

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 th December 2017
Report Subject	The Release of Chinese Lanterns from Council Land
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection
Report Author	Chief Officer (Planning and Environment)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

That the Authority considers the prohibition of the release of “Chinese lanterns” (paper lanterns with wire frames and a lit candle) from land owned by Flintshire County Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Council introduce a voluntary ban on the release of sky lanterns from Council owned/controlled land; and that a communication exercise be undertaken to make consumers and charity organisations aware of the risks associated with sky lanterns and the fact they should not be released from Council owned/controlled land.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE REQUEST TO PROHIBIT THE USE OF CHINESE LANTERNS ON FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL LAND
1.01	<p>There is increasing concern from a wide range of stakeholders (such as the Marine Conservation Society, RNLI, National Farmers Union, Farmers Union of Wales, RSPCA and various Fire & Rescue services) about the possible impact of sky lanterns on livestock and the environment. Particular concerns include the risks to animal welfare through ingestion of debris, litter in the countryside, the sea and on the coastline, risks to aviation and impacts on coastal rescue services. Since sky lanterns contain a naked flame, there are additional concerns about the fire risk to buildings, property and crops from uncontrolled landing.</p>
1.02	<p>Welsh Government and DEFRA jointly commissioned an independent research project to establish a body of evidence on the impact on livestock, plants and the environment of sky lantern releases. The report concluded that any impact on the environment and risk of widespread injury or death to livestock is low. However, the report did find that the risk associated with the use of sky lanterns, mainly to agricultural crops, buildings and moorland is significant.</p>
1.03	<p>As a result of its research, the Welsh Government is encouraging Local Authorities to introduce a voluntary ban on the release of sky lanterns from Council owned/controlled land. It is also urging Local Authorities in Wales to review their policies in order to discourage the use and release of these lanterns and balloons wherever possible.</p>
1.04	<p>The Keep Wales Tidy Group issued a research paper in 2008 which argued that balloon and lantern releases were a form of littering which was already subject to statutory controls. It stated that the act of intentionally releasing a balloon or lantern into the open environment is a contravention of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. At least one Local Authority has taken the view that the release of such lanterns would be viewed as littering under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which makes it an offence to deposit litter in public places.</p>
1.05	<p>Endeavouring to prosecute a party under either of these Acts may prove challenging as there is a debate regarding at what point the littering actually takes place and how this could be monitored and subsequently enforced. In addition, the resources required are likely to be considerable and, at a time of budgetary constraints, may be prohibitive.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	A publicity exercise will be required should this decision be taken.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	A decision to ban the release of lanterns may unexpectedly raise public expectations that such a ban would be rigorously enforced. Any publicity would need to make clear how this would be implemented.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Contact Officer: Andrew Farrow (Chief Officer – Planning and Environment)</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 703201</p> <p>E-mail: andrew.farrow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None.