



Balloon Races and the Environment – Guidance for Clubs

A Well-Deserved Queens Award for Voluntary Service

Rodney Huggins Environmental Awards

The Rotary Tree Challenge

Some Rotary Clubs have been using Balloon Races as a means to generate funds.

However, there is some concern about the impact these are having on the environment and complaints have been received about such events

Clubs are encouraged to behave responsibly and if possible use methods other than a physical balloon release in future.

What is the problem – aren't balloons biodegradable?

It is true that latex balloons are biodegradable but the more modern ones having metal/mylar are not.

There appears to be one objective study of the topic. On exposure to sunlight degradation begins and after release a properly inflated balloon will reach 5000m or

more by which time the air temperature will have fallen to less than -20°C and the latex will become brittle and fragment into numerous very small pieces which quickly degrade further. These should decay in a short time and cause little harm to the environment.

However around 10% of the balloons may be faulty or are underinflated and come down in larger pieces which will take longer to degrade and can thus harm animals. These larger remnants degrade as quickly as an oak tree leaf.

Other problems arise from any string, streamers or tags attached to balloons as these are usually much less biodegradable than latex.

However biodegradability is only part of the problem. Balloons are filled with helium and herein is one concern of many as this gas has a limited resource and mankind should concentrate on using it in closed situations such as Nuclear Magnetic Resonance

Imaging (MRI) scanners used increasingly for medical diagnostics. A recent study by the Universities of Oxford and Durham does suggest that there may be more helium than first thought, but generally the consensus is that stocks are limited.

Alternatives to physical balloon releases

- Instead of a physical balloon release why not have the drama of a number of balloons inflated and get sponsorship for each but instead of release allow them to slowly deflate **WITHOUT** release and the winner is the one which is last to deflate.

- Organise a Virtual Balloon Race - The e-Club of East Anglia have already successfully had two such races and are planning a third.

(This article is based on an article written by Environmental Group member Keith Tovey and previously published in District 1080 News)



QUEENS AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE.

Gabrielle Back, Chair of the Environmental Sustainability group, was recently awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service at a special event held at St Marys Guild Hall in Coventry on behalf of Savers a small charity working to advance and raise awareness of serious Environmental issues through engagement and the adoption of a creative arts approach

The Award was presented by the Lord Lieutenant for the West Midlands and hosted by the Lord Mayor. Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland (RIBI) was represented by General Secretary Amanda Watkin and Gary Dancer, Rotary District 1060 Governor Elect, collected a certificate of appreciation for Rotary District 1060's valuable contribution to helping the Savers Charity raise awareness of Environmental Sustainability.

A REMINDER -THE RODNEY HUGGINS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

The Rodney Huggins Awards seek to recognise Rotary Clubs which are carrying out or supporting projects which are designed to improve the environment and demonstrate sustainability. This Rotary year there are two Awards:

The Traditional Award – with three categories: Rotary Clubs, Schools and Youth groups and International, with the overall winner receiving a trophy and bursary of £250 to spend on their Environmental project with a closing date of **31st January 2018**

The Tree Planting Award – a special 'one-off' Award this year to the Club (or Group of Clubs) which best carry out the Tree Planting Challenge. The Closing date is **30th April**

2018 and the winners will receive a trophy as well as a cash prize of £250.

More information about the Awards is available on the RIBI website - <https://www.rotarygbi.org/members/humanitarian-service-programmes/community/environment-sustainability-group/environment-projects/>

The Rodney Huggins Awards are only possible due the generosity of the Huggins Family Trust and we thank them for their support.

THE ROTARY TREE CHALLENGE

The Rotary Tree Challenge was covered in detail in the August edition of this newsletter – but a reminder that the Special Deal with the Woodland Trust is only available from 1st November. If you have any queries on this then please e-mail our consultant Terry Knowles at Rotarytrees@gmail.com

The Environmental Sustainability Group is part of the Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland (RIBI) Home Committee – and much more information about Environmental matters can be found on our webpage:

<https://www.rotarygbi.org/members/humanitarian-service-programmes/community/environment-sustainability-group/>