

Sky lantern and balloon release Policy

Ref. No.	
Category (Y/N)	
People	
Place	
Corporate	
In Constitution	

Policy Details

What is this policy for?	<p>The Sky lantern and balloon release (SLBR) Policy covers all balloon and lantern releases on Dorset Council land and leased land. It also covers events supported, financially or otherwise, by Dorset Council including those not on Council owned land.</p> <p>Through this policy Dorset Council will also call for the restriction of sky lantern and balloon releases by other landowners across Dorset. It will also carry out public comms dissuading the release of sky lantern and balloon releases by Dorset residents, visitors, businesses and organisations and promote sustainable alternatives.</p>
Who does this policy affect?	<p>The SLBR Policy will affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dorset Council via owned land, leased land, events supported, financially or otherwise, by Dorset Council including those not on Council owned land (Phase 1) Dorset landowners by encouraging them to support this policy Dorset residents, visitors, businesses and organisations and other landowners via the communications plan (Phase 2)
Keywords	Sky lantern release, Balloon release, Single Use Plastic, Plastic, Climate and Ecological Emergency, Environmental Advice, Litter, Fire, Sustainable Memorials
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Dorset Council policy adopted from	This policy applies across the Dorset Council area
Does this policy relate to any laws?	N/A
Is this policy linked to any other Dorset Council policies?	<p>Reference number and details of any other Dorset Council policies this policy is linked to, and in what way they are linked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate and Ecological Emergency – Reducing plastic will reduce Dorset Councils’ carbon footprint, preventing release will decrease littering which can cause harm to wildlife Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site Management Plan Dorset Coast Forum Strategy- this links with Objective 1 - A coast that is at least as beautiful, and as rich in wildlife and cultural heritage, as it is now. Urban Heaths Partnership Management Plan- lanterns can cause wildfires Dorset Waste Partnership Litter Management Policies
Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	N/A
Other Impact Assessments	N/A

Status and Approvals

Status	<i>DRAFT</i>	Version	001
Last review date	N/A – New Policy	Next review date	May 2021
Approved by (Director)	Executive Director of Place John Sellgren	Date approved	
Member/ Partnership Board Approval		Date approved	

Sky lantern and balloon release (SLBR) Policy – Putting it into context

Background to the Policy – setting the scene

Litter Free Coast and Sea (A project of the Dorset Coast Forum which is a hosted partnership of Dorset Council) identified the release of sky lanterns and balloons as an issue in 2015 and set up a multi-agency group to identify ways in which we could reduce them in Dorset. Representatives sat on this group from all the local councils in the Dorset County and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole areas (district, borough, county, town and parish and unitary) along with representatives from Dorset Police, Dorset Fire and Rescue, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset CPRE, Dorset NFU, Environment Agency, Urban Heaths Partnership, Dorset Waste Partnership, Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team, Marine Conservation Society and The Lulworth Estate.

The group:

- Developed a charter to commit to helping to reduce sky lantern and balloon releases across Dorset. This was agreed and can be found at: <https://www.litterfreecoastandsea.co.uk/sky-lantern-and-balloon-release-charter/>
- Sought to put in place and promote bans on all land possible such as DWT reserves, RSPB reserves, estates and bans on all council land too
- Sought to ban/discourage all types of balloon and sky lantern including those that are made from bamboo or claim to be biodegradable and raise awareness of alternatives to balloon releases and sky lanterns
- Gathered evidence on the impact of sky lantern and balloon releases locally.

Following this the Dorset Councils Partnership (North Dorset, West Dorset and Weymouth) adopted a policy on the release of sky lanterns and balloons in 2018. The 2018 policy has been reviewed and incorporated into this policy to apply to the whole of the Dorset Council area.

The Issue

Balloon and sky lantern releases are a popular way of promoting publicity, fundraising and marking events such as weddings or commemorations.

