

# **Fireworks laws need “urgent update”**

**The law on fireworks sales needs an “urgent update” after many MPs supported a bill that would ban the noisiest from public sale, according to the MP for Edinburgh South West.**

Sarah Owen’s Private Members Bill was brought forward on Friday for its Second Reading. The Bill would ban the sale of the loudest type of fireworks – F3s, as well as any F2s – those which make more than 90 decibels of noise. These would only be used by professional fireworks practitioners.

Under current laws, any member of the public could purchase F3 fireworks, which can legally be as loud as 120 decibels, about the same noise as a rock concert.

Ms Owen said that in her own constituency of Luton North, the issue of year-round fireworks was a “constant menace” that “harms pets and people with mental health difficulties, young families, or anyone that just wants a decent nights’ sleep”.

The rules currently also allow registered sellers without a specialised sales licence to sell them during the festive season, which this Bill would bring to an end, and sellers would need to be licensed all year round.

The Bill also contained a requirement for the government to implement a review of online and social media sales of fireworks. At the end of last year Dr Arthur says TikTok was

full of videos of what he considers irresponsible firework use and sales.

As parliamentary time is limited, the Bill, which had the support of major animal welfare and veterans' charities, will sadly not progress any further.

Sarah Owen, the MP for Luton North and proposer of the Bill, said: "Fireworks laws are completely out of step for the challenges of anti-social use of today, and badly need an update. Every year we see louder and more disruptive fireworks set off in back gardens, and it's causing havoc for people's lives.

"Over the last few months I've heard from hundreds across the country, from animal lovers to veterans to people with PTSD, special educational needs and young families, all of whom agree that fireworks use is out of control.

"While I am disappointed that my Bill will not progress, I know that the need for updated laws has not gone away. The Bill is an excellent starting point to continue this campaign so that we get the change that campaigners – from animal welfare charities, to grassroots organisations like the Firework Campaign, to veterans support groups – have been calling for for years".

Speaking in the debate, Dr Scott Arthur MP for Edinburgh South West highlighted meeting Edinburgh residents affected by the irresponsible use of fireworks, including a police officer who had been injured by a firework.

Dr Arthur said in the Chamber: "It is absolutely clear that eventually there will be action in this area, and my hon. Friend will take great credit for that when it happens. In recent weeks, I have spoken to a police officer in my constituency who was injured by a firework last year, and I have been introduced to a man whose mother was killed when one was put through her letterbox. More recently, a senior police

officer in my constituency asked the Government to take action to control the import and sale of fireworks. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is very clear that action is needed, and that the Government should ask themselves whether they want to be proactive or end up reacting to events?"

Ms Owen wholeheartedly agreed with Dr Arthur. She replied: "My hon. Friend highlights perfectly the seriousness of this matter. When explosives such as F3 fireworks get into the wrong hands and are used for criminal ends, it has horrendous, life-changing and sometimes life-taking consequences. That is why I want to see an end to the perverse loophole that allows unlicensed sellers to sell fireworks to members of the public during certain periods of the year, such as Diwali and New Year's Eve."

After the debate, Dr Arthur said: "The irresponsible use of fireworks doesn't just impact people with pets, they can act as a catalyst for other types of anti-social behaviour. leading to scenes like those that we saw in my constituency at the end of last year where large mobs were attacking police, distressing local residents, and causing criminal damage.

"It is shameful that we know such violence is coming every year on 5 November, but all we can really do as MPs is wish the police officers good luck. We should be empowering them and protecting them."



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