OTAS LIVE

Supporting Events and Professionals at Every Stage

OTAS Insight, event security. Full report

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**

OTAS Insight v2.0 · 2 November 2026 · Correct as of 2 November 2026

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 section 15, then agree one task for each level before your next event.



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

Control zones: the law, the dates and the penalties

In brief, and not legal advice. Scotland only.

A firing area cordon, set out before the show. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

What the 2022 Act says

- It is an offence to ignite a firework in a Firework Control Zone, or to knowingly or recklessly throw or fire one into it [11].
- The control zone rules relate to F2, F3 and F4 fireworks [11].
- On summary conviction the penalty is up to six months in prison, a level 5 fine, or both [11].

This year in Edinburgh

- Firework Control Zones in 14 areas of the city, from 30 October to 8 November 2026 [5][6].
- Agreed at the council's Culture and Communities Committee on Monday 8 June 2026 [6].
- The 14 areas are Balerno, Calton Hill, Corstorphine, Gracemount, Liberton, Lochend, Longstone, Moredun, Niddrie, Seafield, Sighthill/Broomhouse, Stenhouse/Gaskill, West Pilton and Wester Hailes [7].

This year in Glasgow

- Four zones: Govanhill and Pollokshields as one zone, Broomhouse, Pollok and Glasgow Harbour, from 30 October to 9 November [8].
- The council says offenders can be jailed for up to six months and fined up to £5000 [8].

General rules in Edinburgh

- Adult fireworks may be used in private places only, between 18:00 and 23:00, or to midnight on 5 November, the council says [5].
- The council and the fire service both encourage people to go to organised displays [5][7].

Your licence

- A licensing authority in Scotland may attach conditions to a public entertainment licence, including conditions "limiting the number of persons to be admitted" [16].
- Check your conditions before the night, and plan your entry and exit to meet them.

Zone maps are on the council pages [5][8] and the fire service page [7]. Check them against your site plan, your car parks and the routes your crowd will use.

ACTION

Mark every control zone on your site map, with your car parks, transport points and walking routes.

05

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.

06

Dispersal zones: what police can do

Police can direct people who do not live in an area to leave it and not to return for up to 24 hours [10]. Check the details with your local police contact.

Police Scotland set a Dispersal Zone in Pollokshields in Glasgow between 31 October and 6 November [9]. Under section 21(3)(c) of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, a direction not to return to the area can be given to people who do not live there, and lasts for a period "not exceeding 24 hours" [10].

Under the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, an officer of at least superintendent rank can authorise these powers where groups of "two or more persons" are causing alarm or distress, and antisocial behaviour is "significant, persistent and serious" [10].

Ask your police contact how the zone will run on the night before you brief stewards.

Seven Dispersal Orders were issued in Edinburgh on Halloween night [1].

What it means for your event (OTAS guidance)

- A dispersal zone near your site can move groups off your walking routes. Know where it starts and ends.
- Stewards do not use these powers. Dispersal is a police matter.
- Ask police whether a zone will be in place on the night of your display.

ACTION

Ask your police contact whether a dispersal zone covers any of your routes on the night.

07

Pyrotechnics in the crowd: possession and designated events

The 2022 Act also covers pyrotechnics carried in public places, and at some venues and events [11].

What the Act covers

- It is an offence to possess a pyrotechnic article in a public place without reasonable excuse [11].
- Sections 36 and 37 cover designated venues and events, including music events, where possession of pyrotechnics is prohibited [11].
- Using a firework against an emergency worker is an aggravation of an offence [11].

If your event is not designated (OTAS guidance)

- Your conditions of entry carry the ban.
- Your search policy and signs say "no fireworks, flares or smoke".
- Your search is sized so queues do not cause crowding. HSE says search procedures must not compromise safety by creating an overcrowding risk [13].

ACTION

Add "no fireworks, flares or smoke" to your conditions of entry, your signs and your search briefing.



08

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.

09

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.

10

Signs trouble is building outside

Signs 1 and 2 come from the police report. Signs 3 to 5 are OTAS guidance.

Warning signs near the site

01 Fireworks lit in the street

Fireworks were lit in the street in Tranent, Bonnyrigg and Glasgow on Halloween night [1].

