this annual debate on the harms that fireworks cause in many of our communities. I suppose that it is with a sense of some frustration that I stand here today,

because we have been having such debates for some years now and the Government's response is to continue to ignore the serious concerns that all of us are raising on a cross-party basis.

There are 414 signatures on the petition from constituents in Glasgow Central; the number of signatures has been reasonably consistent over many years. I continue to have concerns about fireworks raised with me again and again. The hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) said she started receiving complaints about fireworks in October. I think I can probably beat her, because I started receiving complaints in July, from residents in Pollokshields who live in Maxwell Square. They said that they

“typically hear a firework every day, always in broad daylight, usually mid-afternoon. At times, I have seen them exploding on the ground in the middle of Maxwell Square when the park is full of children or set off in the middle of the road.”

Obviously, it is hugely concerning that fireworks are being used in such a way when children are nearby.

Another person who also lives in Pollokshields emailed me in August to say that they had also found fireworks in the park nearby and had picked up the empty casings left behind. They said that the empty casings had very aggressive imagery; they were not for garden fireworks displays, but had pictures of people looking intimidating and wearing masks, as if they were about to use the fireworks in an aggressive way. In Pollokshields in 2018, that was what local residents found. Groups of people on the street were using fireworks against the police in an aggressive way—firing them and using them as weapons. That led me and First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, whose Scottish constituency this had happened in, to set up a taskforce in the area with local police, community groups, the fire brigade and trading standards officers from the council. We have worked incredibly hard over the intervening two years to bring together a community response in Pollokshields to try and stop this kind of thing from happening again.

I must pay tribute to the police—to Chief Inspector Ross Allan, Sergeant Cenny Smith and Inspector John Menzies—who have done a huge amount of work to make sure that people in Pollokshields are kept safe from fireworks. They have educated schoolchildren, they have sited a mobile police office in Pollokshields, they have organised additional foot patrols, and they are doing everything they can to try to bring together this community response. But they should not have to

do all that, because we should have the powers in Scotland to change the law to make sure that the impact of fireworks on communities is not felt in the way that it is.

For other residents of other parts of my constituency, fireworks are also a concern. Some are residents of the Templetons building, next to Glasgow Green. As you will know, Mr Mundell, Glasgow Green has a significant fireworks display every year—not this year, unfortunately, which is causing local residents a bit of extra concern. They fear that people will come to Glasgow Green and use fireworks there anyway, regardless of the social distancing requirements. Lisa Murray, who chairs the Verde residents association, has already seen this happening outside her building. What makes the situation worse is that this building is also affected by the cladding scandal, so she is incredibly worried that young people using fireworks irresponsibly in her neighbourhood will lead to the whole building going up in flames. They have had bin fires near their building because of fireworks being launched from bins, and residents are rightly scared.

A resident in the Calton wrote to me saying:

“I can no longer tolerate panic attacks every day and having to call mental health team due to break downs”—

because of the fireworks—

“teenagers in my area set fire to a mattress and started throwing fireworks into the fire they started...I am literally begging you please do something...each year things just get worse and worse.”

What does the Minister intend to do to keep that constituent safe from the irresponsible use of fireworks? A resident of Govanhill says:

“As you know, the Southside of Glasgow has suffered years of misery because of malicious use of fireworks. We started to hear them at the end of September this year, and now, on 15th October, my dog is terrified to leave home after dark. This will go on in my area until after New Year...I understand that a ban on sales to the general public can have unintended consequences, but as a chemistry teacher, I cannot understand why we allow high powered explosives to be placed in their hands, causing misery and injury.”

As my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) mentioned, this can have impacts on people with disabilities as well. The secretary of Shawlands and Strathbungo community council has written to say that she is aware of a firework being set off right next to a partially sighted person with a guide dog.

It is clear that people are not using fireworks responsibly and that more needs to be done. The Scottish Government held a consultation on this matter and got 16,000 responses, with almost all—some 94%—saying they would welcome increased controls on the sale of fireworks, while 87%, more than three quarters, said they would welcome a ban on the sale of fireworks. The figures are clear. Where this falls down is that there has been no substantial response from the UK Government to the Scottish Government's request for action. Back in 2018, I was told that a desktop review was being conducted by the Office for Product Safety and Standards, but that seems to have brought absolutely no results whatsoever. Just before I came over here, I received the response from the Minister that the Government do not have plans to bring forward additional legislative proposals on fireworks because a comprehensive regulatory framework is already in place, but we have heard from Members from all around the House, and from Members who are not here because of the social distancing restrictions, that this is completely inadequate. We hear year after year that the regulatory framework is not working.

Instead of fobbing off all our constituents, fobbing off the Scottish Government and fobbing off people who have genuine concerns about the impact on themselves, their pets and the wider community, will the Government devolve the relevant powers over fireworks to the Scottish Government, who have the evidence, the will and the understanding of this issue and want to proceed with it, so that my constituents can get a night's sleep?

17:08:00

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP)

I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for her comprehensive setting out of the problems and challenges we face with this issue. I am delighted to take part in this debate, but in doing so I have a sense of déjà vu all over again. I have spoken several times on the issue of fireworks on behalf of my constituents since 2015. My view is, has always been and will continue to be that the sale of fireworks should be restricted to those with a licence to deliver organised community displays. That view is widely held across

Parliament and the UK, and during the restrictions that we are all enduring because of covid-19, it is more important than ever.

