

From: Michael Payne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Susan Carey, Cabinet Member for Environment
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 23 January 2020

Subject: Sky lantern and balloon releases on Kent County Council estate

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: County-wide

Summary: The release of sky lanterns and balloons has a detrimental environmental impact, and as such, KCC has been asked to consider the adoption of a ban on the use of such devices on the County Council's estate. This report summarises the issues and seeks the advice of Cabinet Committee on the potential development of such a ban.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and advise the Cabinet Members for Highways and Transport and for Environment on the need for, and scope of, a formal policy banning the releases of sky lanterns and balloons on Kent County Council estate.

1. Overview and existing KCC policy for sky lanterns and balloons

- 1.1 Balloon and sky lantern releases have become increasingly popular as a way of commemorating a special event. However, the negative environmental impact of such activities is now widely understood and many are now adopting bans on such releases.
- 1.2 Released sky lanterns and balloons pose a risk of harm or death to both wildlife and livestock through ingestion, entanglement, entrapment and associated trauma. By their very nature, they also generate litter, and unexpired sky lanterns present a clear fire hazard, particularly during dry weather spells.
- 1.3 As a result, a number of organisations, including the Campaign for Rural England, Chief Fire Officers Association¹, National Farmers Union², Marine

¹ <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/12050>

² <https://www.nfuonline.com/cross-sector/rural-affairs/rural-concerns/rural-concerns-news/nfu-urges-councils-to-introduce-sky-lantern-bans/>

Conservation Society³, Country Landowners Association and the RSPCA⁴ are urging individuals to refrain from their use and campaigning for councils to introduce bans on such releases.

- 1.4 In England, 53⁵ local authorities have introduced a balloon and/or sky lantern release ban; eight of these are County Councils⁶. Included in these 53 are five Kent authorities – Canterbury, Dover, Swale, Thanet and Tonbridge & Malling (balloon ban only).
- 1.5 Kent County Council does not have a formal ban or policy but does state on its website, in relation to sky lanterns, that “we do not condone their use on any Kent County Council land.” The webpage also currently includes suggestions for alternatives to balloon and lantern releases.
- 1.6 However, it has been suggested that Kent County Council should consider a more definitive and stronger policy that actually bans the release of both sky lanterns and balloons on its estate.
- 1.7 The development of such a policy would require consultation with services, such as country parks and registration (ceremony venues), to determine whether such a policy could be enforced and therefore would be feasible.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 Development of such a policy would require officer time, which would be provided by the Natural Environment & Coast team within EPE.
- 2.2 Any direct financial impacts (such as staff time to educate and enforce such a policy) or indirect financial impacts (through negative impacts on paid-for services offered) of implementing and enforcing such a policy would be determined as part of the consultation with the affected services.

3. Policy Framework

- 3.1 Addressing the impacts of sky lantern and balloon releases will fall under the strategic outcome of *Kent communities feel the benefits of economic growth by being in-work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life* and supporting outcome of *Kent’s physical and natural environment is protected, enhanced and enjoyed by residents and visitors*.
- 3.2 Such action would also contribute to KCC’s Environment Policy, in that it would *protect and enhance biodiversity and the natural and historic assets on Council owned land or land managed in partnership with others*; and the Kent Environment Strategy, in that it would *avoid or minimise negative impacts on the environment*.

³ <https://www.mcsuk.org/campaigns/dont-let-go-councils>

⁴ <https://www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/endskylitter>

⁵ <https://www.mcsuk.org/campaigns/dont-let-go-councils>

⁶ Cornwall, Devon, Durham, Essex, Herefordshire, Norfolk, Northumberland, Worcestershire

4. Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 If development of a policy is agreed by the Cabinet Member, an Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of this work.

5. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and advise the Cabinet Members for Highways and Transport and for Environment on the need for, and scope of, a formal policy banning the releases of sky lanterns and balloons on Kent County Council estate.

6. Background Documents

Existing KCC statement on sky lanterns: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/sky-lanterns>

7. Contact details

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