

Place and Resources Overview Committee

25 February 2021

Options for the control of Disposable Barbeques and other fire related activities

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bryan, Highways, Travel and Environment

Local Councillor(s): All Councillors

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

Report Author: Bridget Betts

Title: Environment Advice Manager

Tel: 01305 224760

Email: bridget.betts@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

- (a) Cabinet are recommended to adopt a two-step approach to the control of disposable barbeques and other fire related activities firstly focussing on increasing public awareness about the risks and the wider impacts through campaigns, policies and schemes, then if necessary, introducing legislation which will result in penalties for those in contravention.
- (b) To achieve this Cabinet are recommended to approve the following options:
 - (1) Not to pursue designating areas or Dorset Council areas with a PSPO relating to BBQ's and fire related activities this year but evaluate 2022 (Option 1)
 - (2) Not to pursue having a specific byelaw at this current time (Option 2)
 - (3) The Sky Lantern and Balloon Policy and the new BBQ and campfire/Wildfire Policy is adopted by Dorset Council (Option 3)
 - (4) Moors Valley to investigate the gas/electric communal style BBQ option with Forestry England later (Option 4)

- (5) Officers to investigate partnership funding options to support having a new Firewise voluntary warden scheme delivered through the Dorset Firewise project (Option 5)
- (6) The campaign and communication work are supported and developed and taken forward for 2021 season in line with any recommendations from this report. (Option 6)
- (7) Dorset council initiate a coordinated approach to the banning of disposable BBQs in agreed high risk area's locations. This work should link with Option 3, 5 and 6 (Option 7)

Reason for Recommendation:

This two-step approach considers the cost, the length of time it takes to introduce new legislation and difficulties in enforcement as well as the effectiveness of various control methods. The recommended approach aims to balance the various options presented to Committee.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Cabinet authorised officers, working with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue and other partners, to proceed with detailed work to establish an options paper that looks at both the legislative as well as other alternatives available to control or prohibit barbeques and other fire related activities in the Dorset Council area.

1.2 The reason for this was due to a rise in incidents of fire damage across Dorset as a result of disposable barbecues that have not been disposed of correctly and campfires especially on heathland and dry wooded areas, an increase in wild camping and the release of sky lanterns.

1.3 The most serious of these incidents has been the recent fire at [Wareham Forest](#) which affected 180 hectares of heathland 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.

1.4 The development of a range of options was carried out collaboratively with partners and officers including the Dorset and Wilshire Fire Service, Urban Heath Partnership and officers within the council. This report will enable Dorset Council to understand and look at a range of options which could work most effectively alongside those available to the Fire and Rescue Service, Police and our other partners.



1.5 There are seven options considered within this comprehensive report and under each option there is detail on its background, a description of the option, the pros and cons, financial implications and an example/case study where control measures have been used before.

1.6 Some of the options considered (section 10) ultimately require enforcement, operationally in terms of offenders being identified and administratively to ensure that any penalties are followed up and dealt with correctly. Without due regard for the provision and funding of these resources any control measures put in place may not be effective. The options consider different approaches that work across the area, and for all partner organisations.

1.7 This is a complex issue, and the options should not be considered individually but used in conjunction with each other or around specific target areas. Recommendations in this report have been discussed by partners and officers and present a multifaceted cost effective and deliverable approach.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 There is a financial cost of implementing some of the recommendations. An annual staff resource cost of £18,500 is required to deliver option 5 - a new Firewise voluntary wardening scheme across Dorset. For this to be successful and effective it is recommended that this should be for 3 years (approx. £56,000). It is proposed that a partnership approach to funding this would be taken, therefore sharing the cost across different organisations.

2.2 Most communications and campaigns can be carried out in house but there is likely to be one-off costs associated with some of this work including banners/resources over the next few years. Individual campaigns/resources will need to find a budget to carry out this work going forward.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

By preventing and reducing the risk of wildfire this reduces risk to life and the physical and emotional side-effects encountered by communities impacted by such events. Negative impacts to natural habitats and wildlife will also reduce.

4. Climate implications

With increased temperatures during the summer months there is an increased risk of wildfires. Warmer weather generally results in more people spending time outdoors resulting in an increase in disposable barbeque use which in turn has resulted in more fires related to their use. Wildfires have a negative impact on air quality and release significant amounts of Carbon Dioxide into the atmosphere

contributing to Climate change this is further exacerbated temporarily as burned vegetation can no longer absorb carbon from the atmosphere until it starts to regrow.

