

The background of the entire page is a dark green color with a pattern of lighter green recycling symbols (triangles forming a circle) scattered across it. There are also several horizontal bands of different shades of green, some pointing downwards, creating a layered effect.

Littering & fly-tipping **BRIEFING**

Litter and fly-tipping

Summary

- **Although people regularly cite litter as a problem in their local area, levels of littering have increased 500% over the last 50 years:** There is a clear “belief-action gap” between what people think about littering in theory, and how they actually behave that must be taken into account when tackling this problem.
- **The government has created new measures to tackle litter and fly-tipping:** The Environment Act 2021 contained many measures to help tackle waste crime, including new rules on the cost of disposal.
- **There are lots of resources available to support you to reduce littering and fly-tipping locally:** From investing in more ‘binrastructure’ to running local campaigns to raise awareness and change behaviour, there are lots of opportunities to lead on this issue locally and many organisations willing to help you do so.

Background

- **Littering and fly-tipping clearly do not fit into the waste hierarchy:** The “[waste hierarchy](#)” ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment, with disposal to landfill at the bottom, making it the absolute last resort. However, when people litter and fly-tip the waste escapes the waste hierarchy altogether and enters into the natural environment, in what is known as “[uncontrolled disposal](#)”.
- **Key-drivers of littering and fly-tipping include:** People’s perception of how the area has been treated by others, a lack of education, insufficient or dirty disposal infrastructure like waste and recycling bins in parks, the cost of legitimate disposal of household and commercial waste that isn’t collected by the council, and low rates of enforcement.
- **Fly-tipping and littering have adverse impacts on our environment:** Many commonly littered items, such as cigarette butts, pollute our soils with microplastics and chemicals. In addition, RSPCA receives on average [14 calls a day](#) in relation to animals affected by litter, with wild birds being a particularly common victim.
- **Despite regularly being ranked as a top environmental issue, littering and fly-tipping are still pervasive:** More than [two million pieces of litter](#) are still dropped in the UK every day. Local authorities also dealt with [1.13 million fly-tipping incidents](#) in 2020/21 which was up by 16% from 2019/20.
- **Cleaning up litter and fly-tipping is a waste of money for the taxpayer:** The cost to the taxpayers for street cleaning is over [£1 billion a year](#), with an additional [£11.6 million a year](#) on tackling large-scale fly-tipping specifically. All fly-tipping and littering incidents could be prevented, so the amount being spent is an astronomical waste of precious local authority resources.

Government policy

- **Local authorities have a range of powers to help tackle litter problems:** Powers include issuing Fixed Penalty Notices to individual people who drop litter and serving notices on other public bodies as well as businesses, land owners, and occupiers that compel them to clear up litter. The cap was raised to £150 in January 2022. Councils can also take offenders to court, which can result in a fine of up to £2,500, if convicted. However, due to the costs of issuing such fines, most councils issue [less than one fine a week](#) to litterers, with almost [17 percent](#) issuing no fines at all across a year.
- **Fly-tipping is a crime:** It is defined as the ‘illegal deposit of any waste onto land that does not have a licence to accept it’ and carries with it the potential for imprisonment, fines up to £50,000, and an order to deprive rights to a vehicle used to commit the offence. Households can also be fined up to £400 if they pass their waste to an unlicensed waste carrier which is then fly-tipped.
- **The Environment Act 2021 made a series of proposals to tackle litter and fly-tipping in England, which include introducing:**
 - Mandatory digital waste tracking
 - Powers to raise the cap of fixed penalty notices
 - Powers to allow the police to seize vehicles on behalf of the Environment Agency
 - [New rules](#) that mean households will no longer have to pay to dispose of DIY waste
 - A [deposit return scheme](#) (DRS)
 - The deposit that the scheme will include incentivises consumers to return their waste. According to [Defra’s assessment](#), an ‘all-in’ DRS (one that includes all sizes of drinks containers up to 3 litres) would help to reduce plastic waste by almost 35,000 tonnes in 2024. Local authorities can participate in the DRS by separating out containers and redeeming their deposit. The scheme is due to launch in 2025.
- **However, the first iteration of the government’s extended producer responsibility (EPR) scheme excludes litter payments:** EPR makes producers responsible for the costs of their packaging throughout its life cycle. The scheme will incentivise producers to reduce their packaging and make it easier to recycle. The government will regulate to require producers to cover the cost of litter communication activities and the cost of managing packaging that is likely to be disposed of in street bins. However, unlike the Scottish and Welsh versions, EPR in England will not include the cost of removing litter from the ground in producer fees. This was excluded in an effort to keep the initial version of EPR as simple as possible but there is scope to include this cost of removing litter in the future.
- **The government launched a [Chewing Gum Task Force grant scheme](#) to help councils clean up UK towns and cities:** In August 2022, the government announced the


first tranche of a package worth up to £10 million to tackle chewing gum stains. The investment will be spread over five years with individual councils receiving up to £20,000.

Ideas and Resources

- **Ensure you have adequate ‘binrastructure’:** Littering rates tend to increase the further people are from a bin and people can feel deterred from using a bin if it is dirty or damaged. Ensuring there are enough bins to cope with demand and that these bins are well maintained is a good first step to improve litter rates.
- **Invest in “smart bins” to tackle overflowing public bins:** Smart bins, such as [Bigbelly](#), have solar panels which power a small compactor that crushes waste to increase bin capacity and sends a signal to the council when the bin is nearly full. These bins help councils to save money and reduce the carbon emissions from additional, unnecessary routes by waste lorries. In [Derbyshire Dales District Council](#) this has reduced unnecessary street bin waste collection by up to 95%. In addition, with more capacity and no open sides for bin contents to fall out of and onto the bin, these bins will not overflow as easily so can remain cleaner for longer which will reduce two common motives residents for littering.
- **Lead on a local #grotspot campaign:** CEN MP Mark Jenkinson has led a community pride campaign for constituents to report incidents of littering and fly-tipping. He helps to resolve these incidents, logging them on his [website](#) and posting on [social media](#). Collaborating with your MP and fellow councillors on a similar campaign is an excellent way to highlight the issue locally and showcase the action you are taking to help resolve it.
- **Make use of litter and fly-tipping organisations:** Keep Britain Tidy provides local authorities with guidance to tackle litter and fly-tipping strategically, from [understanding the problem](#) to [developing](#) local strategies to tackle it. There are additional resources available to local authorities that [become official members](#). The National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group also provides [case studies](#) and [guidance](#) and Defra’s [Litter Strategy for England](#) for 2017 contains a wealth of information and ideas.
- **Get involved with a national campaign to tackle litter and fly-tipping:** Keep Britain Tidy runs a selection of campaigns such as “[Don’t be a Tosser](#)” to stop drivers disposing of waste out of their window, the annual “[Great British Spring Clean](#)” for litter picking, and “[Love Parks Week](#)” to showcase local green spaces and encourage good community stewardship. These campaigns are accompanied by lots of resources to help you participate too. These campaigns can serve as focal points that you can use to raise awareness locally.
- **The government published its first litter strategy for England in 2017:** The strategy contained 36 commitments and actions to contribute to cleaning up the country and delivering a substantial reduction in litter and littering within a generation. [Reports](#) assessing the progress being made on these commitments published annually.

Conservative case studies on littering and fly-tipping

- **Councils across the country are hosting community litter picking events:** From [Lincolnshire](#) to [Devon](#), councils are facilitating litter picking events by lending out litter pickers, providing bags, protective clothing, and offering a waste collection after a litter pick event at a designated collection point.
- **The Essex Waste Partnership, comprising 13 Essex-based councils, launched its “Love Essex” campaign to combat littering:** The campaign combines education with enforcement warnings. Posters highlighting the risk of a fine for littering were displayed in the community, and promoted on social media. There were regular litter-picks and a single large-scale clean-up that collected 120 tonnes of litter. The campaign was backed by big chains such as McDonald’s and around 300 local businesses. The Love Essex website now serves as a hub for the county’s waste and resources initiatives, including a search bar which residents can type any source of waste into along with their postcode to determine where they can dispose of the waste locally.
- **Medway Council installed ‘ballot’ bins to help reduce cigarette butt litter:** Cigarette butts are one of the most pervasive forms of litter and, contrary to popular belief, are made of plastic. These bins require smokers to vote on light-hearted questions such as ‘Batman or Superman?’ using their cigarette butts. Medway funded the installations through WRAP’s [Litter Innovation Fund](#). The Ballot Bin has been proven to [cut litter by up to 46%](#).
- **New Forest District Council commissioned a behavioural insights project to develop a new approach to tackle littering in the New Forest:** They developed the “Look Out for the New Forest” framework to address behaviours and attitudes that were leading to littering. One particular behaviour that the intervention sought to change was the act of ‘polite littering’, where litter is next to an already overflowing bin. By displaying novel communications on advertising trailers at three sites, and providing rubbish bags, the intervention reduced litter by 10.8 tonnes (29 per cent) in one month and saved an estimated £10,000 in waste collection costs.



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