

Motion for Council 24 September 2019 (Agenda Item 6)

Balloon and Sky Lantern Release Policy

“Environmental harm and animal welfare issues caused by sky lanterns and mass balloon releases are of concern to this Council and residents of this area. In order to curtail the harmful effects of these activities Council asks the Director of D&E and the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Environment to settle and adopt a policy restricting the use of council land for the release of sky lanterns and balloons.

For information of members a proposed policy would be:

North Somerset Council Balloon and Sky Lantern Release Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 In recent years outdoor balloon and sky lantern releases have become a more common event at summer fairs, fundraising events, opening of new stores, or part of commemorative and celebratory occasions. However, what is less known is what happens once these items have been released and the potentially harmful consequences for wildlife and property that can occur as a result of this form of celebration.

1.2 The Marine Conservation Society (MSC) - an internationally recognised charity for the protection of seas, shores and wildlife has produced a thorough and detailed Pollution Policy and Position statement on Balloons and Sky Lanterns, asking UK Local Authorities to recognise balloons and sky lanterns as a form of littering and to ban all outdoor releases. This stance is actively supported by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), the National Farmers Union (NFU) and many other public organisations.

2. Objective

2.1 The objective of this policy is to discourage and, if possible, to prevent the intentional outdoor release of balloons and sky lanterns in North Somerset and to prohibit releases from Council owned land and premises.

3. Parameters

3.1 This policy covers the release of balloons and sky lanterns within the boundary of North Somerset and sets out the Council's position in relation to the release of balloons and lanterns from Council owned land and premises.

3.2. The policy covers all types of balloon and sky lantern materials. The main types of balloon are latex (rubber) and foil (also known as Mylar) and can include other materials. Latex balloons, whilst biodegradable, may persist in the environment for several years and sky lanterns typically contain a metal frame.

3.3 The principles and commitments set out in this policy apply to all services of the Council and to our contractors and partners delivering council services on our behalf.

4. Principles and Commitments

4.1 North Somerset Council will

- refuse permission for the release of balloons and sky lanterns from any Council owned land and buildings, regardless of the purpose for the release. This applies to Council run events and events run by third parties.
- refuse the sale of sky lanterns at any Council event or property
- require council “standard conditions” relating to outdoor events and organised functions on land or property owned and/or controlled North Somerset Council to prohibit the release of balloons and sky lanterns.
- Regard the release of balloons and sky lanterns from any land or buildings as potential littering and will act where appropriate.

5. Litter

5.1 Where balloons and sky lanterns are released intentionally outdoors and are not disposed of responsibly, they litter the environment and could be considered as a potential littering offence. Where the Council receives evidence of littering through the release of balloons and lanterns, which are not disposed of responsibly, the Council may consider exercising its powers under the appropriate legislation

6. Permitted Releases

6.1 Piloted hot air balloons are not covered by this policy. Helium balloons may also be permitted when used for research purposes, for example, weather balloons, if supporting evidence is provided, identifying any risk and/or any hazards to the environment and with any appropriate mitigation.

7. Monitoring, Assessment and Review

7.1 The Council will inform event organisers of the Balloon and Sky Lantern Release Policy by means of including relevant information within booking forms and other promotional material.

7.2 The Council will include details of this policy within any new letting agreement or leases of land/buildings where permitted events take place.

7.3 The Council will promote the awareness of the potential harm of balloon and sky lantern releases, where appropriate.”

Cllr Donald Davies