

in the way of appropriate policing in rural areas. The law seems to suggest that because loud, continuous music is disturbing only a relatively small number of people in a rural community, it is acceptable. If successful, my Bill would expand the definition of a rave to address that issue. It would create two new offences: of organising a rave, and of transporting sound equipment for use at a rave. People convicted of organising such events would face a tough penalty, providing a strong deterrent. In short, my Bill would make it much easier to prevent raves from happening in the first place.

The police have told me that they have the necessary intelligence on regular organisers, but that can be frustrating because it is not an offence to organise a rave. I shall illustrate that point. Last week, riot police were called out to disperse more than 1,000 revellers as they congregated in my constituency. More than 100 police officers, with dogs and a police helicopter, were used. The operation was, to Norfolk constabulary's credit, successful. However, I dread to think how much it cost. Norfolk police are already struggling with a tight financial settlement, without needing to spend an exorbitant percentage of police funds on stopping raves. Under the Bill, the police could have used the intelligence that they clearly have in order to arrest organisers and seize equipment before the event happened.¹⁵

Mr Fraser had previously secured an adjournment debate on the subject on 19 July 2007, and raised with the minister the question of creating a new offence, and the logistical difficulties for the police:

It often seems to the public that the police are not doing all they can to prevent a rave, but the site of the party is often revealed only a few hours or minutes beforehand, specifically so that the police have no time to act. That means that the law relating to the prohibition of "trespass assemblies", which requires an application to the district council for a prohibition order, cannot be applied. The police have the power to direct people away from a rave in a 5 mile radius of the site, but in the maze of country lanes that criss-cross Norfolk, that would demand huge numbers of police and is not workable.

In practice, the principal offence is:

"Failing to leave the site of a rave as soon as reasonable, once directed to do so."

Again, Norfolk constabulary simply does not have the resources to round up and arrest hundreds of young people who have no intention of leaving. Does the Minister agree that it would be helpful to make attendance at a rave an offence? What about an offence of organising, or being involved in organising, an event?

I am also concerned that the law focuses on single events. It does not pave the way to prosecuting persistent organisers or serial rave-goers. Power to confiscate equipment relates only to the failure to leave today's event, and is not retrospective. Norfolk constabulary told me:

"Because the legislation is aimed at stopping an event, interrogating and possibly arresting people leaving a site at the end of a rave is not within the spirit of the law."

Does the Minister agree that the ability to gather vital intelligence about regular rave-goers, the identity of the organisers or plans for future raves would be hugely helpful to the policing process? Would not it give the police a fighting chance of making progress?¹⁶

¹⁵ [HC Deb 20 February 2008 c365-6](#)

¹⁶ [HC Deb 19 July 2007 cc536-542](#)