

The banning of Sky Lanterns at any event or activity held on Council owned land

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage, Culture & Leisure
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	William Cornall – Director of Regeneration and Place
Lead Officer and Report Author	Dawn Hudd – Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Sky Lanterns have become increasingly popular in recent times and there is evidence to suggest that the debris from these items can cause harm to animals and property. This report proposes a ban on the use of Sky Lanterns on Council owned land and property.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the use and release of Sky Lanterns is banned from land and property owned or managed by Maidstone Borough Council at all activities and events organised, supported, funded by (fully or partially) and/or licensed by this authority.
2. That an information campaign is launched to discourage the use of Sky Lanterns by residents and visitors.
3. That Parish Councils within the Borough are contacted to encourage them to introduce a similar ban on their own land and property.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Heritage, Culture & Leisure	6 March 2018

The banning of Sky Lanterns from Council owned land

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Sky lanterns (known as Chinese lanterns) are novelty items and consist of a candle or a fuel cell filled with paraffin wax suspended inside a frame of wire or bamboo covered in paper. When lit, they float gently upwards and drift away, landing when the fuel has run out. They can reach up to 1,000m in height and drift for several miles in the breeze. When the lantern has burnt out, it falls on to land or in the sea
- 1.2 The lanterns have become an increasingly popular way to mark special events and fundraisers and are seen at weddings, Halloween celebrations, music festivals and even funerals, with an estimated 200,000 being sold in the UK every year.
- 1.3 Farmers' groups and animal charities have long pushed for the lanterns to be withdrawn from sale, arguing that animals can eat parts after they have landed. There are already bans or restrictions on the lanterns in a number of countries because of the hazards they can cause.
- 1.4 The burnt out remains from the lanterns can endanger the lives of animals who find them. Problems they can cause for animals and property include:
 - Ingestion – can tear and puncture animals throats, stomach, and organs causing an internal bleed resulting in a slow and painful death.
 - Entrapment – can lead to stress, injury and death.
 - Splinters and Embedment – cause wounds into animals skin that can become infected leading to illness and death.
 - Fires to farm buildings or animals natural habitat.
- 1.5 Even though some retailers claim 'biodegradable' lanterns are a safe alternative, bamboo can take decades to degrade and falling lantern debris still poses the risk of ingestion, entrapment, embedment and fires which can cause or kill animals.
- 1.6 Councils across the UK are being urged to introduce bans by the farming community. The RSPCA and many other organisations including the Marine Conservation Society, Women's Food & Farming Union (WFU), Soil Association and National Farmers Union (NFU) all support a ban on sky lanterns.
- 1.7 Alternative suggestions to Chinese Lanterns include:
 - Fun & Cosy Atmosphere: stationary candles, nightlights, static lanterns, outdoor lights, bunting, flags, banners and ribbons.
 - Symbolic wish or memorial: plant a tree, indoor candles,

2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Do nothing. This is not the preferred option as this would not send out a message to our residents, visitors and event organisers about the dangers that Sky Lanterns can cause to the natural environment.
 - 2.2 Ban the use of Sky Lanterns at events on Council owned property and land. This is the preferred option as it would set out the Council's position on this issue and formalise the existing exclusion of their use from activities and events held on Council land.
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3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Option 2.2 above is preferred as Maidstone Borough Council is aware of the potential threat sky lanterns can pose to the natural environment. We should therefore not condone their use at any events or activities organised, supported, funded by (fully or partially) and/or licensed by this authority on any Maidstone Borough Council land.
 - 3.2 It is recommended that the MBC contact Parish Councils in the Borough asking them to introduce a similar policy on their land and property.
 - 3.3 It is also recommended that an information campaign be conducted setting out the dangers of sky lanterns on the natural environment to encourage our residents and visitors to generally refrain from their use.
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4. RISK

- 4.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 There has been no previous consultation on this matter although it is understood that the Council has received communications from residents outlining their concerns about Sky Lanterns and the danger to the natural environment.
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 If the recommended approach is taken then a clause will be inserted into all hire agreements relating to council owned property and land banning the use of Sky lanterns.
- 6.2 A communication will be sent to Parish Councils in the Borough encouraging them to introduce a similar ban on their own land and property.

- 6.3 An information campaign will be undertaken to inform residents, members of the public and events organisers and the dangers of Sky Lanterns on the natural environment. This will take the form of an article in Borough Insight and posts on social media.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council's overall corporate priority to have a clean and safe environment.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development.
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development.
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development.
Legal	As owners of the land, Maidstone Borough Council are entitled to enforce reasonable restrictions on any party seeking to host activities or events on that land	Legal Team
Privacy and Data Protection	N/A	
Equalities	No detrimental impact identified as a result of the proposed change of policy.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Crime and Disorder	N/A	

Procurement	N/A	
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.