5. Other Implications

Litter and waste - litter issues associated with disposable BBQ's that are not disposed of responsibly is an ongoing issue as is the amount of packaging that comes with people having BBQ's. A reduction will help reduce the amount of waste in or around public bins.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low/Medium

Health and safety - risk to human health and safety in spring/summer

Health and safety - Ecological risk with loss of habitats and species, risk to live in the areas close to heathland, wooded areas.

Reputational risk is rated as medium- the need for action has been recognised by Dorset Council Cabinet. To do nothing would increase our reputational risk.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

An EqIA has been carried out for the two proposed policies and actions relate to an inclusive communication plan to ensure all affected groups are communicated with.

8. Appendices

There are 4 appendices with this report

- Appendix 1 – The Sky Lantern and Balloon release DC Policy
- Appendix 2 - The BBQ and Campfire/Wildfire DC Policy
- Appendix 3 – Dorset Firewise volunteer warden scheme proposal
- Appendix 4 – The Dorset 2020 BBQ campaign

9. Background Papers

9.1 Background

9.1.1 In recent years, there have been a many incidents of fire damage across Dorset as a result of disposable barbecues especially on heathland and dry wooded areas and the release of sky lanterns and other antisocial activities.

9.1.2 It is felt that one of the main causes of wildfires is disposable barbeques (BBQ)'s that have not been disposed of correctly. Having BBQs in beautiful locations has been growing in popularity over the years. Having a BBQ is seen as an important social activity for family's especially in rural landscape settings. There has been a move away from picnics to BBQ's and it is felt this is because disposable BBQs are inexpensive and have become readily available at many shops, making it easy for everyone to have a BBQ away from their home.

9.1.3 Sky lanterns have also been an issue and are often used at celebration or memorial events. Previous councils before Local Government Organisation have had policies in place supported by different organisations to ban the release of sky lanterns and balloon on their own land.

9.1.4 The most serious BBQ incident was the 2020 fire at Wareham Forest which impacted 180 hectares of heathland and was declared a major incident by the Dorset and Wilshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS). Table 1 shows the number of incidents relating to bonfires and BBQs over the past 5 years. It shows that there has been a huge increase in BBQ related fires from 2016 to 2020 and therefore action clearly needs to be taken by all.

| Year | BBQ |
|-------|-----|
| 2020* | 74 |
| 2019 | 18 |
| 2018 | 16 |
| 2017 | 3 |
| 2016 | 4 |

Table 1: The number of incidents relating to bonfires and BBQs over the past 5 years Figures supplied by Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service

* incomplete year 01/01/2020-26/10/2020

9.2 Current Legislation

There are two key pieces of legislation in place which address the lighting of fires on the county's 8,500 hectares of heathland. They are:

9.2.1 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act 2000) - This Act relates to the majority of majority of heathland and many woodlands in Dorset, as under The Act they are open access land. Schedule 2 of The Act provides a list of activities which, if undertaken, forfeit a person's right of access to the land for 72 hours. Schedule 2 includes 'light or tends a fire or undertake any act which is likely to cause a fire'. However, the CROW Act 2000 does not make the lighting of such fires a criminal offence. The local authority, (or where relevant the national park authority) oversees access rights under the CROW Act 2000. The scope for identifying persons who thus forfeit their right of access, and enforcing it in the following 72 hours, are in general extremely limited. [It is interesting to note that Section 25 of the CROW Act 2000 appears to provide Natural England (NOT the council) with powers to issue directions excluding/restricting access to land where necessary for the purpose of fire prevention.]

9.2.2 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (W&CA 1981) Section 28P (6A)

- This addresses damage to a SSSI and could be used if damage has been proven to be recklessly caused by use of a BBQ. The legislation states: “A person (other than a section 28G authority acting in the exercise of its functions) who without reasonable excuse:

(a) intentionally or recklessly destroys or damages any of the flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features by reason of which a site of special scientific interest is of special interest, or

(b) intentionally or recklessly disturbs any of those fauna.....is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale. This is a relatively small fine; however, this Section creates a number of more serious offences – for example if the person knew it was an SSSI they were damaging, the fine can be unlimited in Crown Court.