As is always the case in these debates, no one has argued, and no one would seek to argue, that, when used correctly, fireworks are not an enjoyable spectacle. In normal times, some 10 million people across the UK each year see fireworks as a feature in big events in November, for weddings and in all sorts of other celebrations throughout the year. Anyone fortunate enough to have attended such an event will no doubt say that it was indeed a marvellous spectacle. However, we also need to take account of the alarm, distress, danger and anxiety that fireworks far too often cause for too many people and animals, and the disruption they cause to communities when purchased and used irresponsibly by individuals. We have heard much about that from Members from different parties.

We have also heard a lot about the accidents and injuries caused by fireworks, which are very sobering. We are all aware of the increased pressure that accidents associated with fireworks bring to bear on our public services in normal times; of course, we are not in normal times this year. Covid-19 has meant that it has been necessary for community firework displays to be cancelled across the United Kingdom, but that creates a problem. There are now genuine fears that personal use of fireworks will rise significantly this year, which is likely to lead to more accidents and will therefore lead to more pressure on our NHS staff at the worst possible time, during a global health pandemic—crystallising further, if it were required, that selling fireworks to the general public is increasingly hard to justify. We know the increased pressure that accidents cause in normal times, and this is a perfect opportunity for the Minister to do something now.

Every year, from October to January, we hear, as we have heard again today, from constituents who are disrupted and plagued by the irresponsible use of fireworks at all hours of the day and night. Under cover of darkness, too many people set out deliberately to cause mischief, thinking that it is quite funny—that it is a bit of a wheeze—to set off fireworks near housing, where children or whole families are shaken from their slumbers, cats and dogs are scared half to death, and elderly people are driven into a state of fear and alarm. The effect on horses is well documented, with fireworks literally scaring them to death. We have also heard about the effect on veterans who might be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder following active service. This is a catalogue of unacceptable consequences of the free sale of fireworks.

Since 2017, we have been told that the creation of the Office for Product Safety and Standards would address many of the concerns about fireworks that we hear

every year. I am keen to hear of the progress that has been made on that issue, unless of course, and I hope I am wrong, the Minister is going to stand up today and tell us that nothing has been done since 2017. His predecessor told us that something would be done by the Office for Product Safety and Standards. Surely the Minister will not tell us that there has been no progress.

It is both ludicrous and frustrating that we do not have the power to do anything meaningful about the sale of fireworks in Scotland. This lack of control effectively leaves the Scottish Parliament footling at the edges of a problem, with no real power to properly address it despite the fact that, as we have heard, a recent consultation by the Scottish Government showed that 87% of people in Scotland would welcome a ban on the sale of fireworks to the public. I urge the Minister to carry out a similar consultation in England; I think he would find it quite informative.

Of course, the Scottish Parliament can restrict when fireworks can be set off, but we all know that irresponsible people who want to set off fireworks do not care about what time it is when they choose to set them off. They do not care whether it is legal to set off a firework at a certain time, and they do not care if it puts other people in a state of alarm or fear, or if it endangers their safety.

Fireworks cannot currently be sold to anyone under 18, but, as I have said several years in a row, so what? We know that children can get hold of them. We also know that people using fireworks irresponsibly are often perfectly entitled under the law, as it stands, to buy them. The irresponsible use of fireworks is not confined to those who get hold of them illegally, which is why more needs to be done to protect the elderly, people with pets, and a range of people in our communities.

Every single Member of Parliament will have had constituents telling them about the onslaught of fireworks, the profound effects that has had on their constituents' quality of life, and the effect on their pets, which undergo trembling fits and become withdrawn and very frightened. Of course, this cannot be prepared for, because the outbursts of fireworks come from nowhere when someone has fireworks and thinks they will have a wee bit of fun. Some people think it is a great idea to set off fireworks up tenement entrances, or in shared entry ways to flats, in the middle of the night.

The sale of fireworks is tightly restricted in the Republic of Ireland. In Northern Ireland, fireworks have long been subjected to some of the strictest laws in the world. Perhaps the Minister will tell us why the rest of the UK is denied similar or

greater protection. Even the United States, which has liberal gun laws, believes that restrictions on fireworks need to be strict.

The current situation in Scotland is nothing short of bizarre. The use of fireworks is a devolved matter, but the sale of fireworks is reserved. It does not take a genius to work out that unless the sale of fireworks—who can get their hands on them—can be tackled, there is no meaningful influence over who uses them, which makes it extremely difficult to police them. Our local environmental health and antisocial behaviour teams work hard to tackle the misuse of fireworks in our communities, but that is dealing with the consequences of the wide availability of fireworks rather than tackling the fear, alarm and distress, fire risks and safety hazards that they cause, which we have heard so much about. We need to tackle the real issue of the sale to individuals—the problem at source—and be mindful of the fact that fireworks are far more powerful and prevalent today than they were in the past.

Organised and licensed displays allow—in normal times—the many people who wish to enjoy fireworks to do so safely. Importantly, they allow local residents to plan ahead and make arrangements to protect their pets and get on with their lives. The Dogs Trust says that when public displays are organised, 93% of pet owners alter their plans during the display time to minimise their pet's trauma, which protects their pet's welfare.

On helping pet owners to prepare for the use of fireworks in their neighbourhood, we cannot do so—it is not possible—when fireworks are going off randomly with no warning. Therefore, the solution, as we have heard across the Chamber, is patently obvious to anybody who chooses to look. We need greater restrictions on the sale of fireworks, instead of selling them to all and sundry over 18 years old. Organised public firework displays are a safer option for all our communities, and would become the accepted and welcome norm.

