

Litter Strategy

What is in this for local councils?

Local councils will wish to be aware of Government's *Litter Strategy for England* which was recently updated. Local councils are often closely involved in the care of the local environment and will be wondering about the extent to which this strategy, originally published in April 2017, is starting to emerge and have an impact.

There is only one mention of local councils within the strategy and there is no apparent representation on the Litter Strategy Advisory and Working Groups of the National Association of Local Councils or affiliated Local Associations. However, there is a clear understanding that the litter is an 'avoidable problem' about which many residents feel frustrated (they quote 81%) with economic, social and environmental consequences.

Overall the Strategy is based on three themes: "Education", "Enforcement" and "Infrastructure". You are promised that 'This is a strategy that will not gather dust' and if 'voluntary approaches' do not work they will 'consider other measures'. This document sets the framework for future activities and its implementation. If it is implemented, as stated, it would impact on both individuals and organisations.

Date: No deadlines, work to be progressed in line with an action plan detailed in pages 69-73 of the Strategy

References to local councils: 1

Pages: 80

Details

The undertaking envisaged in this Strategy document is significant and would need every "citizen, worker, business and charity" to get behind it:

"Our vision is that in 25 years' time, our country will have the healthiest environment and be the most beautiful place to live, work and bring up a family; driving wellbeing and prosperity. We want ours to be the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than we found it. Our nation's future prosperity will greatly depend on how well we manage our environment."

The intended Strategy outcomes, set in an environmental and economic context and backed by an action plan with timeline on pages 69 to 73 of the Strategy, are listed as including:

- Delivering a world class national anti-littering campaign
- Developing an anti-litter culture, targeting young people
- Engaging communities to pilot projects including through a litter innovation fund
- Making a business case for business investment in anti-litter activity
- Reviewing the case for increasing fixed penalties for littering and related offences
- Introducing new regulations to help tackle littering from vehicles
- Improving enforcement guidance
- Raising awareness of related sanctions to councils and courts
- Supporting national clean-up days
- Working with highways England to introduce measures to address litter at 25 priority litter hotspots on the Strategic Road Network
- Introducing 'binrastructure' guidance to help councils design and locate street furniture such as bins to help reduce litter
- Targeting specific industries (including chewing gum, smoking and fast food) to help address litter
- Exploring relevant improvements to packaging to help reduce litter



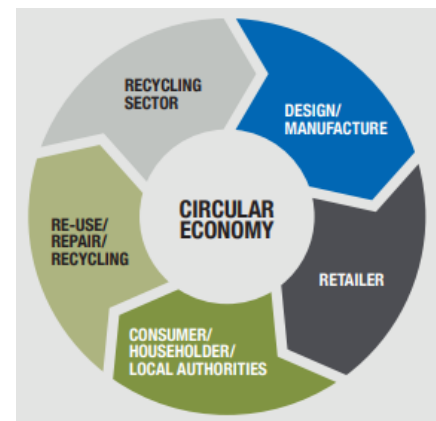
Changing behaviour

The behavioural changes promised are ones to watch as Government promises to “focus on methods that can be proven to work” and which can be replicated. They also highlight things that are often recognised at grass-roots level e.g. “people drop less litter in a clean environment”, hence the need to concentrate on cleaning as well as influencing behaviour. They highlight their intended ‘nudge theory’ based approach. What this means is moving to a more realistic position of designing in and encouraging helpful decisions e.g. influencing behaviour by providing bins rather than relying on traditional force and instruction such as ‘Do Not Litter’ signs. We are also assured that the Strategy will not work in isolation but across Government departments, with legislation, where required, and taking into account the bigger picture (including marine and aquatic litter and wider resource and waste management).

Measuring Litter

There is recognition in the Strategy that measuring litter levels to help determine success is difficult. For example, assessing by number, is not always helpful as a small number of large litter items can fundamentally affect the visual amenity of an area as much as a large number of small items and perception of litter levels is affected by population density and other factors. To help address this and to explore new ways of obtaining data, a working party has been set up to determine a proportionate and robust baseline measure for litter levels. They have also determined ‘citizen science’ sources of apparently sound data e.g. from *LoveCleanStreets*. These measures will be supported by a ‘dashboard’ of other sources of data.

