

# Balloon and Lantern Sky Release Guidance

**September 2022**

**Re-branded February 2023**

# Introduction

## Aim and Scope

The aim of this Guidance is to prohibit the intentional outdoor release of balloons and sky lanterns from land (including beaches and intertidal areas) and premises owned, managed or under the control of Southend on Sea City Council, and to discourage such releases from other land within the City Council area. The principle of the guidance applies to all services and decisions of the City Council, and to our contractors and partners who work within our premises and on our land. Balloons are any inflatable flexible bag filled with gas, or hot air made from any materials including rubber, latex, paper, foil, mylar or a nylon fabric. Sky lanterns are made of thin paper held by a wire or bamboo frame and lifted by heat from a naked flame. This Guidance covers all types of balloons and sky lantern materials and includes single or multiple balloons and/or sky lantern releases including those that are biodegradable.

## Problem Statement

Southend on Sea City Council is one of the largest landowners in the City, and is fortunate to be home to many parks, gardens, recreational areas, and beaches. We recognise that activities within our green open spaces can have a significant impact on the local environment. In addition to the potential fire damage that sky lanterns can have on farming and buildings, there is evidence of the harmful impacts of sky lantern or balloon litter to the environment and wildlife, in particular within the marine environment.

The Marine Conservation Society, an internationally recognised charity for the protection of seas, shores, and wildlife, has produced a Pollution Policy & Position statement on Balloons and Sky Lanterns, asking UK Local Authorities to recognise balloons and sky lanterns as a form of littering and to ban all outdoor releases. This stance is actively supported by the RSPCA and National Farmers Union.

## Problem Statement

The City Council considers the release of balloons and lanterns from any land or buildings as detrimental to the environment and prohibits the intentional release of all balloons/lanterns from Council owned land and buildings. This applies to Council run events and events run by third parties.

## Implementation

In implementing this guidance, the Council will:

- Refuse permission for any sky lantern or balloon release from any Council owned, and controlled land regardless of the purpose(s) for the release.

- Refuse a permit for any street vendor wishing to sell sky lanterns at any organised event held on Council land.
- Require Council 'Standard Conditions of Contract' relating to outdoor events and organised displays on Council owned land / controlled green space or beaches to ban the release of any sky lantern or balloon, regardless of purpose.
- Refuse to allow a person, group or organisation who has breached the Standard Condition of Contract to hire Council land in the future.

## Permitted Releases

For the avoidance of doubt, piloted hot air balloons are not covered by this guidance helium balloons may also be used for research purposes, for example weather balloons, as long as supporting evidence is provided, identifying any risk and/or hazard to the environment and with appropriate mitigation.

## Alternatives to Balloon and Lantern Releases

Whilst releasing balloons or lanterns are a symbolic way to celebrate or commemorate, the adverse impacts should not be ignored, and in recognising this, such releases are not the most respectful way to mark a happy or solemn occasion. There are eco-friendly alternatives to mass balloon releases and sky lanterns that won't endanger animals or local communities, these could include:

- Planting a tree – this creates a symbolic, long-lasting, and eco-friendly memorial.
- Releasing bubbles instead of balloons – using soaps that are safe for fish and the environment.
- Painting stones – place a painted rock or stone somewhere meaningful.
- Organising a Memory Walk – Retracing the steps of someone's favourite walk can be a wonderful way to remember them.

The RSPCA shares their ideas on alternatives here: [Eco-Friendly Alternatives to Balloon Releases & Sky Lanterns | RSPCA](#)

## Working with Event Organisers and Communication

The Council will inform event organisers of its Balloon and Sky Lantern Release Guidance by means of including relevant information within booking forms, and other appropriate material. Any licence issued by the Council, to occupy its land and property, will contain appropriate provisions, and these will also be provided with any new leases and licences pertaining to land and premises. Whilst the ban relates solely to Council owned land and premises, the Council will promote the awareness of the potential harm of balloon and sky lantern releases, where appropriate. The Council will encourage the public to act responsibly and consider the risks posed through the release of balloons and sky lanterns, particularly to wildlife, livestock, and the environment.

## Monitoring, Assessment and Review

This guidance will be monitored over the course of its lifetime and will be reviewed in light of other Council policies and changing legislation as required.

## **Additional Information**

Not with standing that this guidance applies to any release of balloons and sky lanterns from land (including beaches and intertidal areas) and premises owned, managed or under the control of Southend on Sea City Council, the intention is also to discourage such releases from other land within the City Council area. Should there be an intention to release more than 5,000 balloons on private land, a written application is required for permission to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), at least 28 days in advance, of the release because balloons can interfere with air traffic.