NB: that the regulator for all of this Section is Natural England and that the W&CA 1981 does not make the lighting of fires, BBQs etc. an offence per se – there must be damage, so it is a reactive control, after the fact.

9.3 Statutory responsibilities for promoting fire safety

9.3.1 Statutory responsibilities for promoting fire safety, including the provision of information, publicity and encouragement in respect of the steps to be taken to prevent fires and death or injury by fire rests with the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority through the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/section/6>

9.3.2 With its wider responsibilities the Council also has a role to play in helping to protect the public and Dorset’s environment. It is a complex issue and there needs to be a balance in place to ensure that the decisions Dorset council take do not risk pushing the problem to land managed by other organisations which may not have the resources or enforcement powers in place to prohibit activities which present a fire risk.

10 Proposed Options for managing disposable BBQs and other countryside fire risks with recommendations

The proposed options (section 10) were written and discussed in collaboration with a range of partners and officers including the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service, Urban Heath Partnership and officers within the council. It will enable Dorset Council to understand how a range of options could work most effectively alongside those available to the Fire and Rescue Service, Police and our other partners.

This is a complex issue, and the options should not be considered individually but used in conjunction with each other or around specific target areas.

10.1 OPTION 1: DESIGNATION OF A PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER

a) Background

Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPOs) are made under Section 59 Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. An Order can be made if a council is satisfied, on reasonable grounds, that two conditions are met, namely:

- activities carried out in a public place within the council’s area have had a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality; or,
- it is likely that activities will be carried on in a public place within that area and that they will have such an effect.

And, the effect, or likely effect, of the activities—

- is, or is likely to be, of a persistent or continuing nature,
- is, or is likely to be, such as to make the activities unreasonable, and
- justifies the restrictions imposed by the notice.

PSPOs are enforceable by the council by the issue of fixed penalty notices (FPNs), potentially leading to prosecution. Authorised officers may issue FPNs and the council may authorise suitably trained officers from other bodies to enforce the provisions. PSPOs have the potential to be an effective method of formal control that the Council could put in place to control the use of barbecues and open fire cooking in Dorset.

b) Description of potential option

Make a Dorset Council-wide PSPO for preventing the use of disposable BBQs and open fire cooking and within it identify each specific public place (either by name or nature) which together would form the restriction. By identifying specifically, the nature of the PSPO in the title will prevent the overlap of land restriction with other PSPOs which may arise on the same piece of land.

c) Pros and cons

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longevity - PSPOs expire after three years but can be extended for a further three years if the Council considers it necessary to prevent the original behaviour from occurring or recurring, following stakeholder consultation • If witnessed - on the spot fine and quick resolution. • Authorised officers are not necessarily Council employees, if suitably trained |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It takes time to create a PSPO - before making a PSPO, the Council must consult the police, any community representatives the Council considers appropriate, which is likely to also include a full public consultation, for a minimum period of 12 weeks. This would then need to be reported through the committee process before determination and being made. Once made there must be a period of 6 weeks before becoming an enforceable restriction as there is a |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>period of appeal. The whole process can take up to 18 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate signage must be in place at suitable locations, and this must be suitably publicised in the media and on websites • Staff serving FPNs must be suitably authorised and trained in the provision of FPNs • It is only in place for 3 years; this can be extended through a reduced public consultation with appropriate stakeholders and the Police. Any variation or extension must be suitably publicised once completed. Staff resource – Relevant areas of land can be extensive and the ability of the council to resource this activity will be an issue that needs consideration |
|--|---|

d) Financial/resource implications

There are officer resource implications in producing a consultation document, reports to committees/cabinet and the formulation of the results in a report to present to the public. Furthermore, procedures and training will need to be provided to authorised officers, whether these are internally/externally employed. Production, provision and location of appropriate signage will be needed at each of the entrances to the affected areas, and probably within the affected areas if appropriate. The enforcement of the restriction by authorised officers, travel, time spent at the location, any written work associated and any enforcement related process, must all be considered.

e) Example/Case study

Dorset Council is currently undertaking a review of the Dog related Public Spaces Protection Orders and related byelaws that were formerly across the previous sovereign councils. The current work is looking to harmonise and simplify dog related restrictions to protect public safety and the environment whilst enabling dogs (and their owners) to enjoy exercising. The set-up work takes considerable officer time, not just in the department where the Order is to be used. Enforcement is difficult but not impossible with few officers authorised and such a wide area to enforce, dog ownership being in such large numbers and the ability to walk dogs in public open spaces a well-practised undertaking in many locations.

