

Ref. No.	
Category (Y/N)	
People	
Place	
Corporate	
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Disposable BBQ and campfire/wildfire Policy

Policy Details

<p>What is this policy for?</p>	<p>The policy is to prohibit the use of disposable BBQs and the lighting of campfires/wildfires at any of Dorset Council’s country parks and other Dorset Council land that is deemed high risk for fire. It also promotes a key message against the general use of disposable BBQ’s and lighting of campfires/wildfires across all Dorset Council areas that are deemed to be highly sensitive to fires such as heathland, dry grassland.</p> <p>Through this policy Dorset Council will also call for other organisations and landowners to restrict the use of disposable BBQ’s and having campfires/wildfires on their own land where it is deemed to be a fire related risk and/or where there are protected and special habitats and wildlife that would be at risk from fire.</p> <p>The Policy will be used by managers, wardens, officers within Dorset Council including those at each of the country parks to reinforce the clear and consistent message rather than having separate rules and messaging relating to disposable BBQ’s use and the lighting of campfires/wildfires.</p> <p>The policy will enable Dorset Council to carry out public communications highlighting this policy to Dorset residents, visitors, businesses and organisations.</p>
<p>Who does this policy affect?</p>	<p>The Policy will affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorset Council Country Parks – Moors Valley CP, Avon Heath CP, Durlston CP and Thorncombe Woods • Other Dorset Council land deemed to be at high risk from fire • Dorset landowners by encouraging them to support this policy • Dorset residents, visitors, businesses and organisations and other landowners
<p>Keywords</p>	<p>Disposable BBQ, Campfire, Wildfire, Climate and Ecological Emergency, Environmental Advice, Litter, Fire</p>
<p>Author</p>	<p>Bridget Betts Email: bridget.betts@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</p>
<p>Does this policy relate to any laws?</p>	<p>The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) Schedule 2 prohibits activities including that “a person cannot light or tend a fire or undertake any act which is likely to cause a fire.” The majority of heathland in Dorset is open access land. Dorset Council, (or where relevant the national park authority) oversees access rights under the CROW Act and may prohibit people from accessing land for 72 hours for failing to comply with Schedule 2 provisions.</p> <p>The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 covers damage to a SSSI and a person found to have intentionally or recklessly caused destruction or damage can be prosecuted and fined. Dorset Council and/or Natural England may enforce these provisions and institute proceedings for any offence.</p>

	Existing Byelaws - Three Byelaws are currently in place, covering specified areas of Dorset only, which ban lighting of flames, fires and stoves; including the Forestry Commission, National Trust and Weymouth and Portland area. Those organisations can monitor compliance. Non-compliance is an offence under each Byelaw, which can be enforced by the organisations and/or the Police and those found guilty can be fined. These could be actively enforced by the Council and those other organisations who have Byelaws in place. Natural England are currently consulting on a new Byelaw to protect areas of SSSI, which includes a prohibition on use of barbeques and stoves in those areas.
Is this policy linked to any other Dorset Council policies?	Reference number and details of any other Dorset Council policies this policy is linked to, and in what way they are linked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate and Ecological Emergency – Reduction in fire related activities and release of CO2, reducing litter will reduce Dorset Councils’ carbon footprint, preventing release will decrease littering which can cause harm to wildlife • Urban Heaths Partnership Management Plan- disposable BBQ’s and campfires can cause wildfires, especially near heathlands • Dorset Waste Partnership Litter Management Policies • AONB Management Plan
Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	N/A
Other Impact Assessments	N/A

Status and Approvals

Status	<i>DRAFT</i>	Version	<i>001</i>
Last review date	N/A – New Policy	Next review date	May 2022
Approved by (Director)	Executive Director of Place John Sellgren	Date approved	
Member/ Partnership Board Approval		Date approved	

Disposable BBQ and campfire/wildfire Policy – Putting it into context

Background to the Policy – setting the scene

There has been a significant rise in incidents of fire damage across Dorset as a result of disposable barbecues that have not been disposed of correctly and because of people lighting campfires/wildfires especially on or near heathland and dry wooded areas.

The most serious of these incidents has been the wildfire at Wareham Forest which affected 180 hectares of heathland in 2020 and was declared a major incident by the Fire and Rescue Service. Concern about these fires has resulted in questions being raised about the Council’s role in helping to prevent incidents like this occurring. This policy has been developed with a range of Dorset council officers and partners including Forestry England and the Dorset and Wilshire Fire and Rescue Service. This policy is part of a range of options for helping to reduce wildfires in Dorset.

