



## **THE BRITISH FIREWORK CHAMPIONSHIPS - CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

We have taken note of all the comments we have received in the recent consultation we issued and, where appropriate, sought to respond to them in restructuring the way we intend to run the British Firework Championships in future.

There does appear to be a good deal of misunderstanding among some about aspects of the event, particularly the composition of the judging panel and the influence the adjudicator and organisers have over the scores. While these views are virtually all based on assumptions and are simply not correct, we have nonetheless taken these on board and sought to make the whole judging process more open and secure from external influences with the results published for all to see. It is, after all, important that the event is not only run correctly and fairly but is perceived to be so.

Ever since the event was conceived, every effort has been made to ensure fairness and to maintain the spirit of the original concept of creating a 'friendly competition and showcase for the industry'. However, as the status of the event has grown, so the competitive element has to some extent overtaken the goodwill and we now need to address this by tightening up certain aspects of the competition. While this is a shame, it is necessary if we are to maintain the absolute integrity of the event.

### **Fairness of the judging**

A number of comments have been made about this, much of which seems to stem from operators misunderstanding the current process. At the moment, apart from some points which are awarded for the timeliness of entry information etc., the judging is undertaken by a panel of three members of the public (local dignitaries from the Plymouth area such as the Chair of the Council's leisure committee, the editor of the Herald etc.) and three professional people from the event industry, usually including at least one organiser of a major UK event where fireworks are featured.

Although there has been some comment about the aggregation of scores, this has been done to remove any risk of excessive scoring by one judge influencing the overall result. It is standard practice to do this in many competitive events, including the Olympics.

In future the **formal judging panel** will comprise:

Three lay judges – as above

Three professional judges – these will be either event organisers who purchase major displays for their events or senior professionals from the industry with no direct link to any of the competitors.

In addition we are also planning to introduce a **public judging panel** who will be asked to vote for their favourite display on each night.

### **Judges Scoring**

In view of the comments made and our own concern to ensure everything is seen to be run fairly and openly, we are changing the way the judging panel works to ensure that we use the knowledge/experience of the judges in the best way.

Each of the members of the Formal Judging Panel will be asked to rank the displays fired on each night in terms of their preference, namely 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>. They will also be asked to provide a simple feedback statement for each display – what they liked or didn't like about it.

The “lay” judges will be asked to make this ranking on the basis of their overall impression of the display.

The “professional” judges on the basis of technical considerations including:-

- Originality of design
- Use of product
- Rhythm of firing
- Overall effect

In the case of the Public Panel, all their votes will be added to identify the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> on each night.

At the conclusion of each night of the competition, the Formal Judging Panel will meet and will be provided with a report from the adjudicator on each of the competitors in terms of their adherence to the rules, to timings and to safety and they will be asked to similarly vote for each on these factors. The votes for each competitor will then be added to determine the winner on each evening

At the end of the competition the total votes cast for each competitor will be used to determine the overall winner.

### **Prizes**

In line with the above, prizes will in future be given to the winners of each night and to the overall winner. There will be no prizes for second and third instead the winners on each night will get £2000 with the overall winner receiving a further £3000.

The Innovation prize of £750 will also be changed to become the Championship Award and may be given by the Formal Judging Panel to any of the competitors as a special award. This may be awarded for innovation, sportsmanship or any other factor that the judges deem to have added value to the event.

## **Rules**

In view of experiences to date as well as comments made in the consultation about requirements for CAD information etc., the organisers and adjudicators will be meeting in the next couple of months to update the rules for the event.

In advance of this, however, it has been agreed that competitors will no longer be required to provide detailed information, such as CAD data, but much greater emphasis will be placed on the competitors ensuring that they are in control of the risks associated with their displays and that all the material they use is legal.

All competitors will be required to sign an agreement to abide by the rules and to provide accurate information – breaches of this agreement will be reported to the Formal Judging Panel and may be considered possible grounds for disqualification by the judges.

To ensure the rules are adhered to, the Adjudicator will in future undertake spot checks on site of the material being used and the rules will require competitors to be able to demonstrate the safety and legality of the material they are using, if required to do so. The adjudicator will also be empowered to require that unsafe or illegal material is removed from displays, if necessary, and all infringements will be reported to the Formal Judging Panel along with photographic evidence, where appropriate.

In the case of a serious breach of the rules or a safety issue, the Judging Panel may disqualify a competitor. In such circumstances they may ask the competitor for an explanation if they feel this appropriate but this is entirely at the discretion of the judging panel.

Photographs will in future be taken by the Adjudicator of displays being set up, with particular attention to any issues with displays for the benefit of reporting to the Formal Judging Panel. Photographs will also be taken of the completed set-ups by the adjudicator which can be viewed by the judges if questions are raised in relation to angles or other issues. Agreement to have such photographs taken will form part of the competition agreement.

Consideration will be given in reviewing the rules to require that all rigging of displays should be completed by a fixed time (probably 6.30pm) and that access to the site after this time should be severely restricted. Furthermore, only crew working on displays will be admitted to the site during the set-up period.

It is also intended that the rules will be changed to reduce the nominal time between displays to five minutes.

The new rules will be circulated once the review has been undertaken.

### **Report Back to Competitors**

Note has been made of the call for greater feedback from the judges on the displays and this will now be fully addressed.

In future all the scores will be published on the British Firework Championships website. Furthermore each judge will be asked to provide a short comment on each of the displays and these will be passed on (anonymously) to competitors.

It is intended that this information should be made available within a couple of weeks of the event taking place.

### **Protecting the Judges**

It is a concern that the organisers, the adjudicator or the judges should never be put into a difficult position or find themselves in any way under pressure from competitors. For this reason it has always been a rule of the competition that the judges and organisers will not enter into any discussion over the judging decisions.

To further protect the judges from pressure in this respect they will in future all be bound by a confidentiality agreement not to discuss the scoring or to discuss the judging in any way after the event.

**We hope we have addressed the key points raised in the consultation and that the event will gain from this process.**

**We would like to thank all those who made a contribution to this consultation**