

KEY CONTACTS:

CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council will engage with local communities and continue to develop relationships to assist in ensuring safer bonfire management.

Our Environmental Services and Good Relations departments can provide some resourcing and other support toward positive, lawful cultural celebrations.

Council can facilitate dialogue on bonfire management and work with local bonfire builders to plan and consider cleaning up after bonfires and cultural celebrations.

However, Council also has a duty to enforce the relevant legislation and protect its property, relevant to it as a Council and as a landowner. A number of staff have been appointed within the council to work with communities to fulfil the role outlined above and can be contacted as follows:

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Environmental services can provide advice and support to assist you in planning and organising your bonfire safely to reduce the negative impact on the environment. Resources can also be provided to ensure safety at bonfire sites and assistance that can help to reduce the cost of clean ups.

Contacts:

Jackie Barr Tel: **07889 539 353**

(Coleraine & Limavady)

Warner Kirkpatrick Tel: **07841 970 331**

(Ballymoney)

Bryan Edgar Tel: **07809 552 931**

(Ballymoney)

Aidan McPeake Tel: **07525 667 673**

(Moyle)

GOOD RELATIONS

Good Relations can provide support to ensure positive promotion of culture. Developing new and building on existing relations is key to ensuring continued community engagement. Through our Good Relations Programme we can advise, support and facilitate dialogue and mediation to assist in reducing tensions. The Good Relations team can facilitate bonfire safety training and provide a range of opportunities for communities who wish to promote positive cultural identity.

Contact:

Patricia Cameron, Good Relations Manager

Tel: **028 7776 0304** or Mobile: **07702 331 430**

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

NIF+RS will on request, carry out site visits to provide advice on bonfire safety, build good relations with bonfire builders, ensure crews are accepted locally, identify if property or utilities are likely to be impacted, identify hydrant locations, the best approach and resources likely to be required.

NIF+RS will also attend a bonfire related incident when someone from a local community has a concern and requires assistance, to protect life and property.

While not intending to disrupt bonfires, NIF+RS may extinguish a bonfire based on a dynamic risk assessment.

HOUSING EXECUTIVE

HE's Community Cohesion Unit, continues to build relationships with local communities in relation to cultural celebrations. Support can be provided to community groups toward improving bonfire management to reduce environmental damage, better controlled collection of bonfire material, reduce fly tipping and disposal of illegal waste, reduce clean-up costs.

HE will enforce the law where relevant to it as a landowner.

Contact:

Eddie Breslin, Good Relations Officer, Cohesion Unit,

Mobile: **07769 977 897** (9am to 5pm only)

for help with any bonfire issues relating to N.I.H.E.

Estates, within the Causeway Coast and Glens Area.

PSNI:

PSNI help to enforce the law. They will investigate potential injury, damage to property or other unlawful activity.

Local PSNI teams continue to build relationships within communities to ensure positive cultural celebrations.

PSNI will also enforce a number of provisions on roads and help other public agencies in the enforcement of the law.

Contact:

Inspector Donna Bowden, PSNI 101 Ext 63968

Mobile: **07801 738 181**

Sergeant Michael O'Loan, PSNI 101 Ext 83020

Limavady

Inspector David Burns, PSNI 101 Ext 40946

Dervock / Ballymoney / Cloughmills / Rasharkin

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BONFIRE SAFETY, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council aims to engage with local communities to encourage safer bonfire management in order to support positive promotion of cultural celebration.



CULTURAL CELEBRATION:

The tradition of bonfires goes back centuries. Fire was used in early days to celebrate Light's victory over Darkness and marked the control over fire, lighting the dark of night.

According to the Arcade dictionary of origins, a bonfire was a fire in which bones were burned. Historically bonfires were also used as means of communication, primarily to warn of danger.

In Northern Ireland a traditional bonfire has associations with religious or political events. Generally they are used to commemorate feast days or celebrate victories of historical significance.

CELEBRATING SAFELY

Bonfires can be great fun but each year some of the events have seen injury to people, damage to property and negative environmental impact.

This leaflet provides some useful advice on managing bonfires to ensure safer, stronger and healthier communities while ensuring that both the natural and built environment is safe, respected and valued.

PLAN

Planning is key to having a safe and successful bonfire. Advice and support can be provided if you involve organisations such as community groups, land owners (eg housing executive), Fire Service, Police and the local council.

