

# Firework ABatement Campaign



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Parliamentary debate: 6th June 2016, 4.30PM**

**<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/109702>**

April 2016

W: <http://catherinewheel.wix.com/fab-campaign>

Petition no. 109702 is as follows: Restrict the use of fireworks to reduce stress and fear in animals and pets. Fireworks now occur at all times of the day and evening for many weeks during the autumn and winter. Pet and animal owners struggle to keep their companion animals safe during this extended period.

We call for fireworks use by the general public to be permitted on traditional celebration dates only. The need for reform of the Firework Regulations (2004) has been recognised by a number of organisations and charities. Current regulations are outdated and largely ineffective and we are calling for the improved regulation of fireworks use in the UK.

The petition calls for the regulations to change and asks the government to restrict firework use by the general public to the traditional dates around the Guy Fawkes, New Years Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year celebrations

### **Introduction**

In our report we show the distress caused to people and animals by the use of fireworks on many days and nights during the autumn and winter of each year.

We have gathered information to support our petition from surveys,polls, statements sent in by the public and Freedom of Information Requests sent to UK Police Forces.

Against this background, three findings in particular have drawn our attention.

1. Firework use cannot be classed as a personal freedom. There is nothing personal about fireworks. They can be felt and heard over great distances and negatively affect many people and animals.
2. Online shopping has changed how readily available fireworks have become. Restricting sales and licencing of year round outlets has no effect at all in 2016 on availability, anyone can buy anything, anytime. This includes fireworks.
3. Fireworks can have a direct negative affect on this more vulnerable within society, be it those with a physical condition or a mental health issue. Random fireworks have the ability to worsen illness.

### **Aims**

The overall aim of this petition is to reduce the incidence of random and unexpected back garden fireworks by enhancing the current regulation for firework use by the general public so that (unlicenced 'adult' ) firework celebrations are permitted only on certain days and dates of the year.

## **Reach**

This petition has gained signatures from every single constituency in the UK, even though it has had no national coverage in the newspapers or on television. Contrary to popular belief, it is not only pet owners who are affected by the random use of fireworks. Our findings are that people with the following conditions, mental health issues, epilepsy, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anyone on the autism spectrum are greatly impacted by unexpected fireworks. We have also been contacted by veterans, parents of young children, shift workers and carers of elderly parents who have all expressed support.

## **Support**

Our campaign is supported by a number of high profile individuals, organisations and charities. These include, but not restricted to Baroness Jenny Jones, Deputy Mayoress of London, Gary Streeter MP, Henry Smith MP, Corri Wilson MP, the RSPCA, the SSPCA, and many smaller charities. BVA - The British Veterinary Association are also calling for changes in firework law.

## **Key Facts**

- It is recognised that fireworks have a negative effect on people with some medical conditions
- Over the firework 'season' The RSPCA report a 35% increase in calls from the public since 2011 (2015 figures)
- Fireworks are used 365 days a year, 366 this year.
- In some areas there were only 7 single days free from fireworks between October 2015 and January 2016.
- During the six months of the petition nearly 100 separate firework incidents have been reported in the newspapers.
- Online shopping and the proliferation of retail outlets and garden centres who stock year round fireworks have increased the availability.
- In a general Facebook survey 94.95% of people said they would like to see restrictions in residential fireworks, even though 49.44% of the same people said that fireworks did not cause anyone in their household a problem.

## **WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?**

The problem is RANDOM UNEXPECTED firework use, in back garden type situations, by the general public. Responsible use does not extend to informing neighbours.

## **WHY IT IS A PROBLEM**

RANDOM, UNEXPECTED fireworks cannot be prepared for. People with certain medical conditions, and pet owners would be able to prepare themselves and their animals if they knew when to expect fireworks. The 'creeping firework season' makes this impossible.

### **WHEN THIS IS A PROBLEM**

Fireworks are not, as some people believe, merely a problem that can be managed as it occurs around 5th November and New Year's Eve. Increasingly fireworks are being used to celebrate other occasions such as birthdays, weddings, and even in some cases funerals, alongside any other event or even "just because". This is currently legal in the UK where the law allows firework use 365 days a year from 7am up to 11pm with some extensions for recognised traditional dates.

71% of the reports/complaints to police happened within the hours that it is legally permissible to set off fireworks, i.e. between 7am and 11pm (or midnight/1am for traditional dates).

### **HOW CAN WE SOLVE THE PROBLEM?**

To solve this problem the government should restrict back garden fireworks to traditional dates. Allowing displays and organised events to continue, being the safer option and the best advertised. This will allow preparations to be made by the many people who are affected and will also please the other people who are just plain fed up of constant fireworks. By allowing certain days/dates of use those who do enjoy fireworks can continue to do so, without distressing the long suffering public, many of whom have, to date, been relatively unheard.

**The full summary is attached as a PDF document. We would be pleased if you could read prior to attending the debate on 6th June 2016 at 4.30pm**