I hope the Minister appreciates that it is time to ban the free sale of fireworks, except for public licensed displays. Such a ban would mean we could still enjoy fireworks in our communities, with new year displays and at celebrations such as weddings, but they would be out of the hands of those who, by accident or design, put the fear of God into our communities, shaking our children and whole families awake in their beds, alarming older people and causing suffering—perhaps even injury—to animals.

We need to get the balance right. No one is asking for fireworks to be banned altogether, but I urge the Minister to consider a consultation similar to the one

carried out in Scotland. Let us hear what the public think. They need to be part of the conversation, to inform how we proceed to improve the situation across the UK. Let us see a meaningful response to their concerns. I hope he will indicate his willingness to carry out such a consultation so that real progress can be made. If it cannot, give us the power in Scotland at least to protect our own communities.

17:18:00

Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test) (Lab)

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) on bringing forward the debate, which I think hon. Members across the Chamber will agree has been thorough and thoughtful, with the issues before us put squarely on the table, as they should be. Indeed, I look forward to hearing the Minister's reply to some of those points and suggestions, which I sincerely hope will be much more constructive than the response given to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) when she recently raised the issue with the Leader of the House.

E-petitions, including the one that has brought about this debate, have attracted nearly three quarters of a million signatures in just three years. As the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) pointed out, we have had three Westminster Hall debates on fireworks in recent years—it is more or less an annual debate—and today marks our fourth. That demonstrates not only the strength of public feeling on fireworks, but the extent to which there is a feeling that things are not really moving forward and that greater activity on the issue is needed. I very much thank the instigators of the petition and everyone who took the time to sign it, including, since we are talking about numbers, the 400 in my constituency.

Clearly, the recent announcement that we will have a national lockdown from Wednesday this week will have an impact on people's plans to celebrate bonfire night on 5 November. We have heard about that in the Chamber this afternoon and I will touch on it later. However, this debate is about far more than just this year; it is about what we do to improve the situation with fireworks well into the future.

I think we can all agree—indeed, we have agreed it around the Chamber this afternoon—that firework displays run by local groups and charities not only can provide a safe, predictable and organised space for firework displays, but can bring about a sense of place, promote community cohesion and raise funds to be

invested in good local causes. That is quintessentially the way to frame firework displays for the future.

The fireworks evidence base published last Friday afternoon by the Office for Product Safety and Standards tells us that, while approximately 10 million people now buy and use fireworks each year, 14 million of us attended a public display led by members of the British Pyrotechnists Association in 2019 alone. That shows that there is a big appetite for those public displays, with their safe and organised ways of letting off fireworks, and also for the standards of control that the British Pyrotechnists Association brings to those kinds of displays.

However, it is absolutely right for MPs to consider how we can better protect people, animals and the planet, not from the realities of firework use under those circumstances, but from the particular circumstances of firework misuse. We are lucky to have some of the world's most respected animal rights advocates operating here in the UK, including the RSPCA, the Kennel Club and Dogs Trust, for example. Those organisations are not calling for an outright ban on fireworks in the UK, but they do want to mitigate, where possible, the significant animal welfare concerns that have been raised this afternoon. There is broad consensus among those groups that the Government could and should be doing much more to protect animals.

Some of those organisations are calling for a ban on sales to private individuals in order to limit firework displays only to public events. We have had a big debate on that this afternoon, but it is well understood that loud, high-pitched and intermittent noise can adversely affect large proportions of animals, whose hearing is often much more sensitive than that of humans. We have heard of the effects that fireworks, set off in an inconsiderate and unpredictable way, can have on horses, cats, dogs and many kinds of animals.

There does not seem to be quite so much definitive evidence out there to call on regarding the effect that fireworks have on wildlife in general, but it is something that MPs on both sides of the House have also raised with the Government, and it is important that we get more information on the effect of fireworks on wildlife in the country. I urge the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to do some work on that and to see what results come forward.

We have also heard a lot about firework safety. We know that there were almost 2,000 A&E visits linked to fireworks in 2018-19, and more than 35,000 people had to seek advice on how to treat burns and scalds from the NHS website. Some of those injuries are serious and life-changing. Let us be

absolutely clear that fireworks, in the hands of people who are not trained to use them safely, can be very dangerous indeed.

Although the evidence available at this point is limited, it suggests that the majority of those firework-related injuries in the UK occur at private displays in homes or on the streets, rather than at organised displays. As colleagues have said, given the lockdown, it appears that organised displays will be replaced with greater use of fireworks in the home, because of the cancellation of organised events and social distancing. Blue Cross recently found that 25% of people in the UK are considering firework displays at home this year. I hope the Minister will update us on what measures he is taking to prepare local authorities and our fire services for these circumstances, as there will inevitably be a greater call on health services and public bodies to respond to that switch from public to private displays.

I want to raise a point that has not been discussed much this afternoon. Fireworks packaging and the paraphernalia that comes with them can fall to the ground and litter our green spaces. They are not biodegradable and can cause considerable environmental damage in the process. Gun powder is still used in modern fireworks. It throws sulphur particulates, metal oxides and some organic matter into the atmosphere, some of which falls to the ground. The bright colours and the effects that fireworks dazzle us with are the result of complex chemical concoctions, which can emit carbon dioxide, other gasses and residues.