The Issue

With increased temperatures during the summer months there is an increased risk of wildfires. The better weather means that more people are spending more time eating outdoors and with the price and availability of disposable BBQ's it has meant that there has been a huge increase in their use. This has led to a significant increase in fire related to disposable BBQs in Dorset. Also there has been an increase in wild camping, especially in relation to Covid 19 with more people visiting Dorset that would have previously gone abroad. Wild camping can mean that there is more chance of campfires and cooking outdoors.

The risks from disposable BBQ's not being disposed of correctly and campfires/wildfires not being extinguished correctly include:

- Fire risk to properties and infrastructure near places that are considered high risk e.g. visitor centres and heathlands
- Risk to life from wildfire. Risk to staff that's not necessarily life threatening, such as burns and smoke inhalation.
- Risks to rescue services when having to deal with wildfires
- Fire risk damaging habitats and species
- Risks to livestock and animal health through fire risk
- Impacts on the environment e.g. littering on land, discarded coals in the soil and in lakes
- Impact to other users of the sites, such as the smoke generated by BBQs.

National Policy

The UK Government currently has no policy on disposable BBQ's and campfires although there is mounting pressure from others for such bans to be put in place.

July 2020 Rebecca Pow (Conservative) stated "There are existing powers in legislation which can be used by authorities to regulate and prohibit the lighting of fires on Access Land in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks. Current 'Byelaw' legislation allows for local authorities to restrict and enforce the use of disposable barbecues in parks and public spaces. The Government has no plans for additional legislative proposals to introduce a seasonal ban on the use of disposable barbecues.....an updated Countryside Code which advises not to have barbecues or fires is being produced" <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-07-01/67540>

What other councils are doing?

There is mounting pressure from others for such bans to be put in place – Although not a council this campaign did involve the council but was a partnership brought together by the Peak District National Park. By working together, they promoted a key message against BBQ's in the forest and many retailers stopped selling disposable BBQ's as a result. <https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/your-council/news-and-publications/latest-news/3094-crackdown-on-disposable-barbecue-use>

Challenges

The main challenge of introducing this policy is the issue of enforcement. While enforcement can be difficult having a clear policy means that there is a clear and consistent message from Dorset Council that can be cited by the staff working at any of the DC locations. This greatly helps with enforcing this policy and provides the backing from DC to approach members of the public who are not adhering to or aware of the rules. While not all members of the public will adhere to the new policy it is suspected that it will help to reduce the number of incidents.

Effective communications around the policy and visible signage will help overcome any challenges. Community engagement will be key so that residents can act as messengers to communicate the ban to wider audiences within and outside Dorset.

Disposable BBQ and campfire/wildfire Policy – Dorset

The following items/activities are included within this policy:

- The use of disposable BBQ's
- The lighting and campfires/wildfires

This Council prohibits the use of a disposable BBQ and the lighting of campfires or wildfires on Dorset Council land including their three Country Parks. These include:

- Moors Valley CP
- Durlston CP
- Avon Heath CP

In addition:

- Thorncombe Woods.
- All other Dorset Council areas deemed at high fire risk – these areas are related to heathland, meadowland, uncut grassland or areas where there is evidence of fire risk

Criteria for deciding if a site should allow/ban disposable BBQ and campfires/wildfires:

- o Habitat type – Is the habitat susceptible to wildfire? (Example; heathland, grassed sand dunes, long meadow grassland would be considered at risk. Amenity grassland, beach, would be low risk)
- o Have there been any incidents of wildfire within the past 5 years?
- o Is the site vulnerable to antisocial behaviour?
- o Is there good emergency access onto the site?
- o What is the fuel load like? (is the vegetation dense/thick without any fuel breaks, are the species highly flammable? Example, gorse)
- o Is there any contamination on site that would increase risk (example: old landfill site)?
- o Neighbouring land use should be considered. Does it increase the risk? Example, fuel station

Litter and Waste - Additionally this policy will help with litter issues associated with disposable BBQ's that are not disposed of responsibly as well as reduce the amount of waste in public bins.

Monitoring, Assessment & Review - The Council will have clear signage and messaging at each site and be available on the DC website, and associated CP websites, relating to the prohibited use of disposable BBQ's and the lighting of campfires/wildfires. They will inform any group event taking place on DC land, by including relevant information within booking forms and on other promotional materials.

Communications - A communications plan will be formulated and implemented to call for the ban of disposable BBQ's and lighting of camp and wildfires on our land as well as by other landowners across Dorset. It will promote safe alternative activities for the public.

Partnerships hosted by Dorset Council such as Litter Free Dorset will encourage businesses to stop selling disposable BBQs and use community groups to spread the message of the ban to wider audiences.

Review - This Policy will be reviewed each year via an internal audit.