Government highlights the ambition to be resource efficient and increase recycling within a ‘Circular Economy’ which includes recycled materials being built into better-designed and manufactured products. Initiatives to support this include trying to get areas with two-tier principal authorities to work more effectively together on waste and recycling, guidance to local authorities on how to manage recycling centres to facilitate access for households (including for “other than household waste” where charges are sometimes applied) and for small businesses at proportionate cost.



Education and Awareness

A variety of measures are planned:

- **Deliver a world class national anti-littering campaign** – They have set up a working group of key campaigning organisations and behavioural experts to work together with businesses to develop and secure funding for this campaign. The first campaign will be designed to appeal to young people.
- **Facilitate strong and consistent anti-litter education** – They will review existing school resources and link in any new teaching materials to the proposed national communications campaign and work with relevant organisations to raise awareness of the impact of litter. Through schools and the National Citizen Service they will address the fact that 16 to 25 year olds are the most likely to drop litter.
- **Support national clear-up days** – They will “continue to support and endorse” national clean-up days.
- **Empower local communities to channel their passion for their local environment into positive action** – Recognising that community priorities and expectations differ, a working group has been set up to explore the barriers to engaging and involving citizens in tackling litter and improving local places.
- **Recognise and reward the contribution of volunteers to tackling litter** – They will look at how to recognise individual activity, as well as how to formally recognise participation in organised litter-picks in progress towards existing qualifications, awards or badges e.g. National Citizen Service and Girl Guides.
- **Continue to support “quality of place” awards** – They will continue to support and encourage councils and other land-managers to aspire to the highest standards of environment quality, and to apply for recognition through awards, such as the Green Flag, Purple Flag, Blue Flag and Keep Britain Tidy Awards.

- **Smoking-related litter** – In this area, Government highlights work to help people to quit, the impact of e-cigarettes on reducing litter and in reducing smoking of tobacco, and the need for any local council discussions with the tobacco industry to be transparent and compliant with the relevant World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
- **Promote the development of litter-prevention partnerships among local businesses** – They will encourage all businesses to work in partnership with local communities to clear litter and create clean and welcoming public spaces.
- **Explore the case for voluntary and economic incentives to reduce litter** – They will build on the initial success from charging for plastic bags and explore ways to further target these and other products, through voluntary and economic measures.
- **Support the packaging industry in improving product and packaging design** – They will work with relevant organisations to promote the development of a voluntary agreement on anti-littering labels on products, greater use of the Sustainable Packaging Checklist to help increase better packaging design, and consider the Advisory Committee on Packaging’s recommendations.
- **Increase the reach of industry-funded Chewing Gum Action Group campaigns to promote responsible gum disposal** – Further work will be conducted by the Group (chaired by Defra and funded by the gum industry) to increase the use and effectiveness of campaign material encouraging responsible gum disposal, and to achieve access by local councils to specialist equipment to remove gum staining.
- **Encourage councils, producers and retailers of “food on the go” to work in partnership to tackle fast-food litter** – They will work with the Litter Strategy Advisory Group to review the relevant guidance.

Businesses of all sizes in the Kent village of Larkfield have adopted a Voluntary Litter Prevention Code in partnership with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and local volunteers. Under the Code, local businesses undertake to keep the area around their premises free of litter, providing bins and litter-picking as necessary, as well as displaying anti-littering posters. ‘Mystery shoppers’ (including members of Larkfield Neighbourhood Watch, PCSOs on the beat and other local volunteers) carry out random monthly checks, and businesses which are found to be fully compliant for 12 months receive a certificate from the local parish and district councils. Since the Code was developed on a single parade of shops, other businesses in nearby areas have signed up and nearly 30 businesses are now signatories. Littering and other antisocial behaviour in the area has reduced, as has the need for local volunteer litter-picking in some places. The Code is also now being rolled out to other areas within Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. Page 33 [LAIS highlight]

Improving Enforcement

A variety of measures are planned:

- **Review the case for increasing the fixed penalties for littering (and related offences)** – To help achieve appropriate and proportionate enforcement, they are considering increasing fines for littering, graffiti and fly-posting. Littering offences currently have a fixed penalty of between £50 and £80, with a £75 default fine unless the relevant local council specifies otherwise.
- **Regulate to allow English councils to fine the keeper of a vehicle from which litter is thrown** – They would need to make Regulations allowing civil enforcement by local authorities outside of London (where it is already in place) of a new fine for throwing litter from vehicles.
- **Support councils in using new powers to issue fixed penalties for small-scale fly-tipping offences** – They will liaise as needed to help enable enforcement. Fixed penalty notices can be issued for fly-tipping; a single plastic sack of rubbish should usually be considered fly-tipping as opposed to littering. Large-scale fly-tipping enforced using different powers and can lead to prosecution.
- **Promote the use of Community Protection Notices to deal with businesses or individuals whose behaviour is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality** – Among other things, there is a specialist group set up to monitor the impact of use of these powers. The Notices can, for example, require the clearing up of litter by a person or business, under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and guidance has been published.
- **Deliver guidance to promote proportionate and responsible enforcement** – They will complement the consideration of increased fixed penalties for littering and some other environmental offences, with

stronger guidance to enforcement authorities that fines are to be charged only where in the public interest and proportionate to do so. Fines can be used for any of their functions but never to generate income.

- **Promote transparency and accurate reporting of enforcement action against littering, so that offenders know they will be punished if they are caught** – They will encourage enforcement authorities to publicise their enforcement, to help counter the idea that people who litter will never be caught. They will also consult on transparency on enforcement activity.
- **Raise councils and magistrates' awareness of the range of sanctions available for littering and fly tipping offences, including alternatives to fixed penalties** – Although educational measures and schemes such as Community Payback are encouraged, Government's fears include the impact on paid employment and litter-picking being seen as a 'sanction' which deters law-abiding citizens from volunteering. They are prescriptive about use of such schemes e.g. for heavier work addressing fly-tipping on private land. They will explore opportunities to promote such work, 'in circumstances in which community volunteers are unlikely to be operating'. They will alert magistrates to any changes in penalties and related offences.

Better Cleaning and Litter Infrastructure

A variety of measures are planned:

- **Work with Highways England and others to tackle litter on the roadside, and address practical barriers to litter-picking along roads** – Among other things, they have set up a working group and they will improve 25 litter hot spots, will consider performance measures to address under-performance for addressing litter; and Highways England will continue to do what they are already doing e.g. sharing best practice, encouraging effective partnership working and supporting anti-littering campaigns.
- **Support councils in collaborating to co-ordinate cleaning** – The Campaign for Rural England will explore whether better collaboration of relevant statutory bodies could make a difference, starting with baseline monitoring of litter levels and public perceptions of statutory bodies, concluding in 2019.
- **Promote the use of reporting apps to help people report litter problems and enable speedy resolution** – They mention current apps available and the reporting possible at the Gov.uk site. They intend to use data from apps like *LoveCleanStreets* to assess littering and reporting. Local councils will have reservations about how this can work for communities and people who have difficulties accessing online provision.
- **Review and update the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse** – They will conduct an update taking into account 'special circumstances' such as considerable health and safety concerns on central reservations on motorways. They will also, by this Parliament, review how land managers are held to account by citizens for maintaining their land to the standards in the Code of Practice.
- **Help councils and others put the right bins in the right places** – They will develop or update guidance on 'binrastructure', through a working group, to take into account such matters as the best locations, addressing litter hot spots and security (including at railway stations), and how to ensure bins are emptied efficiently e.g. through using bins with sensors which alert the authorities when bins need emptying.
- **Encourage councils to adopt waste management approaches that help to reduce littering and fly-tipping** – They recognise that account should be taken of the fact that fly-tipping, unlike littering, is often driven by economic factors owing to the costs of waste disposal; they will encourage councils to make better decisions and foster collaboration across their departments, contractors and teams.
- **Work with local councils, ports and the haulage industry to improve facilities for hauliers, fishing vessels and others to dispose of their litter and waste** – They will explore the issues faced in the industry with litter disposal and work with neighbouring countries, where practical, to align approaches.
- **Spread best-practice in street cleaning and reducing littering, including learning from international experience** – They encourage use of international portals such as <http://neatstreets.co>.
- **Encourage the use of behavioural insights to develop and test new ways reduce littering, such as nudge techniques and innovative bin designs** – They intend to launch a new Litter Innovations Fund later in 2017 and commend the *Keep Britain Tidy* 'We're watching you' and *Hubbub* 'Love Your Forest' campaigns.

References

Litter Strategy for England can be found at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630999/litter-strategy-for-england-2017-v2.pdf