A study by Environmental Protection UK has suggested that there are notable increases in air pollution from particulates and dioxins on and around 5 November. There is widespread disagreement, however, about the extent to which deposits and pollutants caused by fireworks actually affect soil and water sources. We need to be clearer about that. With smaller displays happening at home this year, the effect on air pollution in many of our towns and cities will be quite substantial.

At the moment, we are governed by the Fireworks Act 2003, which Labour brought in. The Act gave powers to impose licences on retailers selling fireworks outside predetermined dates—bonfire night, new year, Chinese new year and Diwali. It also brought in noise restrictions, banned the sale of F2 and F3 category fireworks to people under the age of 18, and ensured that F4 category fireworks—the most explosive—could only be possessed by fireworks professionals. It introduced an 11 pm curfew for most of the year. A breach of that curfew can, in theory, lead to an immediate £90 fixed penalty notice, considerable further fines and potential imprisonment for serial offenders.

As legislators, we know that these laws are largely meaningless without enforcement. The Minister needs to be clear that a decade of cuts to local authorities, for example to their trading standards and environmental health teams, has left them woefully under-resourced to tackle rogue traders or those flouting the rules under the existing legislation. If the Government are serious about protecting the public, animals and the environment from the negative aspects of fireworks, we need to see investment that allows for a proper enforcement of existing legislation. Like many others, I sometimes sit in my bedroom at 1.30 am listening to the sound of fireworks going off across my city, as they do in many other parts of the UK.

A survey run by YouGov for Dogs Trust found that over half the British public think that fireworks should now be limited to public display only, and over three quarters believe that fireworks should be used only at certain times of the year. It is clear that the case for the Government to consider these proposals is building. I would like to hear the Minister address those suggestions directly.

Many advocacy groups feel that so-called silent or quiet fireworks, although not a panacea, could reduce some distress across the board. We heard this afternoon from the hon. Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) about decreasing decibel levels for firework displays. I think that it is time for the Government to consider the current decibel level cap and see what can be done to bring it down.

For centuries, fireworks have brought joy and wonder to us mere mortals. Throwing luminous bursts of colour, light, sound and energy into the night sky, fireworks are wondrous to behold. But existing legislation is simply not being enforced. The public need to see the Government moving from merely understanding their concerns about animal welfare and all the other issues to actually taking more action. I look forward to hearing from the Minister this afternoon what that action will be.

17:30:00

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Paul Scully)

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Mundell. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi), not only for introducing the debate on behalf of the Petitions Committee but for her considered speech; to the hon. Members across the Chamber who took part in the debate; and obviously to the 305,000 people who took the time to sign the petition.

We heard some distressing stories about the treatment of animals, about antisocial behaviour and about injuries to people. We also heard about the positive side of fireworks—yes, the fun and the benefits. The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) said that she had a fireworks display on her wedding day. They can be enjoyable for many people and many cultures. We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) about Diwali and the Chinese new year. We often talk about 5 November, which is coming up in a few days' time, but there are many other cultures that enjoy fireworks.

I have been a member of the Petitions Committee. I served on it for five years before the last general election, and I was serving on it when we looked at the issue of fireworks, took evidence and came up with our report. Fireworks are an issue that comes up year on year. I just caution the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead) when he talks about 750,000 signatures, because it was 305,000 this year, 305,000 last year, I think, and 307,000 the year before, so the number is relatively consistent. Whether they are all individual signatures or some people have duplicated their signature, it is none the less a lot of people. And we need to ensure that we take into account their concerns, whether that is for their animals, for people's safety or just because of disturbance and antisocial behaviour.

The petition this year, as in previous years, calls for a ban on the sale of fireworks to the public. It highlights the impacts that fireworks can have on animals and wildlife and on the environment, and the injuries to people. They have been debated thoroughly today and in previous debates. As we heard from a number of contributors, we have to consider these matters this year against the backdrop of covid and the additional considerations that that raises—I will come back to that. The hon. Member for Gower did raise it particularly, and I will address it shortly.

I empathise with the concerns that have been raised. We do understand as a Government the strong feelings that some people have about fireworks. We understand that with every petition and debate, those who lobby against fireworks will be questioning why the Government have not banned fireworks or restricted their use since the last debate, so I want to set out here the work that the Government have done since the last Westminster Hall debate in November 2018, and I want to explain why we do not consider a ban on fireworks to be an appropriate course of action.

Simply banning something does not mean that the issue will disappear. In fact, a ban can often have the opposite effect and create unintended consequences, so let me start with the legislation that we have in place. As we have heard, we have legislation in place to regulate the manufacture, supply, storage and possession of fireworks, and their use and misuse, to help to ensure public safety. That includes powers to prosecute those who use them in a dangerous or antisocial manner. The Fireworks Act 2003, the Fireworks Regulations 2004 and the Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2015 provide a regulatory framework that supports the enjoyment of fireworks while providing tools to manage the risks.

Local authority trading standards teams are working with retailers to ensure that the fireworks sold are safe, and they have powers to enforce against those who place non-compliant fireworks on the market, including those imported illegally or via the internet.

Alison Thewliss

The Minister is making a good point about trading standards. During the debate, it has been announced that the trading standards team in Glasgow has seized 500 fireworks in the city, despite the fact that there are 73 premises in the city of Glasgow where fireworks can be bought legally. Does the Minister accept that that means that things are not working?

