
Prohibiting the intentional release of balloons, sky lanterns and non-biodegradable streamers on Council land.



Council of the
ISLES OF SCILLY

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VERSION HISTORY			
Date	Version	Author/Editor	Comments
July 2018	1.0	Officer: Waste and Recycling	Draft policy
July 2018	1.1	Officer: Waste and Recycling	Final draft
July 2018	1.2	Officer: Policy and Scrutiny	Formatting & comments
August 2018	1.3	Officer: Waste and Recycling	Final changes

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EQIA) RECORD					
Date	Is this an existing, revised or new/proposed policy?	Type of assessment conducted	Summary of actions taken & decisions made	Approved by	EqIA review date

DOCUMENT RETENTION	
Document retention period	Until superseded

Prohibiting the intentional release of balloons, sky lanterns and non-biodegradable streamers

Introduction

Balloons and sky lanterns are hazardous to wildlife, livestock, humans and property and can cause false call-outs for the Coastguard and other emergency services. Non-biodegradable streamers are also believed to represent a particular risk to marine life around the Isles of Scilly.

This policy statement covers the intentional release of balloons, sky lanterns and non-biodegradable streamers on Council land and at any events held by Council of the Isles of Scilly on other land.

Within this policy the term 'release' refers to the intentional act of releasing a balloon, sky lantern and non-biodegradable streamers into the general environment.

Within this policy the term 'balloon' refers to any inflatable flexible bag filled with gas, such as helium, hydrogen, nitrous oxide, oxygen or hot air made from materials such as rubber, latex, natural latex, paper, polychloroprene, foil, mylar or a nylon fabric. This includes all balloons whether or not biodegradable.

Within this policy the term 'sky lantern' refers to any structure made of thin material supported by a frame and lifted by heat from a naked flame or any other heat source. Commonly these are made of thin paper held by a wire or bamboo frame but this policy covers all sky lanterns whatever their construction.

Non-biodegradable single-use streamers, commonly referred to as tickertape and confetti, could contain plastic and therefore take longer to break down in the environment.

Balloons

Once a balloon has been released it can rise to a height of 5 miles where, typically, the balloons do not burst but instead fall back down partially inflated. Once they land on the land or at sea they may cause significant harm through entanglement and choking. If balloons are mistaken for food they can find their way into the food chain.

Balloons can cause a choking and ingestion hazard for livestock as the pieces of balloon, ribbon and string may fall into grazing fields or be caught on hedges or fences.

This policy does not include balloons which could be released for research purposes. If a release for research purposes is proposed to take place on Council land, the Council must be notified in advance and, if required by the Council as a condition of access onto the Council's land for this purpose, a full risk assessment must be carried out to consider any risks posed and appropriate mitigation and shared with the Council for comment prior to any such release or permission being given to enter the Council's land for that purpose.

Sky lanterns

Sky lanterns pose similar choking and ingestion threats to wildlife and livestock as balloons.

Sky lanterns can cause false callouts to the Coastguard and other emergency services with a significant increase in recent years.

Sky lanterns on farms pose a fire hazard to dry standing crops, stacks of hay or straw, forestry and farm buildings. They can also pose a fire hazard elsewhere.

Sky lanterns vary in size and performance and when released can travel a considerable distance from the release points at unpredictable heights. CAA guidance states that this unpredictability could cause sky lanterns to become a risk to aviation through airborne engine ingestion. The risk of aircraft collision is small, but the location of St Mary's Airport and Tresco Heliport are such that any release could have an impact on aircraft landing/taking off from the islands and whilst airborne.

Non-biodegradable streamers

These are single-use streamers, such as tickertape and confetti, which could contain plastic and therefore do not break down in the natural environment. They could also find their way into the food chain.

Alternatives

The Council recognises that there may be occasions when it is desirable to use materials for celebrations, promotions or other activities. However, the Council encourages the use of alternatives to the materials covered by this policy, such as:

- Flags, banners, pop-ups and material streamers made from cotton for example, save money and time over balloons, string, helium and lanterns.
- Balloon sculpture - turn balloons into something stunning.
- Virtual balloon races – an internet-based balloon race that uses real time weather data and internet maps.
- Biodegradable confetti, such as dried petals.
- If balloons are used they must be tethered so that they can easily be gathered in for disposal once their use is finished with.

Even if these alternatives are used it is important they are responsibly disposed of in an environmentally friendly way when their use is finished with.

Impacts on the use of Council land and Council endorsed or supported events

All intentional balloon, lantern and non-biodegradable streamer releases on Council-owned land and property. The Council will not endorse or support events at which releases will be made contrary to this policy.

The Council will not provide financial support to events at which releases contrary to the provisions of this policy are to be made. The Council may make it a condition of any funding for an event that this policy will be complied with, irrespective of whose land the event is held on, and any failure to comply with such conditions may result in a requirement to repay any funding provided, if demanded by the Council.

In relation to Council land, we will impose such restrictions as we consider appropriate in any permissions, licences, leases or other documents or concessions we provide permitting the use of our land, to ensure compliance with this policy. Failure to adhere to those conditions or this policy may result in permission to use our land being terminated and the less favourable treatment of future requests to use our land.

Where appropriate we will impose conditions on event hire to make it clear that the release of balloons, sky lanterns and non-biodegradable streamers is prohibited according to the terms of this policy statement and make those using such items responsible for their safe operation and their safe and immediate removal and disposal, in an environmentally friendly way.

Where it is possible to prove littering offences through the use of balloons, sky lanterns or non-biodegradable streamers contrary to this policy the Council may take formal action under its environmental protection powers, which may result in the imposition of penalties.

It is hoped that this policy may lead to further prohibitions on other people's land across the islands. Consultation with the Duchy of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust has demonstrated support, in principle, for adoption of similar policy.

Evaluation and review

This policy statement will be reviewed by the responsible service area after five years, or earlier if required.

References

Marine Conservation Society Pollution Policy and Position Statement:

http://www.mcsuk.org/downloads/pollution/beachwatch/MCS_balloons_and_chinese_lanterns_policy.pdf

NFU <http://www.nfuonline.com/back-british-farming/love-your-countryside/the-dangers-of-sky-lanterns/>

IAA Aviation Safety Leaflet: *Sky Lanterns and the risk to aviation.*

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