DWFRS – Whilst there are clear benefits to a PSPO, as already identified, the enforcement that would be required would be very difficult to achieve. DWFRS fully supports education and prevention activities and the NFCC message of responsible use but it is unlikely we would be involved in enforcement action. We will continue to educate and provide patrols for educational purposes.

f) Recommendation: Not to pursue designating areas or Dorset Council areas with a PSPO relating to BBQ's and fire related activities this year but evaluate 202/22

g) Justification for recommendation:

The concept of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), as provided by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 S 59 et seq., is certainly potentially relevant to the question of unwanted fires and BBQs in Dorset's heaths, woodlands etc. However, it must be stressed that this statutory tool cannot be viewed in isolation; rather, it is a potential part of an overall strategy, set in the context of the other recommended options discussed in this report. There are several considered reservations about implementing a PSPO at this time including:

- It must be borne in mind that the simple existence of such an order will not of itself stop unwanted BBQ/fire activity. This could be achieved only with suitable publicity on a number of levels, combined with a critically necessary ability to meaningfully enforce such an order. All laws rely on a mixture of responsible compliance and a degree of regulatory/enforcement visibility. This balance varies depending on the law and the particular circumstances. In this instance, it is felt that implementing a PSPO at this time runs a risk of credibility loss because of the limitations on enforcement resources. It would certainly be necessary to investigate the scope for considerably widening the number of officers and other partner organisations involved in enforcing such an order.
- The preparation of a PSPO takes considerable time and resource, especially on the scale and in the circumstances being considered. Officers do have experience of this work, and skills to do it; however, for both capacity and PSPO procedural reasons, preparing and implementing a PSPO for Summer 2021 would be exceptionally difficult to achieve.
- As seen in the above points, the use of legal powers and laws does not necessarily offer the promise of an easy way to reduce the number of unwanted BBQs and consequent wildfires. Arguably at least, if not more significant, is the use of a coherent set of communication, education and facilitation approaches as outlined in some of the other Options presented.

Dismissing regulatory powers out of hand is not an option and is not being suggested. Indeed, it is felt that the idea of a PSPO should be very much 'kept on the table', but at this stage should be positioned within the overall strategy timeline as a measure to be implemented in the future if it is felt that other strategy elements need to be supplemented in this way. Such an approach would be consistent with the principles of good regulatory enforcement policy. It is worth noting that whilst there is currently no statute specifically prohibiting BBQs on open land in Dorset, in terms of communications the CROW Act 2000 and W&C Act 1981 provisions can already be packaged up in a way that makes it quite clear that people should not be undertaking such activity.

10.2 OPTION 2: CREATION OF A NEW DORSET COUNCIL BYELAW

a) Background

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. A Council Byelaw can create an offence for non-compliance, which can be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court, and result in a fine on conviction

b) Description of potential option

Create a new bylaw for specifically for disposable BBQs

c) Pros and cons

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Byelaws do not automatically expire therefore once in place can remain for the foreseeable future |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The process for approval is particularly lengthy, requiring consultation, submission to the Secretary of State for approval, further consultation and decision of Full Council.• Staff resource – there will be a considerable cost implication to enforce any new bylaw• Confusion about route to enforcement/prosecution• Many examples where they are not considered effective due to enforcement of them e.g., Weymouth and Portland BBQ bylaw |

d) Financial/resource implication

There are initially officer resource implications in producing a consultation document, reports to committees/cabinet and the formulation of the results in a report to present to the public. Also, producing a byelaw and following the lengthy process to get sign off by the Secretary of State. Furthermore, procedures and training will need to be provided to authorised officers, whether these are internally/extremally employed. Production, provision and location of appropriate signage will be needed at each of the entrances to the affected areas, and probably within the affected areas if appropriate. The enforcement of the restriction by authorised officers, travel, time spent at the location, any written work associated and any enforcement related process, must all be considered.

e) Example/Case study

The government has strict rules when it comes to the use of common land, and town and public greens. Some areas of common land, which includes spaces owned by the local council, privately, or by the National Trust, have different regulations, with some not allowing the lighting of fires or use of barbecues. In a few parts of the country, such as Birmingham and areas around London, byelaws are in place prohibiting the lighting of barbecues in green public spaces. However, in most locations – including Sheffield and Glasgow – barbecuing in public parks is permitted, providing it takes place within a designated barbecue area and care is taken to avoid the risk of fire and of scorch damage to park furniture and grass.