Paul Scully

It is important that we work with the devolved Administrations to ensure the safety of people across the UK. I will come in a second to the training and resource that we are putting into enforcement. The police also have powers to tackle the improper possession and use of fireworks and antisocial behaviour caused by the misuse of fireworks wherever it arises.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards is responsible for protecting the public. It is the national regulator for product safety and is responsible for leading and co-ordinating the product safety system. It was created to deliver effective and trusted regulation for consumer products while ensuring that the legislative framework that it works with is effective and proportionate. It aims to ensure that consumers are kept safe and have confidence in the safety of the products they buy. To deliver that, businesses need to understand and meet their legal and regulatory obligations. To that end, the OPSS has worked with the Chartered Trading Standards Institute to develop and deliver a series of fireworks training events to frontline trading standards and fire safety officers. More than 200 officers in 105 local authorities have completed that training, which ensures that

they have the skills and knowledge necessary to advise firework sellers of their responsibilities and to take enforcement action if necessary.

Let me turn to the evidence base and set out in more detail what work has been done. The Government have committed to ensure that all our policy making is based on evidence. I am pleased that the evidence base prepared by the OPSS was published last week. It contains data and information that has been sourced by drawing on existing data, literature and research, and by engaging with a range of groups and organisations, which have been invited to submit any data they have that is not already publicly accessible. Data was sought about the key issues raised in petitions, correspondence and debates, including noise, injuries and accidents, antisocial behaviour, environmental information and the impact on animals and people. A range of stakeholders have been engaged with to ensure that the evidence base reflects as wide a variety of evidence and perspectives as possible. They include Departments, local authorities, including trading standards teams, the fireworks industry, charities and organisations that represent individuals, advocates for animal safety, the ex-armed forces and the retail sector.

A key concern is noise and disturbance, and we wanted to consider the issues most often raised: the suggestions that the maximum of 120 dB for fireworks that can be sold to a consumer is too high; that some fireworks sold to consumers are louder, and are continuing to get louder, than the maximum 120 dB level set out in legislation; and that the Government should promote silent or low-noise fireworks.

The evidence on the impact of fireworks on animal health indicates that different species of animals have different sensitivities and responses to noise. Separately, the OPSS has commissioned a programme of fireworks testing to determine the average decibel level for common types of retail fireworks sold for public use. It will evaluate whether fireworks placed for sale to consumers in the UK market meet the noise provisions in the Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2015. The hon. Member for Gower and other Members talked about silent fireworks, but it is not clear whether a silent firework actually exists. Fireworks clearly require some explosive content to be set off. However, as part of the evidence-based work, we have commissioned a test of fireworks to determine the range of decibel levels, and that will help to identify a lower acceptable decibel level. It will also look at the potential impact of such a classification. We will publish the report based on that work in due course.

The Petitions Committee inquiry was not party political. This is not a case of the Government not acting; the Petitions Committee is cross-party and has a Labour

Chair: the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell). The Committee concluded that at that time it could not support a ban on fireworks. Instead, it recommended other actions. The Government's policy aligns with the Committee's conclusion that it is not appropriate to ban the public from buying and using fireworks, as it would not be a proportionate measure.

We agree with the inquiry's conclusion that a ban on fireworks, either for private or public use, could have unintended consequences. We acknowledge the experience of the National Police Chiefs Council, which believes that banning fireworks would push the market underground and make it more difficult to regulate and monitor. In addition, a restriction on fireworks sold to the public by retail outlets could lead to more individuals buying products inappropriately through online social media sources and from outside the UK. Individuals sourcing fireworks from illegitimate or unsafe suppliers may unwittingly buy products that are unsafe, as they may not meet the UK's safety requirements.

We take the view that the concerns raised can be best addressed through education and raising awareness about good practice, being considerate to neighbours and the impact on people and animals of irresponsible use, alongside ensuring that the public know what action they can take and what the law provides for. Raising awareness around the safe and considerate use of fireworks is a common theme that has come out of our stakeholder engagement. For that reason, OPSS has developed an awareness campaign, which launched on 20 October, for this year's fireworks season.

The campaign partnered with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the Child Accident Prevention Trust, the RSPCA and the Chartered Trading Standards Institute. We have also worked with a wide range of other stakeholders, including retail bodies such as the Association of Convenience Stores and the British Retail Consortium, to share the messaging across different audiences.

We accept that, with the cancellation of public displays, more people may be having displays in their own back gardens, so the focus of the campaign is to educate people on how to buy, use, store and dispose of fireworks safely; to ensure that retailers understand their responsibilities when selling fireworks; and to promote considerate use so that people and animals can be better protected from any negative effects of fireworks.

We have been working with colleagues in the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly to share information, and will continue to do so. We have also

ensured that we are aligning our awareness campaign on the safe use of fireworks with local restrictions on social gatherings. I emphasise that people must follow the coronavirus restrictions in their local area at all times, including if they intend to use fireworks.

We rightly heard a lot about animals. When I was on the Petitions Committee, we took evidence from fireworks associations and retailers. The people affected include those with horses, dogs and other animals, and indeed young children, as we have heard. It is important that we continue to engage with animal welfare organisations to ensure that we understand the impact on animals and to promote the responsible use of fireworks.

I pay tribute to all Members who have contributed. It was a pleasure to hear my hon. Friends the Members for Carshalton and Wallington (Elliot Colburn) and for Bury South (Christian Wakeford), both of whom showed off how hard they are working: one through speaking of his use of social media and his instant snap poll, the other through speaking of how he was working in his office on a Friday evening—good man. I know that at this time we are all working really hard for our constituents.

