



Report To: <b>West Lothian Community Safety Board</b> From: <b>West Lothian Community Safety Partnership</b>
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Meeting Date: 30/01/2023
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<b>Subject: Bonfire / Fireworks 2022 Debrief and Evaluation</b>
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## **1. Purpose of Evaluation Report – Background Summary**

To Provide the Community Safety Board (CSB) with an overview of the multi-agency preventative activities undertaken within the West Lothian area during the Bonfire/Firework Period 2022.

## **2. Terms of Report**

Planning meeting were held in September 2022 where community safety partners reviewed the learning from previous years and worked together to design and deliver the strategy for the bonfire period. A multi-agency approach was taken to deliver a plan which would assist partner agencies to work together to promote fire and firework safety.

A debrief meeting took place in November 2022 to review the strategy for the Bonfire period and the preventative activities that were deployed.

## **3. Findings**

### **Meetings/Consultation**

An initial meeting was held in September which reviewed the findings of the previous report and was deemed a suitable start time for planning arrangements.

Communication was not limited to planning meetings and was maintained with partners throughout the planning process. Information was shared and acted upon at Task and Co-ordination (TAC) meetings and through ad-hoc contact.

### **Education**

The lifting of Coronavirus restrictions allowed a return to face to face engagement within schools. SFRS national media provided updated versions of the Bonfire and Fireworks Safety Presentations for primary and secondary schools. These were delivered by SFRS

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Community Action Team (CAT) to almost 6000 pupils at secondary school assemblies whilst SFRS operational crews delivered the learning materials to P6 and P7 pupils across West Lothian. The presentations were also shared with all schools so that they could be delivered by teachers using the provided speakers notes if necessary. Positive feedback was received from schools both on the content and delivery of the presentations.

Police Scotland and SFRS conducted joint talks to groups attending the West Lothian Youth Action Project (WLYAP) from schools across West Lothian to help reach those not fully engaging with mainstream education.

### **Community Engagement**

The TAC process proved highly effective in identifying emerging trends and taking targeted multi-agency action to address issues related to deliberate fires and fire related antisocial behaviour that had the potential to develop as bonfire night approached. These interventions took place across West Lothian.

The Blackburn Bonfire Night Action Group arranged the Blackburn Community Event at the Partnership Centre in October to engage with the local community which was well supported by all partners.

WLYAP conducted targeted street-work in areas identified from information shared at TAC and from intelligence from partners engaging with young people and spreading the message of acting responsibly during the bonfire period.

The use of a mix of marked and non-liveried vehicles by Police Scotland worked well and it is believed that the unmarked vehicles detracted from the confrontational antisocial behaviour that has been evident in previous years.

### **Media and Messaging**

This year a dedicated media meeting took place between SFRS, WLC Performance and Policy and WLC Media to deliver a media strategy. As well as planned media releases across a number of platforms, WLC media provided a dedicated landing webpage where multi agency safety messaging was shared and promoted.

SFRS provided a national media campaign with social media releases dedicated to Facebook and twitter platforms that were shared widely with WLC media.

Safety messaging was shared with local community groups and all West Lothian Community Councils.

The media messaging was supported with releases from Trading Standards regarding changes in legislation regarding the times that fireworks can be purchased and used.

Waste Services provide media messaging encouraging householders to retrieve wheelie bins which are often targeted at this time of year.

West Lothian was once again supported by Crimestoppers and Fearless and highly visible banners were displayed at prominent sites outside of schools across West Lothian regarding the misuse of fireworks.

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West Lothian was well supported with organised firework displays, attendance at organised events was encouraged through media channels and during the delivery of education presentations.

**Identification of Unlicensed Bonfires/Fireworks**

WLC Neighbourhood Environmental Teams (NETS) provided an updated list of previous bonfire sites which was shared with SFRS operational crews and proved useful in identifying the storage of combustibles.

NETS and Roads Department were very effective in removing stored combustibles in the lead up to bonfire night. Roads duty officers provided out of hours cover for effective management of WLC resources over the weekend.

NETS and Roads maintained regular contact with SFRS in the lead up to and during the joint patrol period on the 5<sup>th</sup> November.

Unorganised bonfires and dangerous storage of combustibles were reported to NETS and Land Services through the WLC Contact Centre, via the TAC process and by direct contact.

Trading Standards visited licenced fireworks retailers and carried out inspections of 2 temporary retailers outside of the regulatory sales times (after 6pm) and identified no breaches.

**Joint Patrol**

SFRS and Police Scotland carried out a joint patrol on 5<sup>th</sup> November to identify and assess bonfires to reduce the demand on front line appliance. Regular contact was made with Police Control and SFRS Control which enabled the joint patrol to respond quickly to and assess reports of bonfires which significantly reduced the demand on front line appliances allowing them to be available and deployed where needed most.

The SFRS and Police joint patrol were in regular contact with WLYAP and WLC Safer Neighbourhood Teams, sharing intelligence, providing advice and responding to identified incidents.

**4. Conclusions**

The lifting of the Coronavirus allowed for a very welcome return to face to face engagement with schools and smaller groups, both SFRS personnel and Education staff highlighted the importance of delivering the message in person and from the subject experts.

The West Lothian Community Safety Partnership worked collaboratively to share messaging and intelligence which had a positive impact on public awareness and allowed targeted interventions in areas of concern.

SFRS data covering the period of the Bonfire Plan 15<sup>th</sup> October to 7<sup>th</sup> November highlighted a further reduction in incidents responded to and continued the positive trend from 2021.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	5 Year Average	2022	% decrease
All Deliberate Fires	75	74	58	71	62	68	47	30%
Deliberate Secondary Fires	63	65	50	65	52	59	39	33%
Deliberate Secondary Refuse Fires	44	34	30	38	20	33	18	45%

The creation of the WLC Bonfire Safety landing page and media release strategy appears to have been effective in spreading the safety messaging.

The TAC process continues to work well allowing intelligence to be shared and multi-agency interventions to tackle emerging trends.

## 5. Recommendations

SFRS and Community Planning Partners to agree on detail within report and implement learning for the 2023 Bonfire period.

The CSB are invited to consider and make any comment in relation to this report.

**Reported By: Watch Commander Paul Harvey**

**Contact details: [paul.harvey@firescotland.gov.uk](mailto:paul.harvey@firescotland.gov.uk)**

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