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Supporting Events and Professionals at Every Stage

OTAS Insight, event security. Article

Bonfire week: trouble outside your display

What Halloween night in Scotland means for the walk in, the walk home, control zones and the operator exemption



Illustrative image

Operational **Tactical** **Strategic**

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OTAS Live Ltd.

SUMMARY

Halloween calls fell, but fireworks were still thrown at people in the street. For a licensed display, the risk sits outside the gate.

144

fireworks calls to Police Scotland on Halloween night, down from 160 in 2025 [1][2]

62

officers injured in 2023, Police Scotland said. None in 2025 [4]

14

Firework Control Zones in Edinburgh this year, with four in Glasgow [2][5][8]

ACTION

Before your display, check your site against the zone maps, get your operator's evidence on file, and put stewards on the approach routes.

By OTAS Insights. Edited by Kris Dailly. Correct as of 2 November 2026.



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01
Read this first

Sources: 16 public sources opened on 2 November 2026. They are Police Scotland, two councils, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, BBC News, STV News, two Acts of the Scottish Parliament, one UK Act, HSE guidance and the Purple Guide.
We do not name any display, venue or organiser. Each fact carries its source number.
Everything without a source number is OTAS guidance for event professionals.

Halloween night in Scotland brought 144 calls about fireworks to Police Scotland, down from 160 in 2025, a fall of 10 per cent [1][2]. Fireworks were still lit in the street, and some were thrown at members of the public in Tranent, Bonnyrigg and Glasgow [1]. Operation Moonbeam, now in its ninth year, runs to the evening of Thursday 5 November [2]. Edinburgh has Firework Control Zones in 14 areas and Glasgow has four [2][5][8]. For a licensed display the risk is rarely the show itself. It is the walk in, the streets around the site and the walk home. This Insight sets out what the sources say, and what event teams can do this week.

> **In short:** the numbers are falling, but fireworks are still being thrown in the street. Plan the walk in and the walk home as carefully as the show, know whether your site sits in a control zone, and make sure your display operator can evidence the professional exemption.

Five things to take away

01	**Fewer calls is not no risk. Fireworks were still thrown at people on Halloween night.**
02	**For a display, the risk sits outside the gate: the approach, the street and the walk home.**
03	**Check whether your site, car park or walking routes sit inside a control zone.**
04	**Your display operator needs to evidence the professional exemption before the night.**
05	**Agree with police who calls a hold or a stop if anything is thrown at the crowd.**

ACTION

Read the case, then share the actions with your team.



02

What happened on Halloween night

Police Scotland published its figures after Halloween night. BBC News and STV News reported the same numbers [1][2][3].

A steward on the approach, away from the gate. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

The night in figures

Calls	144 calls relating to fireworks on Saturday 31 October, compared with 160 in 2025, a reduction of 10 per cent [1].
Dispersal	Seven Dispersal Orders were issued in Edinburgh [1].
Control zones	There were no charges for breaches of Firework Control Zones on the night [1].
Officers	There were no reports of officers in the operation being injured [1].

What police described

In the street	In Tranent, Bonnyrigg and Glasgow, fireworks were lit in the street and some were thrown at members of the public [1].
As projectiles	The officer in charge of the operation said fireworks were again used as projectiles at buildings, vehicles and members of the public [1].
Public order	Police said there were no offences that required a specific public order response [1].
Confirmed	BBC News and STV News reported the same figures the next morning [2][3].

	As reported
Calls	144, down from 160 [1][2]
Change	10 per cent fewer [1]
Dispersal Orders	Seven, in Edinburgh [1]
Control zone charges	None on the night [1]
Officer injuries	None reported [1]

Table 1. Halloween night 2026 in five lines, from Police Scotland [1], confirmed by BBC News [2] and STV News [3].

ACTION

Before your display, ask your local police contact what they saw on Halloween night near your site and your routes.

03

Operation Moonbeam in figures

Police Scotland gave these figures at the launch of this year's operation on 21 October 2026 [4].

Supply is falling in Edinburgh

- Fireworks retailers in the city fell from 33 in 2024 to two in 2025, the council said [6].

