

Table of Contents

Cover Sheet	2
1 Policy Details	2
2 Status and Approvals	4
The Sky lantern and Balloon Release DC Policy v 1.0	5
EQIA	7
1 Before completing this EqlA please ensure you have read the guidance on the intranet.	7

Ref. No.	
Category:	
People	
Place	Yes
Corporate	
In Constitution	

Sky lantern and balloon release Policy

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>Dorset Council Dorset landowners Dorset residents visitors, businesses</p>
Keywords	<p>Sky lantern release Balloon release Single Use Plastic Plastic Climate and Ecological Emergency Environmental Advice Litter Fire Sustainable Memorials Heathland</p>
Author	<p>Name : Bridget Betts Job Title: Environment Advice Manager Tel: 01305 224760 Email: bridget.betts@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</p>
Does this policy relate to any laws?	<p>Environmental Protection Act 1990 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 Crime and Policing Act 2014.</p>
Is this policy linked to any other Dorset Council policies?	<p>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site Management Plan Dorset Coast Forum Strategy Urban Heaths Partnership Management Plan Dorset Waste Partnership Litter Management Policies</p>

<p>Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)</p>	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) An EqIA has been carried, in summary most of the impacts are neutral or unclear</p> <p>Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but it is not anticipated at this moment in time there will be impacts of this on the protected characteristic groups</p>
<p>Other Impact Assessments</p>	<p>Financial Implications</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Individual campaigns/resources will need to find a budget to carry out this work going forward.</p> <p>Climate implications</p> <p>With increased temperatures during the summer months there is an increased risk of wildfires.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Risk Assessment</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

Status and Approvals

Status	Live	Version	
Last review date	April 2021	Next review date	
Approved by (Director)	John Sellgren, Executive Director of Place	Date approved	6 th April 2021
Member/ Partnership Board Approval	Cabinet	Date approved	6 th April 2021

Policy Details

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

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.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Before completing this EqIA please ensure you have read the guidance on the intranet.

Initial Information

Name:	Bridget Betts
Job Title:	Environment Advice Manager
Email address:	Bridget.betts@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
Members of the assessment team:	
Date assessment started:	20/01/2021
Date of completion:	21/01/2021
Version Number:	V2

Part 1: Background Information

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Existing	
Changing, updating or revision	
New or proposed	x
Other	

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Internal (employees only)	
External (residents, communities, partners)	x
Both of the above	

What is the name of your policy, strategy, project or service being assessed?

BBQ and Campfire/wildfire Policy
Sky Lantern and Balloon release Policy

What is the policy, strategy, project or service designed to do? (include the aims, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy)

The main purpose for both these policies is to reduce wildfire incidents across the Dorset Council area relating to disposable BBQ's, campfires/wildfires and sky lanterns. In addition, they will help reduce injury to wildlife and litter from balloons and disposable BBQ's.

What is the background or context to the proposal?

Over the past few years there has been a significant increase in wildfires related to disposable BBQs and campfires/wildfires in Dorset. In 2020 the devastating Wareham fire triggered a response from councillors to look at investigating this further and to explore options to reduce this impact. As agreed by Dorset Council Cabinet <https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?Ild=10198&Opt=3> a BBQ and other fire related activities options paper has been put together with many Dorset Council officers and other partners including the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service. It looks at both the legislative and other alternatives available to

control or prohibit barbeques and other fire related activities relating to the Dorset Council area. Two of the recommendations are to adopt the BBQ and Campfire/wildfire Policy and Sky Lantern and Balloon release Policy.

Part 2: Gathering information

What sources of data, information, evidence and research was used to inform you about the people your proposal will have an impact on?

For BBQ's - The most serious BBQ incident was the summer 2020 Wareham Forest Fire which impacted 180 hectares of heathland and was declared a major incident by the Dorset and Wilshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS). The table below show the number of incidents relating to 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

For Sky lanterns – The 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 did this data, information, evidence and research tell you?