02 Anything thrown towards people

Police said fireworks were used as projectiles at buildings, vehicles and people [1].

03 Groups gathering near the site

Groups forming on approach routes or at transport points as the show starts.

04 Posts about meeting nearby

Social media posts that point to a gathering near your display.

05 Bangs or smoke off site

Fireworks going off in the streets around the site before or after your show.

Signs 1 and 2 from Police Scotland [1]. Signs 3 to 5 are OTAS guidance.

ACTION

Brief stewards on these five signs, and on exactly what to report and to whom.

11

Plan the approach, the show and the dispersal

Five stages, from this week to the walk home. OTAS guidance unless a source is shown.

Five stages, from this week to the walk home



STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5
This week	**Site plan**	**Doors**	**The show**	**Exit**
Police, maps, operator	Zones, routes, lighting	Approach, search	Hold and stop calls	Stagger, stay 30 minutes

From the plan in this Insight. OTAS guidance.

Stage 1. This week

Call your local police contact about Moonbeam contacts, hotspots and dispersal zones [1]. Check the zone maps [5][7][8]. Get your operator's exemption evidence and insurance on file [11].

Stage 2. The site plan

Mark control zones, dispersal zones, transport points and the routes your crowd will use. Add lighting on exit routes [12].

Stage 3. Doors and the approach

Stewards on the approach routes, not only at the gate. Radios on the same channel as the control point. Search for pyrotechnics, sized so queues do not cause crowding [13].

Stage 4. The show

The event safety officer owns hold and stop calls. Agree the trigger with police before doors. Watch social media for gatherings near the site [14].

Stage 5. The exit and after

A staggered exit with music after the finale. Stewards on the walking routes for 30 minutes. Log incidents, times and police reference numbers.

Part	What it needs
Police liaison	One point of contact with the local Moonbeam commander
Map	Control zones, dispersal zones, transport points and walking routes
Operator	Exemption evidence, insurance and the firing area cordon
Hold and stop	A trigger agreed with police, and one person who calls it
Exit	A staggered exit, lit routes and stewards on the routes for 30 minutes

Table 3. What to agree before display night. OTAS guidance.

ACTION

Walk the main approach route at the time your crowd will use it, and note where stewards and lighting are needed.

12

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.

13
Medical and welfare

Fireworks in the street mean burns and eye injuries are possible on the approach as well as on site. OTAS guidance.

In the medical plan

- Burns and eye injury capability, with the right kit at each treatment point.
- A way to reach casualties on the approach routes, not only inside the site.
- A welfare point near the exit for people who are lost or separated.
- A record of every treatment, with times and locations, for the post event log.

ACTION

Ask your medical provider to confirm burns and eye injury cover for the night.

14
Roles on the night

Four roles, each with one named person. OTAS guidance.

Role	What they own
Event safety officer	Hold and stop calls
Police liaison	The single point of contact with the local Moonbeam commander
Route supervisors	One for each main approach, with stewards and radios
Display operator lead	The exemption evidence and the firing area cordon

Table 4. Roles on display night. OTAS guidance.

ACTION

Put a name against each role, and share the list with your police contact.

15
What to do at each level

Operational	Tactical	Strategic
Report with location	Stewards on approaches	Check zone maps
Move people back	One radio channel	Hold operator evidence
Leave groups to police	Stagger the exit	Agree the stop trigger
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.	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.	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.

16
The display night checklist

OTAS guidance unless a source is shown.

Before the night

- A call with local police about Moonbeam contacts, known hotspots and dispersal orders [1].
- A map with control zones, dispersal zones, transport points and the routes your crowd will use.
- The operator's exemption evidence and insurance in the event file [11].
- "No fireworks, flares or smoke" in your conditions of entry and on your signs.

On the night

- Stewards on the approach routes, not only at the gate.
- Radios on the same channel as the control point.
- A search at entry for pyrotechnics, sized so queues do not cause crowding [13].
- Burns and eye injury capability in the medical plan.
- Social media monitoring for gatherings near the site [14].
- Lighting on exit routes [12].

After the night

- A post event log of incidents, times and police reference numbers.
- A short debrief with police, the operator and route supervisors.

ACTION

Print this checklist for your next safety meeting, and tick it off on the night.

17
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.

18

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.

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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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