Year	Police report
2023	Unprecedented violence directed at emergency services. 62 officers injured [4]
2024	One officer injured [4]
2025	No officer injuries, and an almost 37 per cent reduction in emergency calls relating to fireworks offences [4]
After the 2025 campaign	More than two tonnes of fireworks seized, and 24 people charged with offences [4]
Halloween 2026	144 calls, down 10 per cent on 2025 [1]

Table 2. Operation Moonbeam figures, from Police Scotland [1][4].

The trend is down. But the Halloween report shows fireworks were still used as projectiles [1]. A falling number is not a reason to plan less.

ACTION

Use these figures in your briefing, so stewards know why the walk home matters this week.

04

The professional operator exemption

Schedule 1 to the 2022 Act sets out when the control zone offence does not apply [11].

The Act says it is not an offence under section 27(2)(a) for a person to ignite a firework in a firework control zone if the person is "employed by, or in business as, a professional organiser or operator of fireworks displays" and the firework is for "a public fireworks display" [11].

This part of the Act has been in force since 22 June 2023 [11].

The exemption covers the person firing the display. It does not cover a member of the public who sets off fireworks in the same zone on the way to or from your show. That is our reading of the Act, not legal advice.

What to hold in the event file (OTAS guidance)

- Written confirmation that your operator is employed by, or in business as, a professional display operator.
- A copy of their insurance.
- The firing area plan and the cordon agreed with the operator.
- The name of the operator lead on the night, and how to reach them.

ACTION

Ask your display operator today for written confirmation of their professional status and a copy of their insurance.



05

Where the risk sits: outside the gate

Police describe fireworks lit and thrown in the street [1]. Streets are where display crowds walk. The rest of this section is OTAS guidance, drawing on HSE.

A lit route for the walk home. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Where the risk sits on display night



The pressure point is the walk home, in the dark, with everyone leaving at once. OTAS guidance.

The approach

People walk to a display through the same streets where fireworks are set off. Stewards at the gate cannot see the approach.

The street

Fireworks were thrown at buildings, vehicles and members of the public on Halloween night [1]. A queue on a pavement is a crowd in the street.

The finale

When the show ends, everyone leaves at once. HSE treats leaving the site and dispersal as one of three phases to plan [13].

The walk home

HSE notes people may become disorientated if they arrive in the light and leave in the dark, and says to make sure there is enough lighting [12].

The mood online

HSE says monitoring social media can give useful up to date information on a crowd's mood [14]. It can also show a gathering forming near your site.

ACTION

Put stewards on the main approach routes, not only at the gate, and keep them there after the finale.

06

Six actions before your display

These are the six things to do first, before your display. OTAS guidance unless a source is shown.

Before your display

Maps	Check the council zone maps against your site, car parks and walking routes [5][7][8].
Operator	Get written confirmation of your operator's professional status, and their insurance, for the event file [11].
Police	Call your local police contact. Ask about hotspots, dispersal zones and who to call on the night [1].
Trigger	Agree a hold or stop trigger if anything is thrown at the crowd, and name who calls it.
Approach	Put stewards on the approach routes, on the same radio channel as your control point.
Exit	Plan a staggered exit with music after the finale, lit routes, and stewards on the routes for 30 minutes.

ACTION

Give each of the six actions a named owner today.

07

If something is thrown at the crowd

A projectile response, agreed before doors. OTAS guidance unless a source is shown.

The four steps

Stop	The event safety officer calls a hold on the show if a firework or object is thrown towards the crowd.
Move people back	Stewards move people away from the area calmly, with clear instructions on the PA.
Report	Report the location and a description to the control point and to police, on the agreed channel.
Preserve	Preserve CCTV and note the times. Add it all to the post event log.

Agree with police before doors

- What counts as a trigger for a hold or a stop.
- Who calls it, and who tells police.
- How and when the show restarts, and who decides.

HSE lists "Dangerous behaviour, such as climbing onto equipment/structures or throwing objects" among the crowd hazards to assess [12].

ACTION

Write the hold and stop trigger into your event safety plan, and brief it to every supervisor.

08
What to do at each level

Operational

Report with location

Move people back

Leave groups to police

Know who you report to. If a firework is lit or thrown near the crowd, move people back calmly and report the location and a description. Do not challenge groups. That is a police matter.

Tactical

Stewards on approaches

One radio channel

Stagger the exit

Put stewards on the approach routes. Brief the five signs and the projectile response. Keep radios on one channel. Stagger the exit and keep stewards out for 30 minutes.