This data from the DWFRS showed evidence of a large increase in wildfires from disposable BBQs, especially in 2020. A huge increase in visitors due to Covid 19 in summer 2020 as well as the hot summer weather has put more pressure on the natural environment, and this is believed to be why there is a significant increase. This trend is expected to continue for 2021 as Covid 19 is still very much an issue. We expect there to be more staycations and more people accessing the natural environment.

For BBQ and Campfire/Wildfire Policy - They key issues derived from evidence are:

- 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.
- 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.

For Sky lantern and Balloon Policy - They key issues derived from evidence are:

- 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)

Is further information needed to help inform this proposal?

no

Part 3: Engagement and Consultation

What engagement or consultation has taken place as part of this proposal?

BBQ and Campfire/wildfire Policy – worked with many officers in the council together with the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, Forestry England, the New Forest National park and other organisations.

Sky Lantern and Balloon release Policy – Litter Free Coast and Sea have worked with a range of organisations to write the policy including 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

How will the outcome of consultation be fed back to those who you consulted with?

Consultation with the relevant organisations has been fed into the two policies. It is clear that a clear communications plan is necessary to ensure the policies are communicated to a different range of people including those who do not have English as their first language.

It is also clear that DC need to work in partnership with other organisations and businesses to ensure that these policies are not only adopted by others but the sharing of key consistent messages to a diverse range of people through a joint campaign is carried out and is effective in reducing the risk of wildfire.

Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment Guidance before completing this section.

Not every proposal will require an EqIA. If you decide that your proposal does **not** require an EqIA, it is important to show that you have given this adequate consideration. The data and research that you have used to inform you about the

people who will be affected by the policy should enable you to make this decision and whether you need to continue with the EqlA.

Please tick the appropriate option:

An EqlA is required (please continue to Part 4 of this document)	x
An EqlA is not required (please complete the box below)	

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqlA because:

Name: Bridget Betts Job Title: Environment Advice Manager
Date: 20/01/21

Part 4: Analysing the impact

Who does the service, strategy, policy, project or change impact?

- If your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option. Please cut and paste the template accordingly.

For each protected characteristic please choose from the following options:

- Please note in some cases more than one impact may apply – in this case please state all relevant options and explain in the ‘Please provide details’ box.

Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Age:	Neutral/unclear
What age bracket does this affect?	
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but we do not anticipate at this moment in time there will be an impact of this protected characteristic group.

Disability: (including physical, mental, sensory and progressive conditions)	Neutral/unclear
Does this affect a specific disability group?	
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but we do not anticipate at this moment in time there will be an impact of this protected characteristic group.

Gender Reassignment & Gender Identity:	Neutral/unclear
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but we do not anticipate at this moment in time there will be an impact of this protected characteristic group.

Pregnancy and maternity:	Neutral/unclear
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but we do not anticipate at this moment in time there will be an impact of this protected characteristic group.

Race and Ethnicity:	Unclear																		
Please provide details:	The floating of lanterns is often a tradition within the South Asian communities, the data below details the breakdown of race and ethnicity in Dorset.																		
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Race & Ethnicity</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>All Residents</td> <td>365,153</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White British & Northern Irish</td> <td>95.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller</td> <td>0.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other White</td> <td>2.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups</td> <td>0.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Asian/Asian British</td> <td>0.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</td> <td>0.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Ethnic group</td> <td>0.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Race & Ethnicity	%	All Residents	365,153	White British & Northern Irish	95.6	White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.1	Other White	2.3	Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups	0.8	Asian/Asian British	0.9	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	0.2	Other Ethnic group	0.1
	Race & Ethnicity	%																	
	All Residents	365,153																	
	White British & Northern Irish	95.6																	
	White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.1																	
	Other White	2.3																	
	Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups	0.8																	
	Asian/Asian British	0.9																	
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	0.2																	
Other Ethnic group	0.1																		
Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics																			
Whilst, not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, the introduction of this policy would only prohibit their use on council land.																			

