Bonfire nuisance

There are no specific laws relating to garden bonfires or times at which they can or cannot be lit.

However, if a neighbour is repeatedly causing a problem to you by burning rubbish or garden waste it may be considered a statutory nuisance and can be investigated by the council.

If the bonfires are only occasional, we are unlikely to consider them a statutory nuisance and cannot take action. To be considered a statutory nuisance, a bonfire would have to be a persistent problem, interfering a great deal with your wellbeing, comfort and enjoyment of your property.

Smoke from bonfires can cause health problems for asthmatics, bronchitis sufferers, and people with heart conditions and children, but these factors cannot be considered in the assessment of statutory nuisance.

If a bonfire of industrial or commercial waste is giving off black smoke it is dealt with under the Clean Air Act 1993.

How to reduce problems caused by bonfires

To minimise problems we recommend people:

- Only burn dry material
- Never burn household rubbish, rubber tyres, mattresses or anything containing plastic, foam or paint
- Never use old engine oil, methylated spirits or petrol to light a fire or encourage it
- Do not light a fire on damp, still days because the smoke will hang in the air
- Do not light fires at the weekend or on bank holidays when people want to enjoy their gardens
- Be careful if it is windy, because smoke may be blown into neighbours gardens and across roads
- Never leave a fire unattended or leave it to smoulder. Pour water on it if necessary to put it out
- Warn your neighbours in advance as they can make alternative arrangements and will be less likely to complain.
- Consider disposing of the waste in a better way, for example composting, recycling or rubbish collection.

How to make a complaint

If you feel the problem may be classed as a statutory nuisance, have spoken to the person involved (or do not feel you are able to) and the smoke nuisance continues, please complete the report form or contact us with the details.