DWFRS – Having designated BBQ areas is a positive option which we could include within our education messages in the hope of prevention of incidents. This ties in with the NFCC message around responsible use of BBQ's and allows for the allocation of designated areas for safe outdoor cooking in the future.

f) Recommendation: Not to pursue having a specific byelaw at this current time

g) Justification for recommendation:

Use of byelaws is subject to the same enforcement resource considerations as PSPOs.

PSPO enforcement powers are ultimately stronger and more flexible: they include the crucial ability to serve fixed penalty notices, whereas byelaws can be enforced only by prosecution in the magistrates' courts, giving the perpetrator no option to avoid a criminal record. Prosecutions are an expensive last resort, and in many cases where a PSPO fixed penalty notice would be highly appropriate, prosecution for breaking a byelaw will be exceptionally unlikely.

It should also be noted that in any event a byelaw ceases to have effect whilst a PSPO is in place in the area concerned.

For these reasons it is felt that if a more formal regulatory approach is to be included at any point, the use of a carefully considered, coherent and integrated PSPO is very likely to be much more effective and efficient, legally and financially, than introducing byelaw/s. PSPOs were introduced precisely to allow a more modern and adaptable regulatory tool for many such situations.

10.3 OPTION 3: CREATION OF NEW DORSET COUNCIL POLICIES

a) Background

Dorset Council do not have any policies regarding barbeques and fires. A policy or a range of policies would only typically apply to council owned land and those that use council land.

Balloon and sky lantern releases are a popular way of celebrating events such as weddings or commemorations. As part of the evidence gathering exercise by a multi-agency group in 2015 a report was collated building on from 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 identified for sky lantern and balloon releases which related to this options paper include fire risk (sky lanterns only) damaging habitats (including protected ones such as heathland) and property.

A Sky Lantern and Balloon release policy was put together and supported by many councils and organisations before Local Government Reorganisation. This was facilitated by Litter Free Coast and Sea (part of the Dorset Coast Forum – a hosted partnership at Dorset Council). This policy has been revisited and is available in appendix 1

b) Description of potential options

- Adopt the Dorset Council Sky lanterns and Balloons Policy – **Appendix 1**
- Adopt the new Disposable BBQ’s and campfires/wildfires Policy - **Appendix 2**

c) Pros and cons

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy and quick to do • Can share and lead by example – encourage other organisations to adopt a DC policy • Can influence what we do on our land easily and can be put in to new and existing contracts • Can provide staff with certainty and the backing when asking people/visitors to our sites to conform with the policy |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less powerful than byelaws or PPSO’s • People/organisations and staff are not always aware of DC policies • Enforcement of policies needs to be addressed for policies to work effectively |

d) Financial/resource implication

We have the existing staff resources within Dorset Council to write policies for Dorset Council Cabinet approval. There would need to be a concerted effort to get other organisations to either support or adopt them. This would involve staff resource within the communications team as well as other teams.

e) Example/Case study

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.

DWFRS - NFCC Guidance states “NFCC does not advocate the use of sky lanterns under any circumstances” and DWFRS fully endorses this message.

f) Recommendation: The Sky Lantern and Balloon Policy and the new BBQ and campfire/Wildfire Policy is adopted by Dorset Council

10.4 OPTION 4: ESTABLISHING CONTROLLED BARBEQUES AREAS AT DIFFERENT LOCATIONS

a) Background

There are many ways to have controlled BBQ areas at a range of locations. These controlled areas are found in many places both in the UK and abroad e.g. Australia. They are a way to enable people to have BBQ's during nice weather in a controlled way rather than having BBQs in areas that a very sensitive to fire e.g. heathlands. It would be essential to work with Town and Parish Councils and other partners to agree these areas, have the same consistent messaging and similar type of infrastructure that would be clear for users. The aim being that residents and visitors in Dorset are clear what is permitted and where and there is some uniformity to the facilities provided in Dorset for the purpose of BBQs. There would also need to be some consideration on whether fireproof bins are a requirement at specific locations if disposable BBQs are used.

