

# **Dornoch Bonfire Night - Risk Assessment**

## **Introduction**

- Bonfire Night in Dornoch is normally held annually on the nearest Saturday to the 5th of November.
- The event consists of a procession, bonfire and firework display.
- The event is organised by the Festival Week sub-committee of Dornoch & District Community Association (DADCA).
- Historically attendance has been between 300 – 400.
- It is a free entry event for local families which is advertised in the Northern Times and via posters in shops in Dornoch, Embo, Golspie, Lairg, Rogart & Bonar Bridge.
- The event is covered by public liability insurance taken out by DADCA via Highland Council.

As per DTI guidelines, the local police (Dornoch), Highland Fire & Rescue Service (Dornoch) and Coastguard (Dornoch) are informed before each Bonfire Night.

## **Procession**

Bonfire Night starts with a procession through the Town, and commercially manufactured wax torches are available for purchase by responsible adult spectators.

The procession assembles in the Square at 6.30 p.m., and departs heading West past the Castle Hotel. The procession turns left into Eaglefield Road and onwards to the bonfire in Meadows Park.

The procession is supervised by four stewards wearing high-visibility vests carrying wax torches. They also carry mobile telephones. One steward leads the procession and one brings up the rear. A third steward is placed on the corner of Castle Street and Eaglefield Road and the fourth at the junction of Eaglefield Road and The Meadows (by the car park) to ensure road safety.

The procession is nominally at risk from traffic, however this is not judged to be a material risk and has passed off safely, without incident in the past.

## **Parking**

A steward is on hand to ensure that as many cars as possible park in the free Council car park in Meadows Road, minimising the number of vehicles within Meadows Park and thus helping to ensure the safety of spectators.

Parking for disabled spectators is provided within Meadows Park itself, with vehicular access via the side gate where a steward is on-hand to show cars to the disabled parking area (see plan attached).

## **Bonfire**

The bonfire is located over 150 metres from the nearest residential buildings and over 200 metres from the nearest road. It is sited on rough ground at the South end of Meadows Park (see attached map and site layout), an area of community land in Trust for the people of Dornoch.

Meadows Park is primarily used as a football pitch and is generally level ground with short-cut grass. Pedestrian access is via the main gate (north end of site) and an illuminated path is created to the bonfire by means of wax torches on posts. Additional mains-powered lighting is provided by electric lights on top of the 'Games Hut', which is used as the First Aid Post for the event.

The bonfire is roped off to the front and sides at a minimum distance of c. 5 metres, and Stewards monitor the perimeter during the event. As a safety precaution the base of the bonfire is always checked by the organiser for animals and children prior to lighting. The bonfire is lit by firing kindling in the core with the torches carried in the procession. It takes some time to catch, giving everyone more than enough time to get clear.

The bonfire is checked at the end of the event and later during the evening, and the organiser remains in attendance until the fire has died down. The site is cleared of debris over the next week and further visits are made to check the site.

The main risks posed by the bonfire are spectators getting too close and falling into the flames or being struck by bits of the collapsing bonfire. This risk is addressed by roping off the bonfire and having members monitor the perimeter (the heat of the bonfire also keeps everyone at some distance).

## **Firework Display**

The firework display is scheduled to start at around 7:30 p.m. and lasts about 15 minutes. No-one is allowed to bring their own fireworks to the event, although sparklers are on sale to responsible adults. Sand buckets are provided for the disposal of the sparklers and a First Aid post and fire extinguishers are also provided.

The firing zone for the fireworks (measuring approximately 40 metres wide by 20 metres deep) is at the southernmost end of Meadows Park, behind the bonfire. The dropping zone for rockets is to the south, in an uninhabited area of rough ground away from all habitation. Spectators are always at least 30 metres away from the nearest fireworks.

The main risks identified during the display are :-

1. **Risk to those lighting the fireworks** : managed by the use (on a voluntary basis) of professional firemen experienced in lighting fireworks over many years. All fireworks are stored and handled by them.
2. **Risk of spent fireworks falling onto the spectators** : managed by keeping a significant distance between the audience and the firing zone, by using a distant and uninhabited dropping zone.
3. **Risk of burning due to sparklers** : managed by ensuring that sparklers are only sold to responsible adults, and by providing sand buckets to help safely extinguish them.

Refreshments (Soup, Hot Dogs, etc.) are available at the event, but the event is unlicensed and no alcohol is permitted (given the family nature of the event alcohol has never posed a problem).

The safety record of this annual event is excellent (thus far there have been no accidents or injuries reported) however, in the event of a high wind the firework display would be cancelled.

*For more information contact the organiser : Jerry Bishop, Chair, DADCA – Tel : (07766) 528615*