



## **Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service**

### **Flying Lanterns Position Statement**

*(released on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016)*

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service fully supports the position statement released by the Chief Fire Officer's Association in July 2013 regarding the use of flying lanterns.

Flying lanterns are also known as Chinese Lanterns, Wish Lanterns or Sky Lanterns. Traditional flying lanterns go back thousands of years in both Chinese and Thai celebrations, but are becoming more popular worldwide for celebrating weddings, birthdays, anniversaries or any other special event.

The lanterns are generally made from paper supported by a wire frame with a holder at the bottom for a solid fuel cell. The paper outer may or may not be fire retardant. Sizes and shapes vary usually 90cm high with a diameter of about 80cm. Flying times suggested by manufacturers vary from 6 minutes up to 20 minutes with heights claimed to be up to 1 mile!

Whilst lighting and launch are mostly in the control of the user, the actual flight path and end destination are usually not. There is no guarantee that the fuel cell will be completely out and cooled when the lantern eventually descends and any contact with a flammable surface could result in a fire developing.

There is evidence of them causing fires, wasting police time, being mistaken for distress flares, misleading aircraft and killing livestock. Previously Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service has responded to numerous fire related incidents involving these lanterns.

The risk of these occurrences will only increase if the use of flying lanterns increases, therefore Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service does not support the use of these devices and asks members of the public and event organisers to refrain from using them.

Whilst these lanterns are undoubtedly a popular and beautiful sight, the potential damage they can cause is significant. For this reason, Northumberland County Council has banned the release of lanterns on its land.