

Date of statement: February 2021

## MCS Asks:

- ✔ **Local authorities and councils to ban mass balloon releases and lantern releases.**
- ✔ **Balloons and lanterns to be classified as litter and outdoor releases made illegal.**
- ✔ **Balloon sticks should be banned.**

Intentionally letting go of balloons and sky lanterns can cause big problems for wildlife both on land and at sea. Choking and entanglement are the biggest dangers that balloons and lanterns cause when they float back down to earth. Certain species (such as endangered marine turtles) confuse balloons/balloon fragments for food. We want to avoid any forms of litter entering the sea – either directly or indirectly.

The main types of balloons are latex (rubber) and foil (also known as mylar). Latex balloons, whilst biodegradable, are known to last a number of months, even years. Metal sky lantern frames are also dangerous to wildlife and pose an entanglement threat. Livestock have been killed by eating degraded lanterns which are accidentally picked up by harvest machinery and put into winter feeds. Lanterns also pose a fire hazard and have been mistaken over sea for distress flares.

We are aware that balloons may also be used for research purposes, for example, weather balloons. We do not wish to restrict the release of these, as we believe the number involved to be minimal compared to the current number of intentionally released balloons for commemorative, social or publicity events.

Currently all Welsh Local Authorities have voluntary bans in place for lantern releases (some have also banned balloon releases). We are asking for all local authorities to ban mass balloon and lantern releases. UK governments should ban balloon sticks (in line with the EU Single plastic Directive). Balloons and lanterns should be classified as outdoor releases made illegal under existing legislation such as the Environmental Protection Act 1990 or the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.