As part of the evidence gathering taken place by the multi-agency group in 2015 a report was collated (see appendix 1). In addition, the group discovered a report created for DEFRA by ADAS in 2013 entitled “Sky lanterns and helium balloons: an assessment of impacts on livestock and the environment”. This document gives a comprehensive account of the evidence of the impact of sky lanterns and balloons. National evidence of impact is sparse. The key potential impacts sky lantern and balloon releases can have are listed below:

- Risks to livestock and animal health (including marine animals) through ingestion, entanglement and fire risk
- Fire risk (sky lanterns only) damaging habitats (including protected ones such as heathland) and property
- Impacts on the environment, littering on land and at sea
- Risks to aviation
- Risks to coastal rescue services (mistaken for distress flares)
- Risks to consumer safety (there is a variety of sky lanterns on the market, some more safe to use than others)
- Waste of limited helium resources (helium balloons only)

National Policy

The UK Government currently has no policy on sky lantern and balloon releases although there is mounting pressure from national charities such as Marine Conservation Society, RSPCA and NFU for national and local bans to be put in place.

Marine Conservation Society recommend that balloons and lanterns are classed as litter and outdoor releases made illegal under existing national legislation such as the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (reference: https://www.mcsuk.org/downloads/pollution/beachwatch/MCS_balloons_and_chinese_lanterns_policy.pdf)

What other councils are doing?

The Marine Conservation Society holds a list of councils in the United Kingdom who have a ban in place on Sky lantern and/or balloon releases. The list has over 80 councils including Cornwall Council and Devon County Council locally. The list can be viewed at: <https://www.mcsuk.org/campaigns/dont-let-go-councils>

Challenges

The main challenge of introducing this policy the issue of enforcement. The 2015 multi-agency group looked into bans in the form of byelaws and public space protection orders and found that public space protection order had been used by other councils (Cornwall Council in 2015) and would be most enforceable.

The other challenge will be getting the policy embedded within the whole council. This is being overcome by the creation of an action plan that gives each Service Manager the tools and the responsibility to embed the policy. A communications campaign across the council raising awareness of the new policy and how to implement it in your work will also be delivered.

Sky lantern and balloon release (SLBR) Policy – Dorset

The following items/activities are included within this policy for 'Lanterns' and 'Balloons':

- All airborne launched lanterns, latex balloons and similar free-floating devices that are not under control once launched.
- Any such device containing a naked flame, fuel cell, helium gas or similar elevation mechanism.
- Special consideration will not be given to devices stated to be Biodegradable as classifications of what is and is not biodegradable varies greatly

Lanterns are also commonly known by numerous names including Chinese Lanterns, Sky Lanterns, Flying Lanterns, Glowing Lanterns, Night Sky Lanterns, Kongming Lanterns and similar.

This Council prohibits the release of balloons and lanterns from Council owned land and buildings. This applies to Council run events and events run by third parties. The council also prohibits the release of balloons and lanterns from events supported, financially or otherwise, by Dorset Council including those not on Council owned land. The Council considers the release of balloons and lanterns from any land or buildings as potential littering and will take action when advised to do so under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 where appropriate.

Litter

Where balloons and lanterns are released intentionally outdoors and are not disposed of responsibly, they litter the environment and as such this could be a potential offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. 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.

Permitted releases

For the avoidance of doubt, 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, as long as supporting evidence is provided, identifying any risk and/ or any hazards to the environment and with any appropriate mitigation.

Working with event organisers/ third parties/ lessees/ licensees

Once the Council is notified of potential releases within the Dorset Council area the Council will work with event organisers to suggest suitable alternatives to outdoor balloon and lantern releases and/ or to provide advice and guidance on the potential disposal of these items.

Monitoring, Assessment & Review

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 materials. The Council will also at its own discretion and where appropriate include details of this policy within any new leases or licences of land and/ or buildings where permitted events take place at those locations. An Action Plan and internal communications campaign will be formulated by hosted partnership project "Litter Free Coast and Sea" (working with Dorset Council Comms team) to ensure all council services embed this policy within their working and promote sustainable alternatives.

A communications plan will also be formulated and implemented to call for the restriction of sky lantern and balloon releases by other landowners across Dorset, dissuade the release of sky lantern and balloon releases by Dorset residents and promote sustainable alternatives.

This Policy will be reviewed in two years' time via an internal audit.