



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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Ms Linda Kennedy  
mail@lindakennedy.com

Our ref: FOI2019/08621  
21 May 2019

Dear Ms Kennedy,

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Banning of mass "balloon releases"**

Thank you for your request for information of 23rd April about Banning of mass "balloon releases". We have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The EIRs apply to requests for environmental information, which is a broad category of information defined in regulation 2 of the EIRs. Public authorities are required to handle requests for environmental information under the EIRs. They give similar access rights to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

- 1) *'What steps DEFRA is taking to ban mass balloon releases which are damaging to our wildlife and infrastructure?'*

Defra has no current plans to ban mass balloon releases.

- 2) *Has DEFRA commissioned any reports or investigations into mass balloon releases?*

Yes. In 2013, Defra and the Welsh Government jointly commissioned an independent study on balloons and sky lanterns to identify and assess their impacts and risks to livestock and the environment. It is published here:

[http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=11133\\_AC0229-DefraWAGReportFinal.pdf](http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=11133_AC0229-DefraWAGReportFinal.pdf)

- 3) *Are mass balloon releases the subject of any forthcoming agenda within DEFRA?*

Last year the European Commission commenced negotiations on a Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive, to reduce the impact of certain products, particularly on the marine environment. These negotiations are now complete and the Directive is due to be published by the end of June 2019. The top ten littered single-use plastic items across European beaches, included balloons and balloon sticks, so will have measures applied; the UK is likely to be party to those measures.



4) *Has the department submitted any reports or statistics to the Environment Minister?*

Yes. Defra Ministers received briefing, including statistics on balloon litter in connection with the Government's response to petitions answered in October 2017 and May 2018

5) *Is the department in liaison with any environmental groups on the subject of the effect of balloons on wildlife, marine life?*

No. Defra works closely with a wide range of environmental groups and campaigners, including the Marine Conservation Society and others. However, the department is not in liaison with any environmental groups specifically on the subject of the effect of balloons on wildlife or marine life.

We attach an annex giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Jo Collinge**  
**Information Rights Team**  
[InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk)

## Annex

### Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Nick Teall, Head of Information Rights, Area 1E, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk)) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF