



**SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL**

## Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

26 November 2019

**Report of:** Councillor Dr Peter Moseley

Cabinet Member for Commercial  
and Operations



# Position Statement on the Intentional Release of Sky (Chinese) Lanterns and Balloons

The purpose of this report is to consider the Council's position in relation to the intentional release of sky (Chinese) lanterns and balloons on council owned land.

### Report Author

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Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
<b>Competitiveness</b>	<b>Non-Key</b>	<b>All Wards</b>

<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Ian Yates, Assistant Director – Commercial and Operations	17 September 2019
<b>Approved by:</b>	Gary Smith, Director – Commercial and Operations	3 October 2019
<b>Signed off by:</b>	Councillor Dr Peter Moseley, Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations	7 October 2019

### Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

- Note the report and consider the establishment of a Position Statement setting out the Council's approach to the intentional release of sky (Chinese) lanterns and balloons on Council owned land.**
- Subject to feedback and agreement with recommendation 1, recommend to Cabinet that the draft South Kesteven District Council Position Statement on the Intentional Release of Sky (Chinese) Lanterns and Balloons be adopted.**

## **1 The Background to the Report**

- 1.1 The intentional release of sky (Chinese) lanterns and balloons to the open environment have become a popular way of fundraising for charity or for marking occasions. It is impossible to control where they land, and they can travel large distances before falling to the ground or into streams and rivers which may lead to the sea.
- 1.2 Balloons and their string/ribbon attachments can cause a choking or entanglement hazard for livestock and wildlife. Lanterns pose similar threats from the metal frame and as they contain a naked flame, also pose an avoidable fire hazard to dry standing crops, stacks of hay or straw, forestry and buildings. This view has been supported by amongst others, the RSPCA, the National Farmers Union, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Marine Conservation Society and some Fire Services.
- 1.3 The Marine Conservation Society argues that the release of sky (Chinese) lanterns and balloons is an indirect form of littering or fly tipping and should be legislated as such. The Government has previously indicated that it does not advocate a complete ban and it is unlikely that there will be any legislative changes in the near future. Therefore, raising awareness and community engagement should be seen as an approach to changing behaviour.
- 1.4 The extent of intentional releases in South Kesteven is unknown. However, being a predominantly rural area, there may be greater risks to livestock, wildlife and crops than in more densely populated areas. In addition, the Council has demonstrated its commitment to improving the attractiveness of the district through the Big Clean and the debris will have a detrimental impact on the local environment. Publishing a position statement would support this continued commitment.
- 1.5 While a breach of a position statement would not be legally enforceable, if approved, it can be included in Council policies and agreements relating to the use of Council land e.g. parks and open spaces for public events etc.
- 1.6 To date, 84 UK local authorities have been recognised by the Marine Conservation Society as having a balloon and/or sky lantern release ban in place.
- 1.7 A potential draft position statement is at Appendix 1.

## **2 Available Options Considered**

- 2.1 The Council is not obliged to publish a position statement and can remain silent on the issue.
- 2.2 The release of sky (Chinese) lanterns and balloons is not an illegal activity, however, there are risks associated with the resulting debris which presents a significant risk to animals, crops, property and the natural environment. The Council could publish a position statement in relation to its own land.

## **3 Preferred Option**

- 3.1 Publishing a position statement would show the Council's continued commitment to improving the attractiveness of the district and tackling the detrimental impact of the debris resulting from the releases.

## **4 Reasons for the Recommendation (s)**

- 4.1 There is currently no UK legislation available to control this issue, therefore it is for the local authority to consider whether a position statement is necessary.

## **5 Next Steps – Communication and Implementation of the Decision**

5.1 If a statement is adopted a communication campaign will be necessary to inform Town and Parish Councils, residents etc. of the position.

## **6 Financial Implications**

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Head of Finance**

## **7 Legal and Governance Implications**

7.1 The policy statement would enable the Council to monitor the use of its parks and open spaces and to educate any members of the public who might wish to release such lanterns from Council land. However, it should be recognised that adopting the policy statement would not confer any enforcement rights on the Council but should be viewed as a longer term ambition to promote good practice and reduce the impacts referred to in the report.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Shahin Ismail, Monitoring Officer**

## **8 Equality and Safeguarding Implications**

8.1 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and is at Appendix 2. This recognises that there is the potential for the statement to have an impact on the “race” and “religion or belief” equality groups as lanterns are used during some religious and cultural festivals.

## **9 Risk and Mitigation**

9.1 No significant risks have been identified as a result of this report.

## **10 Community Safety Implications**

10.1 No significant community safety implications have been identified as a result of this report.

## **11 Other Implications (where significant)**

11.1 None identified.

## **12 Background Papers**

12.1 [ADAS 2013, Sky Lanterns and Helium Balloons an Assessment of Impacts on Livestock and the Environment](#)

## **13 Appendices**

13.1 Appendix 1 - Draft South Kesteven Position Statement on the Intentional Release of Sky (Chinese) Lanterns and Balloons.

13.2 Appendix 2 – Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment

<b>Report Timeline:</b>	Date of Publication on Forward Plan (if required)	TBC
	Final Decision date (proposed)	21 January 2020