We also heard from the hon. Members for Pontypridd, for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) and for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead). The hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) gave a horrendous example. I am glad that her dog was not the one that was so horribly treated in that incident. I know that she is a great mother to her dog, and she will be looking after the dog on Thursday.

This issue comes up time and again and is of concern to people. We believe that, with the extra evidence that the OPSS is gathering and the extra awareness campaigns, which we are launching earlier, with more detail and to a larger extent each year, we can start to tackle this in a balanced and proportionate way. Again, I thank everybody who has taken part in this debate and pay tribute to the work of the Petitions Committee.

David Mundell (in the Chair)

I call the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi), who has up to 14 minutes to respond.

17:45:00

Tonia Antoniazzi

That is extremely kind, Mr Mundell. I shall endeavour to keep everybody busy for the next 14 minutes. I thank the Minister for his response. I share the view of the chemistry teacher who is concerned about such explosives being in the hands of the inexperienced, as brought up by the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss). I was a teacher for 20 years, so I was struck by that example. However many campaigns there are, the message is just not getting through—and that is how the petitioners feel.

As the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson) pointed out, we have a sense of *déjà vu*. While I respect that there has been a campaign since 20 October, is that really early enough? It is not, and it is not satisfactory. I can tell hon. Members that I have not seen anything this year. As a mother of a 16-year-old son who has always disliked fireworks because of the noise, I appreciate that it is not a pleasant experience for everyone. I also take this opportunity to thank the 131 members of my constituency who signed the petition.

We have made so many sacrifices since March this year. I pay tribute to everybody in the NHS and the emergency services, particularly the fire brigade, because the next week and the coming days will not be easy for them. We are agreed across Westminster Hall that we have to think about the impact of home displays, because it can be absolutely horrific and potentially very dangerous. I agree with the hon. Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) on banning all pop-up shops.

I am not being a killjoy. The Leader of the House mentioned to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) that fireworks are fun. I grew up overlooking Stradey Park, the famous Llanelli Scarlets rugby stadium, where every 5 November we sat with our hot dogs and watched and enjoyed the fireworks. However, things have changed. As has been mentioned, people are using fireworks as weapons. We have to do more, and I hope that we will keep on pressing the Government and working with the police and the emergency services to improve the situation. I have always had a dog in the house, and my mother currently has two dogs from the Dogs Trust, and it is frightening for them, because they do not understand. We have to work with everybody.

I appreciate that the Minister spent time on the Petitions Committee and so knows his way around these debates. However, we need to—and must—do

more, for the sake and safety of everybody, particularly with the light that coronavirus shines on us.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered e-petition 276425, relating to the sale of fireworks.

17:49:00

Sitting suspended.

Firework and Bonfire Event Voluntary Registration Scheme

Application Form



**North East
Derbyshire**
District Council

Please provide the information about your event, along with a site plan. The site plan can form part of other documents you submit with the application. If you do not submit all the documents listed on page two your application will be returned without being assessed.

This information must be returned no later than eight weeks before the event is planned.

Use Adobe Acrobat reader to fill in the form online or print off, fill in and send back to North East Derbyshire District Council, Commercial Team, Joint Environmental Health Service, 2013 Mill Lane, Wingerworth, Chesterfield, S42 6NG.
Email: environmentalhealthadmin@ne-derbyshire.gov.uk

EVENT DETAILS

Name of the event:

Site address:

Proposed date:

Event times: from

to

Numbers expected:

Name and email of organiser:

Home/business
address:

Contact number:

Contact number (on the night of the event):

Named chief marshall:

Form completed by:

Date:

Please note: This is a generic document intended to assist the event organiser/s consider the general issues relevant to an event. It is not comprehensive and the level of detail the organisers will need to consider will depend on the nature, scope and scale of the event.

Using your personal information: For more information on how we use personal information please go to our privacy statement on our website www.ne-derbyshire.gov.uk or ask a member of staff.

OFFICE USE ONLY

INSPECTED BY

SITE VISIT DATE

DATE SATISFACTORY

APPROVED BY

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Document list

1. Site plan:

Make sure your site is large enough for the event.

- Use the CBI guidance document, 'Giving your own firework display - How to run and fire it safely' to make sure you include all the required information and measurements requested on the site plan

The blank site plan should be completed using the checklists on the guidance booklet to help make sure you provide enough information for us to access your application. A freehand sketch of your site is suitable providing the measurements (in metres) are reasonably accurate.

2. Public Liability Insurance:

Please provide a copy of your current Public Liability insurance certificate for the event.

- Check that both bonfire & firework displays are included in your insurance.

Policy No:

Does your insurance policy require you to notify the Fire Service? Yes No

3. Fire risk assessment as per the regulatory reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

4. Event management plan (see the guidance notes for more information)

5. Firework storage

The storage of fireworks in excess of 14 days requires a licence.

- Does this apply to your event? Yes No
- If yes, have you contacted Trading Standards for a licence? Yes No
- Please provide a copy of the licence

Disclaimer

Given the current Coronavirus pandemic North East Derbyshire District Council and Derbyshire Fire & Rescue cannot accept any responsibility for the subsequent cancellation of any event, or for any other reason beyond our control. As a result of the exercise of this North East Derbyshire District Council and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue will not incur any liability for any cancellation.

North East Derbyshire District Council and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue will also not be held liable for any other consequential loss or expenses incurred by any party either directly or indirectly resulting from such cancellation or prohibition.