--	--

Religion or belief:	Unclear																						
Please provide details:	<p>The lighting of lanterns is often associated with religious festivals such as Diwali and Buddhist festivals, the data below shows the breakdown of religion and belief in Dorset.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Religion or Belief</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>All Residents</td> <td>365,153</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Christian</td> <td>65.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Buddhist</td> <td>0.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hindu</td> <td>0.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jewish</td> <td>0.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Muslim</td> <td>0.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sikh</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Religion</td> <td>0.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Religion</td> <td>25.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Religion Not Stated</td> <td>8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics</p> <p>Just over 1% of the population identify with other religions including Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism and these tend to be concentrated in Dorset towns. There are also concentrations around military establishments such as Blandford Camp where the Gurkhas and their families live who are predominantly Hindu.</p> <p>Whilst, not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision the introduction of this policy would only prohibit their use on council land</p>	Religion or Belief	%	All Residents	365,153	Christian	65.1	Buddhist	0.3	Hindu	0.1	Jewish	0.1	Muslim	0.3	Sikh	0	Other Religion	0.5	No Religion	25.4	Religion Not Stated	8
Religion or Belief	%																						
All Residents	365,153																						
Christian	65.1																						
Buddhist	0.3																						
Hindu	0.1																						
Jewish	0.1																						
Muslim	0.3																						
Sikh	0																						
Other Religion	0.5																						
No Religion	25.4																						
Religion Not Stated	8																						

Sexual orientation:	Neutral/unclear
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but we do not anticipate at this moment in time there will be an impact of this protected characteristic group.

Sex (consider both men and women):	Neutral/unclear
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but we do not anticipate at this moment in time there will be an impact of this protected characteristic group.

Marriage or civil partnership:	Unclear
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision. however, we are aware that sky lanterns and balloons are often used at weddings and civil partnership ceremonies. This policy would mean that these could not be let off on council land and as part of the communications plan alternative suggestions would be offered.
Carers:	Neutral/unclear
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but we do not anticipate at this moment in time there will be an impact of this protected characteristic group.
Rural isolation:	Unclear/positive
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, however, by introducing this policy reduces the risk of fires to properties and businesses in rural locations, especially farms.
Single parent families:	Neutral/unclear
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but we do not anticipate at this moment in time there will be an impact of this protected characteristic group.
Social & economic deprivation:	Neutral/unclear
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but we do not anticipate at this moment in time there will be an impact of this protected characteristic group.
Armed Forces communities	Neutral/unclear
Please provide details:	Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision, but we do not anticipate at this moment in time there will be an impact of this protected characteristic group.

Part 5: Action Plan

Provide actions for **positive**, **negative** and **unclear** impacts.

If you have identified any **negative** or **unclear** impacts, describe what adjustments will be made to remove or reduce the impacts, or if this is not possible provide justification for continuing with the proposal.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
All protected characteristic groups	A communications plan for both policies that covers a whole range of different people, with different languages and incorporates visual (pictorial) messages to ensure our message from the policy is shared to all equally	Bridget betts/James Potten	May/June 2021
	A new DC web page developed to provide clear messaging and why we doing this and who we are working with. Link to the Litter Free Website where there are resources etc	Bridget Betts with web team Sophie Colley, Litter Free Dorset	May/June 2021
	A coordinated campaign with key messages to ensure all audiences are catered for – including clear visual messaging and videos/subtitles	Bridget Betts, James Potten Sophie Colley, Litter Free Dorset	May/June 2021
Marriage and Civil Partnerships, Religious beliefs and Race and Ethnicity	Communications to these groups on sky lantern and balloon release is specifically required – detailed in the communications plan. Link to the Litter Free Coast and Sea website where there is more information on alternatives to sky lantern and balloon release for religious and marriage/civil partnership celebrations.	Matilda Manley, Litter Free Coast and Sea	April/May 2021

EqIA Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA:	Bridget Betts	Date:	21/01/2021
Equality Lead:	Susan Ward-Rice	Date:	21/01/2021
Equality & Diversity Action Group Chair:	Rebecca Forrester	Date:	21/01/2021