b) Description of potential option

Identify green space and park areas within the Dorset Council area where controlled BBQ areas are available for people to use.

c) Pros and cons

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easier to enforce no BBQ rules if there is an allowable alternative in a controlled area• Keeps BBQ use under control• If adopted by all partners in the Dorset Council area, then messaging will be easier for the users to understand• Will help to move to a clear message for all of Dorset – code of conduct for having a BBQ on any designated area• Can help move people away from more sensitive locations• Supported by DWFRS |
|-------------|---|

| | |
|-------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be Dorset wide branded and have clear messaging alongside |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On hot days there will not be enough facilities to accommodate everyone • Will still needs some level of enforcement • Potential for increased waste/litter • Potential to encourage large parties/alcohol |

e) Financial/resource implication

We have existing staff resource to work with Town and Parish councils and other partners to establish the different areas which could be made available, develop the simple infrastructure and develop clear and effective messaging. There will however be a financial implication to buying whatever is decided and installing these. A simple cost-effective solution might be to have picnic tables with a branded metal sheet attached to half of the picnic table. Having fireproof bins would be another cost. Other options of electric grills could only be installed where there is an electric supply however with this option there would be a staff cost to clean and provide the administration of a booking system.

f) Example/Case study

Dorset Country park examples

Currently barbecues are available for day hire at DC Avon Heath Country Park. It is an exclusive fenced off area with two barbecues, and two further barbecues on the main green, which can be hired for £30 for one BBQ and £50 for the two per day. The use of portable barbecues is strictly prohibited due to high heath fires risk in the area. <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/countryside-coast-parks/country-parks-and-visitor-centres/avon-heath-country-park/park-facilities/for-hire/barbecue-hire-at-avon-heath.aspx>. This hiring system can bring in a small income for Dorset Council.

At Moors Valley Country Park doesn't technically have designated areas for BBQs, but people do tend to gravitate towards the main picnic area. Forestry England have stopped allowing them in the Forest picnic area over the last 6-7 years. Over the last few years Moors Valley have only allowed portable BBQs in the picnic area and its proximity to the visitor centre makes it viable for the rangers to manage. However, issues have mainly been that disposable BBQs still used on tables or grass, causing damage and are a huge fire risk, the disposal of coals or the actual disposable BBQs ends up in bushes or the lake. During summer 2020 Moors Valley completely banned BBQs of all kind, due to the increased fire risk and extra pressures of Covid. Aside from a few people breaching it, it worked well with no real complaints

The picture shows an example of a multi-use BBQ area in Australia. Gas or electric BBQs that are coin



operated, £2 for 10mins with the right signage in place are used by people responsibly. They take their food waste / litter home with them. Rangers clean it ready for the next people. In Australia people would just BBQ at these dedicated areas, but happily sit at another picnic bench to eat.

There are other examples of free-standing areas where disposable BBQs could be used. Picnic tables with metal sheeting on one side has also been used in various locations including the lake District with some only success. Moors Valley CP have tried benches with designated metal plates for BBQs, but it did not work with people still burning through the tables and throwing their coals in bushes.

DWFRS – this is something DWFRS would fully support and as in line with the message they want to share

f) Recommendation: Moors Valley to investigate the gas/electric communal style BBQ option with Forestry England later

10.5 OPTION 5: HAVE A COMMUNITY FIREWISE VOLUNTARY WARDEN SCHEMES AT HIGH FIRE RISK AREAS AND SENSITIVE LOCATIONS

a) Background

Community fire watch schemes can be a good way to engage those living near to high-risk fire areas. Dorset Firewise is an initiative that helps local communities who live in areas where they are at risk from heathland wildfires. Creating communities that are informed, prepared and safer is the main aim behind this work.

b) Description of potential option

Increase the scope of Dorset Firewise to cover all high-risk areas of Dorset and develop and implement a Dorset Firewise volunteer warden scheme – **Appendix 3**

c) Pros and cons

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We already have a community scheme and resource that is working • It is linked to an international project Firewise • It is supported and linked to the Dorset and Wilshire Fire and Rescue Service • It is a great way to involve local communities • It puts the problem and solution in the hands of the local community • It can be delivered digitally |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be time/resource intensive • There will be a financial cost to setting this up and for maintaining the volunteers |

d) Financial/resource implication

Currently Dorset Firewise sits under the Urban Heath Partnership and has an officer employed for 14 hours a week. This covers areas relating to the heathland in BCP and Dorset area. There would need to be some investment in staff resource to make this a full-time officer post to ensure that all other (outside the heathland areas) high risk communities in Dorset could be included. There would also need to be a small resource budget to pay for the leaflets and other resources for carrying out this work. It is estimated that an extra £18,500 per year would cover all costs. It is also recommended that to ensure its success that it would need to be run for three years.

e) Example/Case study

Dorset Firewise is an initiative that helps local communities who live in areas where they are at risk from heathland wildfires. Creating communities that are informed, prepared and safer is the main aim behind this work. Firewise is a new approach for both Dorset and the United Kingdom where the communities, those that manage the heath, and the emergency services are brought together to help reduce the risk from wildfire to properties and provide safer and more resilient communities. Run as an initial pilot project in 2018 Dorset Firewise brought together an 'at risk community' with the key stakeholders through neighbourhood meetings. These meetings have led to the production of relevant information and a better understanding around the management of heaths and the risks associated with wildfire. This has created community members who have taken more responsibility in relation to wildfires, who not only feel better prepared but are also sharing the key messages to others.

It is funded as a part time role through heathland mitigation in DC and BCP area and sits within the Urban Heaths Partnership (a hosted partnership within Dorset Council). There is more than enough work for the current heathland sites, and it would be recommended that if this option was chosen that more funding be identified to extend this work and implement a Firewise warden scheme across a larger area.

DWFRS – are very keen for Firewise to be promoted across the county and continue with the excellent work that is already being done. Engaging with the community to make properties safer from the risk of fire is a priority. We would need to carefully consider the use of community fire watch schemes and how such groups would interact with other users of the land, this could potentially sit alongside Firewise

f) Recommendation: Officers to investigate partnership funding options to support having a new Dorset Firewise voluntary warden scheme delivered through the Dorset Firewise work

10.6 OPTION 6: COMMUNICATION

a) Background

Roadside signage is an excellent way to let those travelling to nature/beach sites that there is a fire risk, and that fires and BBQs are not allowed during periods of extreme hot and dry weather. It is essential that permanent and seasonal signs are used rather than signs that are there all year round. DWFRS currently have a system in place that utilises Council signage. It is stored at Wareham Fire Station and there is a procedure in place for signage to be deployed. The signs are recovered promptly to maintain impact. This service will continue for 2021.

Communication campaigns – there has been a range of successful campaigns during 2020 including the Litter Free Dorset, Urban Heaths Partnership and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service BBQ campaign. The Urban Heath partnership and Litter Free Dorset are two partnerships hosted by Dorset Council within the Environment Advice Team. The campaign provides shops, campsites and supermarkets with resources to put at sale points of disposable barbeques as well as running a social media posts across several platforms.

<http://www.litterfreedorset.co.uk/current-projects-and-campaigns/bbqs-burn-more-than-bangers/>

Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service provide information on weather alerts and BBQ safety. It also has a referral scheme called Firesetters to report young people up to age of 18 years who are acting irresponsibly to tackle such behaviours www.dwfire.org.uk/firesetters

DWFRS - are very keen to continue supporting cross agencies media messages alongside its own messages which we are happy to be shared by Partners.

Working with others is a brilliant way to deliver effective and powerful messages. Developing and supporting campaigns and ways of working is a cost-effective way to deliver communication.

b) Description of potential options

- Continue to use the Dorset Council roadside signage.
- Deliver and support targeted campaigns through partnership working.

c) Pros and cons

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactive and proactive • Can work together with partners • Address a lot of different audiences • Target specific areas • Easy to do • Easy to push out over a range of partner and DC social media |
|-------------|--|

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messaging at Point of sale/working with retailers can be difficult with national chains but may work with local independents • Needs good coordination to avoid conflicting and disjointed messaging |
|-------------|---|

d) Financial/resource implication

As the signs are already produced, stored and managed by DWFRS there is no cost to continue this. If more signs are required there will need to be a small resource budget but on an ad hoc basis.

