

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Environment and Climate Change Committee

Does this report require to be approved? Yes No

Ref LR/VA Date 30/04/25

Council Fireworks Display 2025 and 2026

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Executive Summary

This report outlines the impacts the current building works at Strathclyde Country Park will have on delivering a safe and enjoyable fireworks event in 2025 and 2026. It outlines advice received from partners and advises that fireworks events are not feasible during the period of construction. It further outlines the approach the service will take to consulting with partners on the benefits and impacts of resuming a fireworks display in 2027 and will bring a further report to committee with proposals.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Environment and Climate Change Committee:

- (1) Note the impacts of building works on the safety and deliverability of a fireworks event at Strathclyde Country Park.
- (2) Note cancellation of fireworks display in 2025 and 2026.
- (3) Note that the service will consult with partners during 2026 to explore the feasibility of fireworks events once the building is reopened and bring options back to Committee.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities
Ambition statement	(15) Encourage the health and wellbeing of people through a range of social, cultural, and leisure activities
Programme of Work	Sustainable Futures

1. Background

- 1.1 North Lanarkshire Council has held a free to attend fireworks display at Strathclyde Park since the mid 1980's. Similar longstanding displays in Airdrie, Coatbridge and Cumbernauld were removed as a budget saving in 2020.
- 1.2 It is estimated that the event attracts in the region of 30,000 – 50,000 attendees from North and South Lanarkshire. The event is financially supported by South Lanarkshire Council contributing 50% of the identified costs. They also support the event through providing and marshalling parking in Hamilton Palace Grounds.
- 1.3 North Lanarkshire Council provide substantial resource in terms of staff costs together with 50% of the identified costs.
- 1.4 The event is organised by Community Operations staff with support from Corporate Communications and in partnership with Scottish Police and Scottish Fire and Rescue as part of a joint approach to supporting community safety on Bonfire Night. Although there is a natural assumption that an organised display reduces levels of fire raising and home firework displays and the concurrent risk of injury and fire damage, there is no data to confirm this.
- 1.5 In 2020 and 2021 the displays were cancelled due to pandemic restrictions. This pause in the event gave an opportunity for the council to assess the merits and drawbacks of continuing to provide a free display.
- 1.6 Many other local authorities have not reinstated fireworks displays since Covid, including Glasgow City Council.

2. Report

Watersports Centre Redevelopment

- 2.1 The enabling works for the building redevelopment are commencing during Spring 2025 with the main contract expected to run from autumn 2025 to early 2027. During this time, the watersports centre and most of the carpark and compound will be within the contractors redline boundary. This will render the building and surrounds unavailable for a fireworks event in both 2025 and 2026.

Impact of Construction Work on Fireworks Event

- 2.2 The service looked at the feasibility of continuing the event at a position opposite the grass event area to the west of the watersports centre. The event changes that would be necessary would be:
 - Move the firing platform into the rowing course area. This would render the rowing course unusable for a number of weeks and risks damaging the course installed for the 2018 championships with potentially high costs for replacement.
 - Relocate the main crowd location to the event site – this is a grass surface so may need to be covered with tracking to provide a safe event area if the weather is poor.
 - Relocate welfare and first aid stations to the event site – the required number of portaloos for the anticipated crowd would utilise a significant part of the site.
 - Relocate food and PA system to event site – further reduction in event site crowd capacity.

- Direct foot traffic along the front of the construction site to the event site – this will be a significant pinch point for the high-volume footfall of the event. There will be queues and frustration. The service has particular concerns about crowd pressure along this area (where the boat jetties are located) as it has a steep fall into water should the crowd pressure not be contained within safety barriers.
 - Agree location for JACC room (control centre for the event) possibly in a temporary facility in the event site.
- 2.3 The cessation of fireworks events in Cumbernauld, Airdrie, Coatbridge, and Glasgow has led to an increased footfall at Strathclyde Park since 2022. It has also seen an increase in traffic issues associated with the event due to families coming from further afield by car. There are annual complaints about the impact the event has on parking in residential areas around the park. The service does what it can to provide as much parking as possible within the park, provides tow vehicles to ensure dangerous parking can be moved and deploys TTRO and parking enforcement. We also use social media to encourage responsible parking and sustainable travel. Despite this, it has proven extremely difficult to eliminate irresponsible parking and the disruption it causes for communities on the edge of the park. No additional approaches have been identified that can alleviate this any further. The building works will further limit the amount of car parking available at the event with the carpark immediately adjacent to the centre being unavailable, further adding to the parking pressure.
- 2.4 In terms of park amenity, there is usually significant temporary land damage to the park as a direct result of the event. Concentrating the event into a smaller area of mainly grass surface will exacerbate this effect.
- 2.5 As part of the normal event planning, there is detailed liaison with Police Scotland regarding terrorism threat, hostile vehicle mitigations and terrorism alert training for staff, and several mitigations have been put in to ensure safety at the event. The scenario described in 2.2 was discussed with Police Scotland. The counter terrorism and security coordinator raised concerns regarding:
- General policing and crowd management issues regarding having an open site which has no general facilities for issues such as lost children, first aid (defibrillators etc) and general shelter.
 - The event site would not benefit from the strategic protection that the building gives in terms of hostile vehicle mitigation and person-based knife attacks. Previous counter terrorism recommendations have utilised the building in some way in terms of using the building as a shelter if a person-based attack was to occur and police training inputs have always used this with the approach to get event stewards to facilitate patrons inside while emergency services attend and neutralise the attacker. If this type of attack was to occur in the event site, the emergency response to this becomes extremely problematic.
 - The event site is directly beside a road which can be accessed, and which represents an easy method even for a self-initiated attacker. The casualty numbers would be extensive and undefended (note the recent Magdeburg attack where a vehicle was able to be used at an undefended crowd and the injuries were over 300).
- 2.6 In conclusion the advice was that the proposal for the event site being the focus of an event where 30 – 50,000 people could be in attendance is extremely hazardous, and accordingly the recommendation was to postpone the event until the new building was complete.

