

Council consulting on potential firework crackdown zones

Niddrie and Calton Hill are among the Edinburgh areas where fireworks could be banned under a council crackdown.

New powers allow Scottish local authorities to designate 'firework control zones' (FCZs), within which setting one off is a crime unless as part of a properly licensed public display.

The Scottish Government says establishing FCZs is a "key milestone in the journey towards a cultural change in Scotland's relationship with fireworks".

In the capital it's hoped the new laws will curb anti-social behaviour and violence around Bonfire Night seen in recent years. Last November riot police were attacked by around 100 youths with petrol bombs and fireworks in Niddrie, while there was similar trouble in Southhouse and Sighthill.

Edinburgh Council is currently consulting on which locations should be made FCZs, after inviting suggestions from community groups.

The options currently on the table are Niddrie, Seafield, Calton Hill and Balerno.

In addition, the council is seeking views on a control zone covering the entire city, however it says this may not be

“legally possible”.

The suggestions will be “rigorously assessed” and evaluated by the council, fire, and police before anything approved.

The council intends to have FCZs established in time for November and it’s understood a decision on which zones to implement will be made by councillors in August.

Scottish Green councillors in the City Chambers are pushing for a city-wide crackdown to address concerns about the impact of fireworks on the environment, animals and vulnerable people.

The call has been backed by animal charity Blue Cross who say due to “very acute hearing” pets can be caused “actual pain in their ears” from loud bangs.

Edinburgh Green councillor Dan Heap said: “We’re concerned about animal welfare, we’re concerned about the welfare of vulnerable people and from that point of view it only makes sense to have a city-wide zone – and it’s also more straight-forward for people.

“So at the moment they’re consulting on five proposals; four individual ones in Seafield, Calton Hill, Balerno and Niddrie, and a city-wide one.

“The other issue we’re concerned about, particularly with Niddrie is that I think it can become a bit of a stigmatising thing saying people in these areas can’t be trusted to have fireworks and we don’t really want to get into that. We saw some very stigmatising discourse around what happened in that particular area last year. So that’s another reason to just have it around the whole city and then you don’t really get into that problem.”

Consultations on each of the five proposals are accepting responses until Friday, August 23.

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter