

The BFA response to the ScotGov inquiry into firework safety

After months of deliberation at an inquiry headed by Alasdair Hays, the ScotGov Firework Review Group has finally published its report and 11 recommendations.

The British Fireworks Association has contributed to this inquiry since its inception in December 2019 – it joined the panel with enforcement agencies, medical experts, animal charities and selected members of the public.

The BFA believes the report falls woefully short of meeting public and political expectation and its recommendations will do nothing to address the problems associated with fireworks. It has tried –but failed – to persuade the inquiry to take a tougher, more practical stance.

The BFA believes the inquiry should have stayed focussed on eradicating illegal fireworks and firework hooliganism.

The BFA believes the report, published on November 2nd, will only penalise the law-abiding users of fireworks. It does not address anti-social behaviour. It will not remedy the problems. It is, therefore, not fit for purpose.

The BFA believes the unintentional outcome of the inquiry report – if implemented – will be a strong incentive for an increase in criminal behaviour, more illegal fireworks and higher accident figures.

The BFA wished to see tougher measures. The Inquiry has failed. So, the BFA has refused to add its name to the report. Instead it here publishes 10 recommendations it would have wholeheartedly endorsed had the Inquiry listened to its concerns.

- 1) There should be an annual national safety awareness campaign agreed and funded jointly between industry and Government.
- 2) Enforcement agencies should receive additional, seasonal funding, to help tackle the growth in illegal fireworks.
- 3) Enforcement agencies to receive better training in the detection and apprehension of illegal fireworks.
- 4) The minimum age for buying fireworks should be raised to 21.
- 5) Illegal fireworks sold via social media should have their sites taken down immediately.
- 6) Fines for selling, possessing or using illegal fireworks should be increased – along with robust minimum sentencing.
- 7) There should be a central contact point for reporting all firework related mis use issues.
- 8) There should be a standardised reporting structure for injuries caused solely by fireworks – to include the cause.
- 9) Better resources for border control to prevent illegal fireworks entering the country.
- 10) Tougher sentencing for letting fireworks off in a public place such as streets and shopping arcades. Tougher sentencing for using fireworks as weapons – especially against police officers and other emergency services.