

## POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Environment and Community Panel		
DATE:	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2020		
TITLE:	A ban of mass balloon, sky lantern release and flying rings		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Development		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Culture, Heritage & Health		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Nathan Johnson		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

### **REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE**

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:

To present an update on Cabinet Report dated 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016, which proposed as ban on the mass release of balloons and sky lanterns from Borough Council land.

To propose a ban of flying rings on Borough Council beaches.

#### KEY ISSUES:

The release of balloons and sky lanterns in the outdoor environment poses a significant threat of harm to wildlife and livestock from ingestion, entanglement, entrapment and possibly cause the animals to panic.

The flame within sky lanterns can also pose a fire hazard and, when released out to sea, pose a significant risk to the proper and effective operation of coastal rescue Services.

Flying rings are a potential danger to sea life and in particular, sea lion pups as they may become trapped around the neck of the pups and may cause strangulation of the pup as they mature / grow, if they are not caught and the ring removed.

This has been highlighted in the local press via the friends of Horsey Seals who have been touring the coastline towns of Norfolk and Suffolk highlighting the danger of flying rings.

All of these items are also a potential source of litter and waste in the environment.

The present ban only applies to those people / groups 'hiring' and / or using Borough Council land Inc. beaches.

#### OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

- Change the wording in the Code of Conduct to include a ban mass release of balloons and sky lanterns by anyone on Borough Council land.
- Include the ban on mass release in the Terms & Conditions of Hire, presently under development.

- Borough Council to sign up to the Norfolk County Council Balloon and Lantern Release Charter.
- Provide and promote links to alternatives to the mass release of balloons and sky lanterns such as those provided by the RSPCA.
- To ban the use of flying rings on Borough Council Beaches and liaise with the friends of Horsey Seals to encourage public education Inc. retailers.
- To establish a Code of Conduct for the ban on flying rings.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Panel are requested to consider the recommendations and make any appropriate recommendations to Cabinet.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

To protect wildlife and the local environment.

## **REPORT DETAIL**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 At a cabinet meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016, the proposed ban of Mass Balloon and Sky Lantern Releases from Borough Council land was discussed.
- 1.2 A Draft Code of Conduct was also developed and discussed (appendix 1).
- 1.3 In 2012 Defra commissioned a desktop review of the evidence on sky lanterns and helium balloons. The findings were that there are risks from both. However, the report suggested that robust evidence is sparse, but particularly affects the marine environment. Defra have therefore made the decision not to ban at a National level for the time being leaving the decision to organisations and local Councils.
- 1.4 Norfolk County Council have recently developed a Charter regarding the release of sky lanterns and balloons from land and property owned by the county council.
- 1.5 The use of Flying Rings have been added to this report as an emerging issue of concern, specifically on the beaches where mislaid/discarded rings present a danger to seals in particular.

### **2. Proposal**

- 2.1 Amend the wording in the Code of Conduct to include a ban mass release of balloons and sky lanterns by anyone on Borough Council Land and / or property.
- 2.2 Include the Code of Conduct ethos into the Terms and Conditions of hire of any borough Council land or property.
- 2.3 Borough Council to sign up to Norfolk County Councils Sky Lanterns and Balloon Release Charter (appendix 2).
- 2.4 Provide and promote links to alternatives to the mass release of balloons and sky lanterns such as those provided by the RSPCA.
- 2.5 Ban the use of flying rings on Borough Council Beaches

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 None

### **4. Consultation**

- 4.1 None

### **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 As the release of balloons and lanterns has not been set in law at a national level, the Borough Council can merely advise and promote the non-release of balloons and sky lanterns as there are no enforcement powers to append this Code of Conduct too.

5.2 This is the same for the use of flying rings.

## **6. Background Papers**

6.1 Report to Cabinet – dated 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016

6.2 NCC's – Sky Lanterns and Balloon Release Charter.

6.3 RSPCA's – Alternatives to Balloon Releases and Sky Lanterns.

**DRAFT CODE OF CONDUCT**

There have been cases of livestock or other animal loss, including cattle, horses, sheep and goats as a result of ingestion of parts from sky lanterns and balloon debris. Entrapment and panic are also issues affecting livestock and wildlife. Unexpired sky lanterns pose a fire hazard and a significant risk to the proper and effective operation of coastal rescue services.

The Council value and want to make sustainable use of our environment, support our rural economy and do not want to encourage activities which could negatively impact on coastal.

The Council also has a legal obligation to tackle litter and waste defacing publicly owned land and is committed to actively support and encourage community action to reduce waste going to landfill and littering the natural and built environment.

For these reasons we are banning sky lanterns and mass helium balloon releases from the land we hire out for events and encouraging alternative fund raising, celebratory, promotional or memorial activities.

We would in addition encourage other land owners to consider the potential impact of sky lanterns and mass releases of balloons on our rural economy and environment. More information can be found on [http://www.mcsuk.org/what\\_we\\_do/Clean+seas+and+beaches/campaigns+and+policy/Don%27t+let+go+-+balloons+and+sky+lanterns](http://www.mcsuk.org/what_we_do/Clean+seas+and+beaches/campaigns+and+policy/Don%27t+let+go+-+balloons+and+sky+lanterns)

**Additional Clause for Hire Agreements**

For the benefit and protection of the surrounding land environment and wildlife and to avoid the risk of damage from fire thereto [the Hirer] agrees that it will not release or permit anyone on the land of the Council pursuant to this [Agreement] to mass release balloons or release any sky lanterns whatsoever.