



Balloon and Sky Lantern Release Policy

January 2020

Environmental Services
Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AP

Bedford Borough Council's Policy on Balloon and Sky Lantern Release

1. Introduction

In recent years outdoor balloon and sky lantern releases have become a more common event at summer fairs, fundraising events, opening of new stores, or part of commemorative and celebratory occasions. Usually, however, little or no attention is given once these items have been released and the potentially harmful consequences for wildlife and property that can occur as a result of this form of celebration; there is virtually no control over where any release is likely to come to ground.

Although others have also undertaken research on this issue, the Marine Conservation Society (an internationally recognized charity for the protection of seas, shores and wildlife) has produced a thorough and detailed Pollution Policy & Position statement on Balloons and Sky Lanterns, asking UK Local Authorities to recognize balloons and sky lanterns as a form of littering and to ban all outdoor releases. This stance is actively supported by the RSPCA, the National Farmers Union and many other public organisations. Bedford Borough Council also supports this stance.

2. Objective

The objective of this policy is to discourage the intentional outdoor release of balloons and sky lanterns within the Bedford Borough area and to prohibit releases from, to, over and on Council owned land and premises.

3. Parameters/ Scope

This policy covers the release of balloons and sky lanterns within the Bedford Borough area and the Council's position in relation to the release of balloons and lanterns from Council owned land and premises.

The policy covers all types of balloon and sky lantern materials. The main types of balloon are latex (rubber) and foil (also known as mylar) but can include other materials. Latex balloons, whilst biodegradable, may still persist in the environment for several years and sky lanterns typically contain a metal frame.

4. Policy

This Council prohibits the release of balloons and lanterns from, to, on and over Council owned land and buildings. This applies to Council-run events and events run by third parties.

5. Litter

The Council considers the release of balloons and lanterns from any land or buildings as potential littering and may take action in respect of any occurrence of littering when advised to do so under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 where appropriate.

6. Permitted releases

For the avoidance of doubt, piloted hot air balloons are not covered by this policy.

Helium balloons may also be permitted when used for research purposes, for example weather balloons, as long as supporting evidence is provided, identifying any risk and/ or any hazards to the environment and with any appropriate mitigation.

7. Working with event organisers/ third parties/ lessees/ licencees

Once the Council is notified of potential organised balloon or sky lantern releases within the area of Bedford Borough, the Council will work with event organisers to suggest suitable alternatives to outdoor balloon and sky lantern releases and/ or to provide advice and guidance on the potential disposal of these items.

8. Monitoring, Assessment & Review

The Council will inform event organisers of the Balloon and Sky Lantern Release Policy by means of including relevant information within booking forms and other promotional materials.

The Council will also at its own discretion and where appropriate include details of this policy within any new leases or licences of land and/ or buildings where permitted events take place at those locations.

Should you require any further information on this subject matter it should be requested in writing or by email to.

Events Team
Borough Hall
Cauldwell Street
Bedford
MK42 9AP

events@bedford.gov.uk

This Policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if required.