

Dispersal zones set up to combat disorder over Bonfire weekend



Four dispersal zones are being set up in Edinburgh to combat anti-social behaviour and disorder over Bonfire weekend.

The zones cover areas in North East and North West Edinburgh and will be in operation between 2pm and midnight Wednesday 31st October to Tuesday 6th November.

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004, police have a Power of Dispersal within the designated zones authorised by Edinburgh Superintendent Bob Paris. This means that they can instruct any people in groups of two or more who are congregating and behaving in an anti-social manner to leave the zones if they do not live there and not return for up to 24 hours. If they do return, they will be arrested.

Supt Paris said: "Police in Edinburgh have been working closely with our partners at City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service through the citywide Community Improvement Partnership specifically set up in

response to the events we saw over the Bonfire weekend last year.

“The number of calls concerning antisocial behaviour rose last year, and more significantly the damage caused and levels of violence displayed were considerably greater than in previous years. This caused alarm and distress for our communities and is completely unacceptable.

“We are confident that these dispersal zones will enable us to robustly tackle anti-social behaviour and general disorder in key areas of the city, allowing us to move on people who are causing a nuisance. Anyone who is banned will receive a copy of the map so that it is clear where they should not be and they will be arrested and put before the courts if they are found to have returned to continue the same behaviour.”

Cllr Amy McNeese-Mechan, Vice-Convenor of Culture and Communities and Chair of Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership, said: “Protecting communities from harm during Bonfire Night 2018 and beyond is a priority us all in the CIP. Working together we are taking a collaborative approach to reduce the levels of vandalism, antisocial behaviour and violence that occurred last year and we are supportive of the use of dispersal zones. We want everyone to enjoy a fun and most importantly safe Guy Fawkes Night.”

Assistant Chief Officer David McGown is the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service’s Director of Prevention and Protection. He said: “The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will always seek to work with our partners and emergency service colleagues where appropriate to protect our communities, and ensure the safety of our firefighters. Anti-social behaviour such as deliberate fire-raising and the abuse of emergency service workers is completely unacceptable – and will never be tolerated.

“We see all too clearly the loss and the devastation that can

result from fire and that is why our firefighters work extremely hard to engage with people of all ages to equip them to stay safe, and this includes around bonfires as well as fireworks.”

“It beggars belief when I hear that our firefighters have been physically assaulted or verbally abused when responding to an emergency. This not only prevents our crews from bringing any emergency to a safe and swift conclusion but it can impact on our emergency service colleagues including the police when they have to escort us at the scene.”

Supt Paris continued: “Use of these powers and the areas the zones cover have been well planned and are based upon the issues we saw last year and ongoing work in these communities. It is just one tool that we will be utilising to make these areas safer and help people to feel safer there over this busy time. Specialist resources will be available to complement local officers who will be on patrol across Edinburgh over the Halloween and Bonfire Night period.”