Strategic

Check zone maps

Hold operator evidence

Agree the stop trigger

Check the zone maps. Hold your operator's exemption evidence. Agree the hold and stop trigger with police. Name the four roles for the night.

ACTION

Pick one action at your level and do it before your display.

09

What we do not know yet

- How many calls there will be on 5 November, and where.
- The full figures for this year's operation.
- Whether any display this season will be stopped because of projectiles.

ACTION

We will update this Insight if Police Scotland or the councils publish more.

10

Coming up: the rest of the bonfire season

Edinburgh's zones run to 8 November and Glasgow's to 9 November [6][8]. If your display falls on the weekend, the same plan applies. The Purple Guide lists a chapter on fireworks [15].

ACTION

If you need support with crowd, route and stewarding plans for a fireworks display, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

Questions

Can a display be fired inside a control zone?

Yes, in the circumstances the Act sets out. It is not an offence for a person employed by, or in business as, a professional organiser or operator of fireworks displays to ignite a firework in a control zone for a public fireworks display [11]. Hold their evidence in your event file.

Should stewards deal with people setting off fireworks outside?

No. Igniting a firework in a control zone is an offence [11], and it is a police matter. Stewards report the location and a description, and move people back.

How long can police direct someone away from a dispersal zone?

Under section 21(3)(c) of the 2004 Act, a direction not to return can be given to people who do not live in the area, and lasts for a period "not exceeding 24 hours" [10]. Ask your police contact how the zone will run on the night.

Does a fall in calls mean less risk this year?

Calls fell 10 per cent on Halloween night [1]. But police said fireworks were again used as projectiles [1]. Plan as if it could happen near your site.

Do we need to search for fireworks at the gate?

Possessing a pyrotechnic article in a public place without reasonable excuse is an offence [11]. If your event is not designated under the Act, your conditions of entry carry the ban. Size your search so queues do not cause crowding [13].

If a firework was thrown at your queue on the night, who would call the hold?

ACTION

Send us your question and we will add the answer to the next update.

Sources

Web sources opened 2 November 2026 and labelled with their publisher.

1. **Police Scotland, police praise public spirit during Halloween 2026, 31 October 2026** scotland.police.uk
2. **BBC News, Halloween fireworks calls in Scotland, 1 November 2026** bbc.co.uk
3. **STV News, fireworks thrown at people, buildings and vehicles, 1 November 2026** news.stv.tv
4. **Police Scotland, launch of Operation Moonbeam 2026, 21 October 2026** scotland.police.uk
5. **City of Edinburgh Council, Firework Control Zones** edinburgh.gov.uk
6. **City of Edinburgh Council, news, Firework Control Zones for 2026** edinburgh.gov.uk
7. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, organised firework events** firescotland.gov.uk
8. **Glasgow City Council, Firework Control Zones confirmed for four Glasgow communities** glasgow.gov.uk
9. **Police Scotland, dispersal zone in Pollokshields over Halloween and Bonfire Night, October 2026** scotland.police.uk
10. **Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, legislation.gov.uk** legislation.gov.uk
11. **Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act 2022, legislation.gov.uk** legislation.gov.uk
12. **HSE, crowd management, assess the risks** hse.gov.uk
13. **HSE, crowd management, controls** hse.gov.uk
14. **HSE, crowd management, monitoring** hse.gov.uk
15. **The Purple Guide, chapter list** thepurpleguide.co.uk
16. **Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, section 41, legislation.gov.uk** legislation.gov.uk

Related OTAS Insights

These are links to other OTAS Insights pieces, not to any OTAS Live product or service.

When a rumour moves faster than your stewards
When a social post draws a crowd: pop-up events without a plan

Law: this Insight summarises parts of Scottish law as published on legislation.gov.uk. It is not legal advice. Ask your council and the police what applies to your event, and take advice.

Interest: OTAS Live Ltd, which publishes OTAS Insights, sells event operations services, handbooks and training related to this topic.

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Images are OTAS style images, generated from real photography. None is a record of a specific event.

ACTION

Check the sources before you quote them, and tell us if any link has changed.

OVER TO YOU

If a firework was thrown at your queue on the night, who would call the hold?

If you need support with crowd, route and stewarding plans for a fireworks display, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

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