

Policy on the release of Balloons and Sky/Floating Lanterns

1. Context

- 1.1 The release of balloons and sky lanterns can be a spectacular sight often used during festivals, to mark anniversaries and as a part of charity events.
- 1.2 Plastics are a major source of aquatic and global marine pollution. They cause harm by entering the food chain as they are broken down by the sun and the action of water. Plastic pollution in the oceans is an alarming problem affecting the ecosystems that support human life.
- 1.3 Balloons and sky/floating lanterns have been identified as a choking hazard for wildlife and farm animals. Balloons, plastic parts, wire and ribbons can all be eaten by animals and wildlife causing a risk of choking or blockage leading to starvation.
- 1.4 Sky lanterns pose a further risk as a fire hazard with the potential to spark fires in crops, heath, moorland, forestry and buildings.
- 1.5 Helium, often used to inflate balloons, is a non-renewable resource that is in short supply. It is of incredible value to science and humanity – in particular used as a coolant for MRI scanners. When released from bursting balloons it is lost from the earth entirely.
- 1.6 Torbay Council has a duty to shape the environment in which we live and has a commitment to making Torbay a place where our built and natural environment is celebrated and where we play our part in addressing the climate change emergency.
- 1.7 This policy sets out the Council's ban on the use and sale of sky lanterns (also known as Chinese lanterns) on land or property owned and/or controlled by Torbay Council.
- 1.8 Their increased usage is having a harmful impact on our environment, wildlife and farm animals.
- 1.9 The Fire Service, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), the Soil Association and the National Farmers Union (NFU), along with many other organisations, all support a ban on sky lanterns.

2. Objective

- 2.1 The objective of this policy is to ban the intentional outdoor release of balloons and sky/floating lanterns from land or property owned and/or controlled by Torbay Council.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Torbay Council holdings and land ownership.
- 3.2 The principles and commitments set out in this policy apply to all services and decisions of the Council and to our contractors and partners delivering council services on our behalf
- 3.3 This policy does not apply to piloted hot air balloons or balloons used for the purposes of research.

4. Principles and Commitments – Key Actions

- 4.1 Torbay Council will refuse permissions for the release of any sky/floating lanterns from any Council owned or controlled land/water, regardless of the purpose for the release.
- 4.2 Torbay Council will refuse the sale of any sky/floating lanterns at any Council event or property, or any event held on Council owned land.
- 4.3 The 'standard conditions of contract' relating to outdoor events and organised functions on land or property owned and/or controlled by Torbay Council will prohibit the release of any sky lantern regardless of purpose.
- 4.4 Torbay Council will ensure that all relevant officers involved in the organisation and granting of permissions for outdoor events on Council owned land are aware of and implement this policy.
- 4.5 It is the responsibility of all Council departments/teams to comply with and implement this policy as appropriate to their service area.

Notes

It should be noted that this policy is intended to prohibit the deliberate release of sky/floating lanterns and/or helium balloons (either individually or by mass release at an event). The Council recognises that there may be instances where single helium balloons will be accidentally released into the environment such as may happen at children's parties.