LOCATION OF BONFIRES

Local consultation should be carried out as to where a bonfire will be located. If residents are consulted, it is less likely that there will be complaints from locals. The site of a bonfire should be in an unenclosed space well away from houses, garages, sheds, fences, overhead cables, trees and shrubs. Bonfire sites should be well away from areas where kids usually play.

As a guide, the location of a bonfire should be at ratio of at least 1:5, meaning that the nearest property should not be any closer than 5 times the height of the bonfire.

Wind direction should be taken into consideration to ensure that smoke and fumes do not blow across spectators or nearby homes.

Bonfires should not be positioned on tarmac or asphalt surfaces. If the weather is dry, preferably the surface should be damped down. Ideally a bonfire should be in an area and on a surface that can be easily cleared and cleaned afterwards.

COLLECTING MATERIALS FOR BONFIRES

Stockpiling material in open sites can be dangerous particularly for children and can make the neighbourhood look unsightly and encourage vermin.

Bonfires are often used as a means to dispose of waste materials, sometimes materials that are subject to legal control because of environmental and health impact. Dumping of this waste should not be supported by local communities. Legal action can be taken against anyone who dumps controlled waste at bonfire sites. Examples of control waste include tyres, chemicals, household waste, flammable liquids etc.

If any controlled waste is dumped at a bonfire site, it is advisable to contact the land owner to have the waste removed. This may be the Northern Ireland Housing Executive or the environmental services at your local council (contact details are provided in this leaflet) or possibly a private land owner who can arrange to have it removed.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BURNING OF CONTROLLED WASTE ON BONFIRES

The uncontrolled burning of waste on bonfires can produce substances that can harm the environment. Black smoke contains volatile organic compounds and dioxins which affect the air quality and health of people nearby, particularly the elderly.

The burning of tyres, plastics and upholstered furniture or painted materials may cause problems for asthmatics, bronchitis sufferers, and people with heart conditions and children.

Smoke prevents local residents enjoying their garden, opening windows, hanging out washing and also reduces visibility in the neighbourhood and surrounding roads.

The burning of tyres in particular causes the remains of the bonfire to smoulder for several days prolonging the exposure to the toxins produced.

This also creates a negative perception to tourists or visitors to the area.



STRUCTURE

Stability during the whole burn is key to building a safe bonfire!

When building a bonfire you should think about not only size, but density and dampness. There should be an even distribution of weight and combustibility all around.

The bonfire should be a manageable size.

Remember if it's 5 meters tall it should be at least 25 metres from the nearest building / structure.

It should not contain any potentially hazardous materials that could explode or give off toxic fumes e.g. tyres, gas cylinders, aerosols, batteries etc.

LIGHTING UP

The fire should only be lit under the guidance and supervision of a responsible adult.

NEVER use flammable liquid such as petrol or paraffin to light the fire as these can cause an explosion. Domestic fire lighters should be used. A few points around the bonfire should be used to ensure it is lit and burns evenly.

BE RESPONSIBLE

Keep children away from the bonfire.

Spectators should also be kept far enough away from the burning fire. They should be in an area where they can not be trapped.

Ensure there is plenty of water nearby. Check nearby buildings, out buildings, sheds, tanks etc to ensure they are not subjected intense heat.

In the event of an emergency dial 999.

AFTER THE EVENT: CLEANING UP

It is important to keep the area around the bonfire site as tidy as possible. An untidy bonfire site can make the neighbourhood look unsightly. A smouldering fire remains a risk! It can leave smoke and unpleasant smells for days after the event.

Planning the clean-up is important to ensure the area is cleared and returned to normal as much as possible after the event. Remember, a smouldering bonfire site can remain extremely hot for several days. It is important that the fire is completely extinguished and as soon as safe to do so, the site and surrounding area should be cleared for all debris.

BONFIRES CAN HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS THAT INCLUDE:

- **Illegal dumping of waste materials**
- **Anti-social behaviour associated with the event**
- **Air pollution**
- **Visual amenity**
- **Health impact of emissions**
- **Damage to property**

REMEMBER:

Following the advice and information within this leaflet and planning your bonfire sensibly can help to ensure your bonfire is an enjoyable event for everyone within your community. It can also help to reduce and minimize damage to public land, thus reducing clean up and reinstatement costs.

If the bonfire is planned and managed safely and sensibly, these affects can be reduced making them safer for the whole community.

FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVES

Cages or fences to outline the size of the bonfire, sand bases and willow beacons should be considered for safer and more environmentally friendly methods of having a bonfire to celebrate culture.