Event Benefits

- 2.7 It is clear that many families look forward to and enjoy the annual fireworks event, however other providers could move into this market and provide similar. This would unlikely be free of charge, on a smaller scale and more dispersed within our communities as seen in other local Authority areas. For example, for many years the largest Bonfire night display in Stirling Council has been successfully run by Bridge of Allan Rotary club and likewise in the Fife Council villages of Burntisland and Anstruther.
- 2.8 In the lead up to bonfire night, there is always publicity around the introduction of Firework Control Zones. This new legislation was introduced primarily in reaction to a level of anti-social behaviour within certain areas of Scotland's main cities, but there has never been a requirement for any such action within North Lanarkshire due to the lack of any significant increase of anti-social behaviour around this time. During the previous two years of the fireworks cancellation as detailed above, Land Services, Police Scotland and Scottish Fire & Rescue did not see a significant increase in the numbers of illegal bonfires they have been asked to remove, suggesting that there is an entrenched minority that indulge in this behaviour and the lack of a council organised event is not going to increase this proportion. However, people were generally being cautious and remaining at home during this pandemic period, so this should be acknowledged albeit there was no formal lockdown on 5th November 2021. Reviewing the situation following this further period of cancellation would allow us to assess this better and provide advice to committee.

Other Options Considered

- 2.9 The team revisited the option of hosting a display at one of the previously used sites within North Lanarkshire in Coatbridge, Airdrie, or Cumbernauld. These sites previously attracted crowds of less than 10,000 each. With all sites it would be extremely difficult to restrict entry. As we only have budget for one display, any of these sites are likely to be overwhelmed by demand from across the authority and potentially Glasgow. In consultation with Police Scotland Operations Planning none of the sites were considered an appropriate alternative both in terms of space for safe crowd management and associated parking and traffic management.

Conclusions

- 2.10 Taking into account all factors detailed above and specifically the recommendation from Police Scotland, the fireworks displays in 2025 and 2026 will now be cancelled.
- 2.11 During November 2025 and 2026 the service would continue to work with other services and partners to monitor the community safety impacts of no council display on bonfire night and work with the Community Safety Partnership to assess the best way forward.
- 2.12 During 2026/27 the service would utilise the budget allocated to the fireworks display to deliver a community based opening event for the new Watersports Centre in 2027, with a report provided to Committee outlining options for this event and future fireworks events at the site.

3. Measures of success

- 3.1 No significant increase in illegal bonfires or fireworks injuries is recorded.
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4. Supporting documentation

n/a

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lyall Rennie".

Lyall Rennie
Chief Officer (Community Operations)

5. Impacts

<p>5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.2 Financial impact Does the report contain any financial impacts? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts been discussed and agreed with Finance? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? Temporary budget underspend will be utilised to offset under recovery during closure and support reopening events</p>
<p>5.3 HR policy impact Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts been discussed and agreed with People Resources? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.4 Legal impact Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.5 Data protection impact Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.6 Technology / Digital impact Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>

Where the impact identifies a requirement for significant technology change, has an assessment been carried out (or is scheduled to be carried out) by the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group (EAGG)?

Yes No

5.7 Environmental / Carbon impact

Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

Positive impacts through reduced air and water pollution and reduced temporary impacts on park amenity.

5.8 Communications impact

Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

There is likely to be disappointment from some sections of the community. This will be managed by promoting the future benefits of the building refurbishment.

5.9 Risk impact

Is there a risk impact?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed?

There may be increased anti social behaviour around fireworks night due to the lack of a council display. This will be monitored and addressed in collaboration with Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue and the Community Safety partnership.

5.10 Armed Forces Covenant Duty

Does the report require to take due regard of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty (i.e. does it relate to healthcare, housing, or education services for in-Service or ex-Service personnel, or their families, or widow(er)s)?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the provision which has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the particular needs of the Armed Forces community to make sure that they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.

5.11 Children's rights and wellbeing impact

Does the report contain any information regarding any council activity, service delivery, policy, or plan that has an impact on children and young people up to the age of 18, or on a specific group of these?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact and the provision that has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the relevant Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

If Yes, has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) been carried out?

Yes No