

Councillors call for tougher restrictions on sale of fireworks

Tougher restrictions on the sale of fireworks should be “fast-tracked” following violent scenes across Scotland around Bonfire Night, councillors in Midlothian have said.

Councillors Stephen Curran told a meeting of Midlothian Police and Fire and Rescue Board the chaotic scenes of the last week had changed his mind over firework sales.

And he called on the board to write to The Scottish Government supporting tough new legislation.

His comments came after incidents in Dundee during the week when gangs set fires and fireworks were let off during clashes with police and in Edinburgh when video footage captured youths shooting fireworks at emergency workers.

Speaking to the board, Mr Curran said: “I’ve never been one for looking to restrict the sale of fireworks because I’ve always thought that families and kids, in particular, use them responsibly.

“My position has changed over the last week. I know there is government legislation coming in but some of the chaotic scenes, antisocial behaviour, frankly criminal scenes we have seen over the last week, putting peoples lives in danger, it

is difficult now to be opposed to a tightening of legislation around the sale of fireworks publicly.

“I’d be more inclined to favour organised displays.”

The board heard that there were 16 calls to police over fire-raising incidents across Midlothian during the weekend.

Nine of them were related to fireworks, five related to bonfires with one involving an abandoned garage being set alight and another involving damage to a car.



Police in Midlothian posted a picture of officers with Dalkeith firefighters on Bonfire Night on social media. Police representative Jim Robertson told the board that Police Scotland had held a pop-up event at King George V Park in Bonnyrigg on Saturday afternoon when police and fire fighters played football with youngsters and free drinks and snacks were provided.

He said: "We believe it had a positive impact on the number of calls we had on the night."

Police patrols also joined fire crews in Dalkeith on Saturday night to provide extra protection on call-outs.

At the start of the board meeting today chair Councillor Stuart McKenzie thanked fire crews and police for all their hard work over the weekend.

And he supported Mr Curran's call for an approach to be made to Scottish Government expressing Midlothian councillors support for tougher legislation.

Councillor Willie McEwan added his backing, telling the board: "We need to speak to all the councils to go through Cosla and push for legislation to be fast-tracked, if you like, to just eradicate the sale of fireworks to unlicensed users."

Fellow board member Dianne Alexander agreed saying: "I think a lot of people are scared by them (fireworks) in their homes. I have heard of a horrific accident where a firework was set off on the ground and a boy lost an eye and his face was burnt.

"The distress it causes pet owners and everything, to have it more regulated would be a massive step forward for everyone."

The council's chief officer place Derek Oliver told the board the Scottish Government has brought through a bill following public consultation which will tighten regulations but recent events had revealed more work needed to be done.

by Marie Sharp, Local Democracy Reporter

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