

Instead of just watching the balloons float away why not make an activity out of balloons:

- **Balloon Popping Competition.** Release the balloons in an enclosed area (such as a church/school hall). Hide the prize tags in several balloons and children (and adults) rush around popping the balloons to find their prize. The burst balloons can then be then be easily collected and disposed of.
- **Balloon Animals.** Best done in teams. Prizes can be awarded for the best, biggest, most colourful, etc.
- **Balloon Surfing.** For the more radical, why not try balloon surfing! Inflate several balloons to about half size, and tie their ends. Place a small board over the balloons. See who can balance on the board without bursting the balloons. The winner is the person who stays on the board for the longest. Alternatively, if you've got a large board you could see how many people you get on the board at one time.
- **Round Up the Herd.** For this game you will need a broom, 6 x 4 balloons (4 colours) and 4 'sheep pens'. The aim of the game is to 'herd' as many balloons as possible into the correct colour 'pen' within the allotted time. One point is awarded for each balloon in the correct pen, with one point being deducted for a wrongly penned balloon and five points awarded for a full pen. The person with the most points wins.

### Other Activities:

- Balloon decoration eg feathers, glitter, fabric
- Make scarecrows/characters
- Balloon modelling/sculptures/archways
- Balloon printing
- Punch balls!
- Table decorations eg tied to chairs/bottles
- Indoor balloon race eg between knees, balanced on a spoon/back of hand/nose, flapping with newspaper
- Indoor balloon release. Participants decorate helium balloons before releasing them from a cardboard box. First to hit ceiling wins
- Raffle with tickets inside balloon (burst to see if you've won)

### References

Marine Conservation Society - [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org)  
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society - [www.wdcs.org](http://www.wdcs.org)  
National Association of Balloon Artists & Suppliers - [www.nabas.co.uk](http://www.nabas.co.uk)



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## KEEP SCOTLAND BEAUTIFUL Policy and Position Statement

### Balloon Litter

## Position Statement

Keep Scotland Beautiful is opposed to balloon releases. This applies to both mylar and latex balloons and to large or small events.

## Policy

### Introduction



The impressive visual impact of thousands of balloons being released into the sky may last a few minutes, but the impact upon the environment and wildlife may last many months, with potentially harmful consequences.

Releasing balloons at promotional and corporate events is not something that should be done without thinking about the consequences.

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 it is an offence to drop 'or

otherwise deposit' litter in a public place and it is therefore questionable whether balloon releases with their potential for littering are within the law.

Balloons used in balloon releases are generally made from latex. A study on balloon persistence in the environment indicated that latex balloons degrade 'faster than an oak leaf' and this is often used in defence of mass balloon releases. However, an oak leaf in a cold water environment may take six months to break down and during this time the balloons can be carried hundreds of miles by sea breezes and currents.

Attachments such as ribbons and string tied to balloons are a particular problem as they can lead to the entanglement of birds and animals.



## The Problem

After balloons are released they rise to high altitude where about 90% of latex balloons burst, undergoing what is termed 'brittle fracture'. The balloon pieces then float back to earth over a large area. However, around 10% of balloons released will come back down to earth without bursting, and these whole balloons pose a particular threat to many animals on land and at sea.

Balloon litter found on beaches during the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) Beachwatch survey has shown a general increase since 1996. In the 2006 Beachwatch a total of 1,983 balloons were recovered, representing a density of 10.6 items per kilometre surveyed.

Both whole balloons and balloon pieces can cause problems for marine animals. It is believed that they mistake balloons for



their natural prey e.g. jellyfish and squid. The following species, all of which occur in the North East Atlantic waters off the UK, have been reported with latex balloons in their digestive system: Common Dolphin; Risso's Dolphin; Loggerhead Turtle; Leatherback Turtle; Blue Shark; Northern Fulmar. In 2005, balloons and their ribbon and string accounted for 4% of entanglements of marine creatures recorded over a single weekend.

## Action

Whilst not wishing to prevent fund raising events or spoil peoples' fun, Keep Scotland Beautiful is calling on all organisations to support a voluntary ban on balloon releases and to celebrate or commemorate events in more environmentally-friendly ways.

Local authorities are asked to:

- Ban mass balloon releases at any event over which they have control
- Introduce a condition on Entertainment Licenses to prevent balloon releases

Individuals are also encouraged to take action.

- If you become aware of a potential balloon release let the organisers know about their negative environmental

impact, not everyone knows, and encourage them to look at alternatives.

- Write to your local council and ask them to consider banning mass releases from their premises and any premises or events licensed by them.

Corporate bodies who provide sponsorship or other support for charities or events are encouraged to decline to sponsor events involving mass balloon releases and to encourage alternative fund-raising activities.