To develop and support the ongoing campaign work a small amount of resource is required for new signs, campaign materials, banners, Social media posts etc to deliver successful campaigns. A small budget is required for specific resources.

e) Example/Case study

The Litter Free Dorset, Urban Heaths Partnership and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service BBQ campaign has run throughout the summer of 2020. Details the campaign, its success, reach and lessons learned can be found in **Appendix 4**

f) Recommendation: The campaign and communication work are supported and developed and taken forward for 2021 season in line with any recommendations from this report.

10.8 OPTION 7: BBQ'S TO BE BANNED IN CERTAIN LOCATIONS/AREAS

a) Background

There have been many petitions asking the government to support the banning of disposable BBQ's during 2020 as there have been many fires and a major incident in Dorset at Wareham forest. The Litter Free Dorset, Urban Heath Partnership and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire service 2020 campaign has already linked with many retailers, supermarkets and campsites to support the message around BBQs on heathlands and this could be widened to larger commercial and non-commercial organisations.

In 2020 many places had posters up showing support and some smaller retailers who sold disposable BBQs before the Wareham fire are no longer selling them thanks to this work. However, the large supermarkets have an enormous amount of these disposable BBQs for sale and the local managers are not allowed to make any decisions on removing them as a sale item. A larger more corporate approach, linking with national government, is required if banning of disposable BBQ's is to be successful.

The use of the term 'ban' is a highly effective, hard hitting and simple tool to convey a 'Don't do it' message and can help the council achieve its objectives in this issue. At the same time, it will be important for officers and members to

understand the legal limitations of such an informal term; for example, is it indicative of a legally enforceable prohibition, or is it more a reflection of an arrangement/agreement between partners? It will also need to be clear whether bans relate to sale, use or possession etc.

DWFRS would be looking to support the NFCC message around disposable BBQ's and the safe and responsible use rather than an all-out ban.

b) Description of potential option

Instigate a coordinated approach to the banning of disposable BBQs in agreed high risk area's locations. This work should link with the new BBQ and campfire/wildfire policy in section 10.3 (Appendix2).

c) Pros and cons

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to instigate • Builds on the Dorset BBQ campaigns • Working in partnership to deliver the same message to the public • High profile • Linking to government on this issue on a Dorset united front |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement is lacking • Hard to engage the large national retailers e.g., Sainsburys, Asda • Would only be applicable to some locations considered high risk and therefore may push the problem elsewhere |

d) Financial/resource implication

The financial/ resource implication is primarily around staff time to do the engagement with a range of different partners and organisations. Based on the 2020 BBQ campaign this takes time recognising that the best way to engage with retailers, campsites etc is by face-to-face visits. This work links with many of the options within this report including:

- Option 3 (10.3) the introduction of a new BBQs and campfire/wildfire policy
- Option 5 (10.5) a firewise voluntary warden scheme
- Option 6 (10.6) and the support and development of a new campaign material and linking with other businesses and organisations. There would be staff resource in the communications team and the Environment Advice team to enable success.

e) Example/Case study

Example 1: In 2020 The New Forest National Park Authority called on other organisations to support and retailers across the Forest to remove disposable



barbecues from sale and for a continued ban on fires and barbecues in the open countryside of the National Park. The move followed large numbers of disposable barbecues being used while the New Forest was at extreme risk of fire. Multiple fires had to be put out and numerous areas of scorched earth were left across the protected habitats when fire warnings were still in place. Forestry organisations including the National Park Authority, Forestry England, Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and the National Trust worked with the emergency services to educate the public about the dangers of disposable barbecues and fires, and to protect the Forest and coast. They plan to continue the campaign for summer 2021. <https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/news/new-forest-national-park-authority-calls-for-ban-on-disposable-bbqs/>

Example 2: Derbyshire have worked with landowners and organisations across the Peak District area to prohibit use of disposable BBQs. It is not legislation or a Byelaw or Order with enforcement powers, just an agreed unified approach. <https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/your-council/news-and-publications/latest-news/3094-crackdown-on-disposable-barbecue-use>

f) Recommendation: Dorset council initiate a coordinated approach to the banning of disposable BBQs in agreed high risk area's locations. This work should link with Option 3, 5 and 6

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.