



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff, CF99 1SN

Paul Scully MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

**Department for Business, Energy &
Industrial Strategy**
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000
E enquiries@beis.gov.uk
W www.gov.uk

Our ref: CC2021/08129
Your ref: DC/LG/02850/21

23 March 2021

Dear Lesley,

Thank you for your letter dated 3 March 2021 about our meeting, together with Ash Denham MSP, Minister for Community Safety in the Scottish Government, on 28 January to discuss fireworks. It was helpful to have the opportunity to hear your views and thoughts.

As you know, the Petitions Committee carried out an extensive inquiry into fireworks that covered the whole of Great Britain and published its report in November 2019. The Committee concluded that they could not “support a ban (of consumer fireworks) before other, less drastic but potentially more effective, options have been fully explored”.

The Government agrees with the Committee’s approach. Furthermore, we do not feel at present that any further restrictions in relation to fireworks are appropriate, as they could have unintended consequences. We acknowledge the experience of the National Fire Chiefs Council and the National Police Chiefs Council who believe banning fireworks would push the market underground and make it more difficult to monitor. Nevertheless, we are not complacent and have been carrying out work to deliver the commitments we made in response to the Petition Committee’s inquiry.

As you will understand, the pandemic has been a key focus, meaning stakeholders’ attention has been on other highly important matters. Despite this, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) continues to engage regularly with animal welfare bodies, including the RSPCA, The Kennel Club and the British Horse Society. This is intended to ensure we have access to all available evidence. The Government also engages with a wide range of other stakeholders, including ex-armed forces charities, to ensure we understand the issues and that we are focusing on the right messages in our awareness campaigns.

On 29 October 2020, OPSS published a Fireworks Evidence Base that collated available data and research about noise and disturbance, anti-social behaviour, non-compliance, environmental impact, and the impact on humans and animals. The intention of the evidence base was to collate existing information, to build a full picture of the data around fireworks.

A key commitment the Government made in response to the Petition Committee’s inquiry was to run a public awareness campaign for the 2020 fireworks season. We believe the campaign was successful and far-reaching. Subsequent reports from Twitter showed that, between 11 October and 9 November 2020, the campaign materials had a potential reach of 2.6 million (total number of people who saw the content) and 9.4 million potential impressions (number of times content was displayed).

The Fireworks Evidence Base work with stakeholders and the conclusions of the Petition Committee's inquiry indicate that awareness raising and education are key to ensuring anti-social behaviour is minimised and that fireworks are used considerately. I am pleased that the assets for the 2020 campaign were translated into Welsh. I also understand that they were used in the campaign and shared with your officials to promote in the most appropriate way for Wales. We have started to plan for the 2021 campaign, and we will be keen to engage with your officials as we develop the approach.

Other commitments the Government made and continues to work on include:

- Engaging with Local Authorities to better understand what specific issues they face. To date we have received limited evidence, but we continue to engage and monitor issues by area;
- Engaging with the Department for Health and Social Care and Home Office to determine whether data collection of firework related incidents could be improved and if it would be beneficial to do so;
- Engaging with the Home Office, the police and fire services to better understand what issues they face with fireworks, to inform a decision as to whether non-compliance or criminal activity incidents require a change in the way they are reported;
- An OPSS project aimed at reducing the flow of unsafe products through fulfilment houses within the UK. The project includes capturing data on fulfilment activity within the UK and disrupting the activity of any fulfilment houses supplying unsafe products. While the project does not focus on fireworks, we believe the lessons learned can be applied more widely;
- Engaging with online platforms to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities and are taking action to remove any listings of unsafe products;
- Engaging with the fireworks industry to consider what action can be taken on a voluntary basis. The industry is already considering how they can encourage consumers to read the instructions that come with fireworks (an issue we have identified as part of our evidence base work).

As part of the Government response to the Petition Committee's inquiry, OPSS committed to do further work on noise, and a research programme was commissioned to test the decibel level of commonly used fireworks. The objective of the testing work is to help us understand the decibel level associated with a range of fireworks, and whether there are any that can be considered as "low" noise. In the context of the pandemic, the testing laboratories had to re-prioritise their workload and we hope the testing can be completed later this year.

With regards to the legislative amendments the Scottish Government is implementing, I am keen to understand the impact the changes have made. I believe this is necessary to consider whether similar changes are needed for England and Wales and to what extent the objective could be achieved through non-legislative ways in England and Wales.

I remain committed to considering if it would be appropriate for the Welsh Government to be given additional powers in respect of fireworks. Before advancing on this matter, I would want to wait until the outcomes of commitments the Government has made and the impact of the changes the Scottish Government have implemented have been evaluated. I am mindful that

this approach is supported by the extensive Petition Committee's inquiry (of which I was a member).

I encourage our officials across England, Scotland and Wales to continue to engage and work collaboratively. Of course, I would be happy to discuss the matter again as work progresses.

Thank you once again for taking the time to write, I hope my response is helpful to you.

This letter is copied to Ash Denham, MSP.



PAUL SCULLY MP
Minister for Small Business, Consumers & Labour Markets
Minister for London