

John Griffiths AC /AM  
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy  
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref: P-04-385  
Ein cyf/Our ref:

William Powell AM

William.powell@wales.gov.uk

21 May 2012

*Dear William,*

Thank you for your letter dated 1 May, on behalf of the Petitions Committee asking for my initial thoughts on the petition below, which received 564 signatures.

*'We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to legislate against the intentional release of balloons and Chinese (or Air) lanterns into the air.'*

I would like to assure you that I have given full consideration to the points raised in the supporting material appended to the petition.

I recognise the potential risks that balloon releases and air lanterns can pose, which may cause litter, affect the welfare of animals, cause fire damage to crops and property, stress to livestock and can be mistaken for distress flares by members of the public when informing coastguards.

I am also aware that there are many responsible retailers who do what they can to minimise the harmful environmental effects of both balloon releases and air lanterns by following the National Balloon Artists and Suppliers (NABAS) Code of Conduct.

The Welsh Government is committed to improving littering (including fly-tipping) through our funded work programmes involving Keep Wales Tidy, Environment Agency Wales and local authorities. These programmes are helping change littering behaviours through education, specific littering campaigns and increased littering and fly-tipping enforcement.

I support and encourage the efforts made by Keep Wales Tidy, the agricultural industry and other organisations to raise awareness of the hazards and to urge people to consider carefully the implications of releasing a lantern or a balloon.

I have asked my officials to develop the evidence base on the impact of lantern and balloon releases and, if justified by the evidence, to scope the options for additional steps that could be taken to mitigate those impacts. This work will be completed in time to inform the Environment Bill.

I hope this response helps to clarify the Welsh Government's position on this petition.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John', written in a cursive style.

**John Griffiths AC / AM**

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