



John F. Robins,
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Our Reference: 202200315223

2 September 2022

Dear Mr Robins,

Thank you for your email of 10th August regarding the safety of sky lanterns. I am responding in my role of Policy Officer within the Fire and Rescue Unit of the Scottish Government.

I note your concerns of sky lanterns in regards to animal and fire safety. The Scottish Government at this time does not have any plans to ban sky lanterns, however, please be assured like all fire safety issues, we keep it under review.

It is crucial that people act safely and responsibly in rural environments and follow the countryside code. Just one heat source like a campfire ember or sky lantern can cause it to ignite and if the wind changes direction even the smallest fire can spread uncontrollably and devastate entire hillsides. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service always discourage the lighting of sky lanterns due to the significant threat of fire and the serious consequences for rural environments, property and wildlife. SFRS works closely with land managers, communities and other safety partners to prevent these incidents occurring. SFRS provide further advice regarding wildfires on their website: [Scottish Fire & Rescue Service \(firescotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.firescotland.gov.uk).

I also note your concern of sky lanterns to animal safety and it may be helpful to know that the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 created a number of offences in relation to the welfare of animals. These offences cover a range of animal welfare issues including the offence of causing “unnecessary suffering” to an animal. This offence may be by any person by either an act or a reasonable assumption of the consequences of an act, or by a person responsible for the animal by an act or omission. However, potential harm to livestock or other animals from the use of fire lanterns appears an unintended consequence and identification of the person launching a lantern that causes harm could be extremely difficult.

Animal welfare legislation places much of the responsibility for the welfare of the animal on its keeper. While recognising that the concerns held result from the actions of other persons, those actions (the

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use of fire lanterns) are not directed at animals and are lawfully provided. The onus on protecting the welfare of livestock therefore falls to the keepers of livestock, although an added difficulty is that fire lanterns may travel for some distance, are most likely to be used when dark and advance warning of them might not be available.

Another area of concern in a rural environment may be the risk of fire, and in an agricultural context this may also involve the possible combustion of stored chemicals commonly used in agriculture. Whilst there is a possibility that such chemicals could be at risk from fire lanterns, there are a number of other risks of fire that holders of such chemicals must be aware of and take steps to avoid. The Health and Safety Executive provides guidance on health and safety in the agricultural sector, including on the storage of chemicals.

I hope you have found this response helpful.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters
SCD : Fire and Rescue Unit

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