The Event Organiser shall take out and maintain public liability insurance in the sum of £5,000,000 (five million) and indemnify the Council against all actions, claims, damages, costs, demands and expenses in respect of loss of or damage to goods or death, injury to persons howsoever occurring or caused, which may be brought or awarded against, suffered, sustained or incurred against the Event Organiser.

SITE PLAN

This is the site plan for:

To be held on:



North East
Derbyshire
District Council

We speak your language

Polish

Mówimy Twoim językiem

French

Nous parlons votre langue

Spanish

Hablamos su idioma

Slovak

Rozprávame Vaším jazykom

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North East
Derbyshire
District Council

Firework and Bonfire Event



Derbyshire
Fire & Rescue Service
Making Derbyshire Safer

Voluntary Registration Scheme

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The Firework and Bonfire Event Voluntary Registration Scheme enables local public events to obtain publicity through the Council's websites and social media accounts where they meet the criteria of the scheme.

The Council promotes events which have declared in a self-assessment which:

- a) Meet the guidance in this document;
- b) Provide documents to support their application;
- c) Submit a site assessment and comply with Council and Fire Service guidance; and
- d) Commit to ensuring only clean wood (not laminated chipboard or laminated wood for example) is placed on bonfires.

Applications must be made in full, with all the required documentation at least eight weeks before the event date. Applications made nearer to the event will not be considered, so early preparation is key.

For further information, contact North East Derbyshire District Council, Commercial Team, Joint Environmental Health Service, 2013 Mill Lane, Wingerworth, Chesterfield, S42 6NG.

Tel: 01246 781111

Email: environmentalhealthadmin@ne-derbyshire.gov.uk

Firework displays and bonfire guidance

Introduction

Whether you apply for registration with the Council's voluntary scheme or not the following guidance can be followed to help you run your event more smoothly and ensure the event is fun and safe for everyone.

The Confederation of British Industry Explosives Interest Group has produced detailed guidance for event organisers and professional display companies, as well as smaller community events which can be found via the Health and Safety Executive's website - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/explosives/fireworks/using.htm>.

The following guidance is a summary of the main guidance documents.

Event essentials

- An event management plan.
- Organisers familiar with the CBI and HSE guidance.
- Operatives trained and have read literature on organising a display.
- Operatives familiar with display fireworks and lighting requirements.
- Named Chief Marshall available at event in case of a site visit.
- One person designated responsible for lighting the bonfire.
- Operatives suitably clothed - substantial outer garments, boots, etc.
- Display operatives designated.
- Sufficient Marshalls for the size of event.
- Checks that only clean wood (no laminated woods or other combustible material) is used on a bonfire.
- No accelerants e.g. petrol, paraffin on site.
- Checking of the bonfire for children and animals prior to lighting.

Managing your event

An event management plan is key to ensuring you, and your teams can fully understand the event and the safety precautions. This can be used to help you complete and modify risk assessments, find problems in your plans which can be fixed, as well as help brief staff and volunteers before the event.

An event management plan should contain:

- The event safety policy statement detailing the organisation chart and levels of safety responsibility. (Is there a clear understanding within the organising team of who will be responsible for safety matters?).
- The event risk assessment/s.
- The site safety plan detailing the site safety rules; storing fireworks safely; bonfire safety; firing the display; site manager/s and safety co-ordinator.
- The crowd management plan detailing the numbers and types of stewards, methods of working, chains of command.
- The transport management plan detailing the parking arrangements, highway management issues and public transport arrangements.
- The emergency plan detailing action to be taken by designated people in the event of a major incident or contingency.
- The first-aid plan detailing procedures for administering first aid on site and arrangements with local hospitals.
- Plans for Clearing up after the display and waste disposal arrangements.
- Details of who has been informed that the event is taking place including the Council's Environmental Health Service, Fire Service, Police and Neighbours.
- Plans to minimise the effect of noise and smoke on neighbours and animals. If you are in a residential area, there may be vulnerable people and pets affected. In rural areas farm animals can be affected by noise from fireworks and smoke.

Key equipment and knowledge

- Hose pipe (will it reach?), or water buckets or water extinguishers.
- Metal buckets for spent sparklers.
- Fire blanket available in bonfire display areas.
- First Aid kits available.
- On site knowledge of how to treat a burn injury.
- Identification of operatives.
- Arrangements for calling Emergency Services.
- Provision to maintain adequate site access for Emergency Services.

After the event

- Ensure bonfire is safe (damp down if necessary).
- Collect spent fireworks and sparklers.
- Clear away litter/rubbish.

Danger areas and safety distances

Fireworks can cause serious injuries to spectators or firers. The first consideration for any public firework event should be to make sure there is enough space to meet the safe distance guidelines. The distances between the different areas on your site need to be marked on your site plan.

