

Date of statement: February 2021 (Updated October 2024)

## The Marine Conservation Society asks:

- ✔ **Local authorities and councils ban mass balloon releases and lantern releases.**
- ✔ **Balloons and lanterns are classified as litter and outdoor releases made illegal.**
- ✔ **Balloon sticks are banned. (This has now been achieved through the Single Use Plastics bans across the UK as of 2023)**

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 – to prevent this from happening.

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. Before and as they degrade, these balloons continue to pose a risk to wildlife and litter the environment. Metal sky lantern frames are also dangerous to wildlife and pose an entanglement threat. Livestock have been killed by eating degraded lanterns that are accidentally picked up by harvest machinery and put into winter feeds. Lanterns also pose a fire hazard and have been mistaken for distress flares at sea.

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.

We are asking for all local authorities to ban mass balloon and lantern releases. Balloons and lanterns should also be classified and outdoor releases made illegal under existing legislation such as the Environmental Protection Act 1990 or the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

We previously asked that balloon sticks be banned and have been successful in securing this. As of 2023, all UK governments have banned balloon sticks (in line with the EU Single plastic Directive).