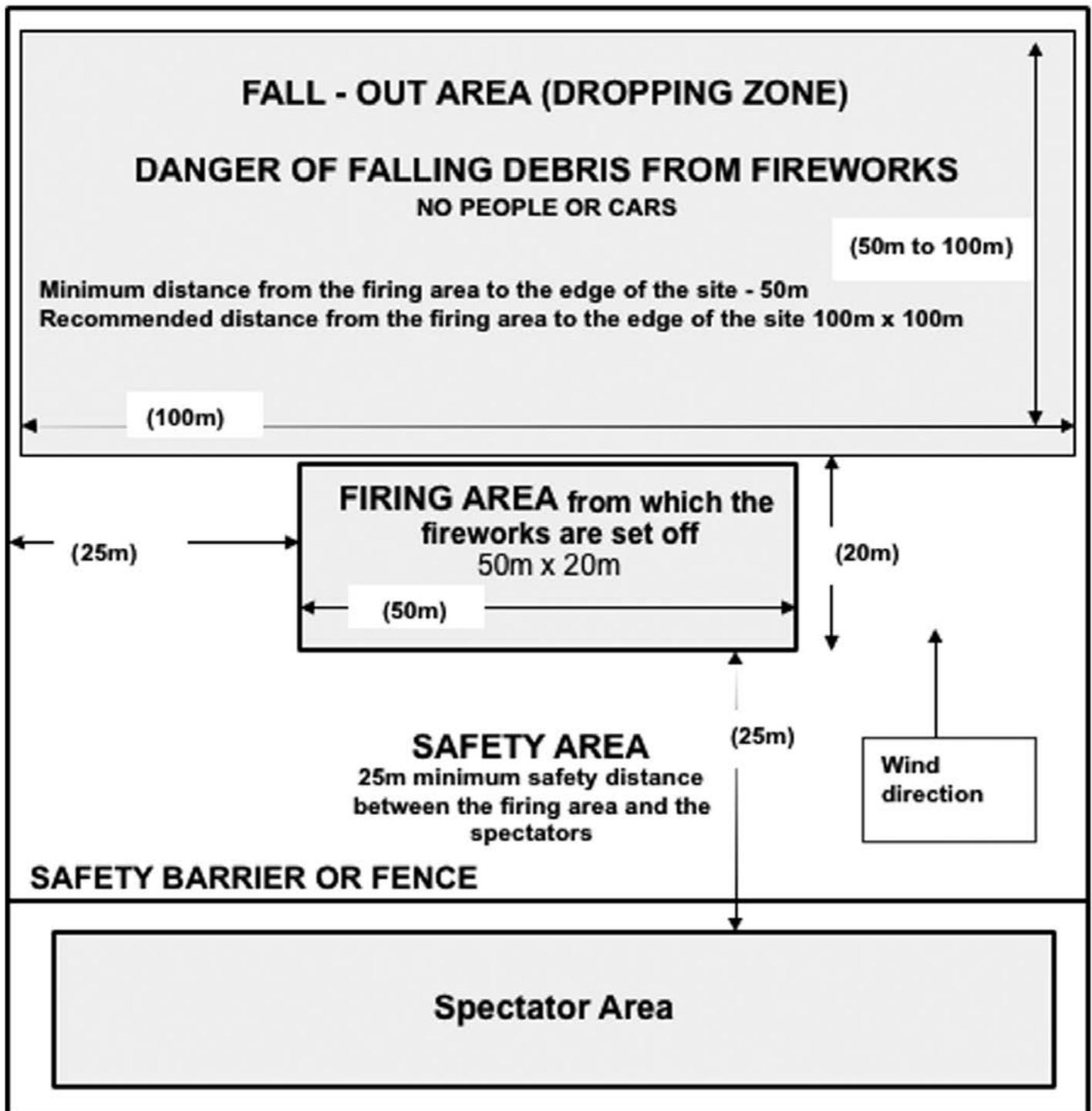
Use the table and diagram (right) as a guide to where the danger areas and safety distances are in relation to each other.

Display Site - the whole site used for the firework display and made up of:	
• The spectator area - from which the spectators watch the display.	
• The safety area - the distance between the spectators and the firework firing area to ensure the spectators are at a safe distance from the fireworks during the display.	
• The firing area - from which the fireworks are set off.	
• The fall out area - (or dropping zone) - an area clear of people, where the debris from spent fireworks lands.	
• The bonfire area - the area provided for the bonfire.	
Other information to be marked on the plan:	
• Approximate dimensions (in metres) of the whole site.	
• The location of barriers or fences.	
• The position of buildings or structures within the site .	
• The position of public access to site.	
• The position of emergency vehicle access to site.	
• Prevailing wind direction.	

Firework display site layout guidance

For public events, displays should have:

- Adequate viewing, display and fallout areas relative to size of display.
- Areas sited with consideration of prevailing winds.
- Areas a safe distance away from buildings, trees, etc.
- Areas clear of overhead obstructions such as power cables, etc.
- An area for safe storage of fireworks.
- Fenced/taped/roped safety area relative to display size and type.



These are ideal distances. Any variations should be subject to risk assessment, e.g. height of bonfire, restriction on types and size of fireworks used.

Bonfire site layout guidance

A bonfire needs to be:

- 15m from other areas, buildings, roads, railways & public rights of way.
- A safe distance from flammable materials and overhead electric powerlines.
- Downwind of spectators.
- A safe distance away from buildings, trees, etc.
- Clear of overhead obstructions such as power cables etc.
- Well-constructed - especially if on sloping ground.
- Free of foam furniture, rubber, aerosols, gas cylinders, bottles.
- Free of light ash producing materials that could blow about, e.g. corrugated cardboard.
- Sited with consideration of prevailing winds.
- Fenced/taped/roped off at a safe distance relative to bonfire size.

Please note: This is a generic document intended to assist the event organiser/s consider the general issues relevant to an event. It is not comprehensive and the level of detail the organisers will need to consider will depend on the nature, scope and scale of the event.

Disclaimer

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Reminder:

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