



National Litter and Flytipping Strategy

A9 Roadside Litter Intervention October 2024 - March 2025



Keep Scotland
Beautiful

Your charity inspiring action for our environment

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We support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



Foreword

Roadside litter damages Scotland's reputation. It is ugly, dangerous and expensive to clean up and it poses a real threat to Scotland's already depleted wildlife. Additionally, it negatively impacts the wellbeing of many communities, landowners and businesses.

It is not a new problem: our beautiful country has been blighted by roadside litter for years. With limited resources Keep Scotland Beautiful has tried to tackle this problem. From 2016 to 2019 we ran a national campaign to reduce roadside litter by raising awareness and improving infrastructure as well as encouraging positive behaviour change. Despite this and other activity, only 11% of people believe enough is being done to address the issue. Although improvements have been made, this continued frustration shows a strong desire and need for further interventions to tackle roadside litter.

Litter on our roadsides stems from a complex combination of factors relating to behaviours, sources, varied waste management practices and challenges with enforcement. All these need to be addressed to enable change.

We welcomed the passing of the The Circular Economy (Scotland) Act in 2024 with its powers to strengthen enforcement in tackling roadside litter. The Act includes a provision establishing a new civil penalty system whereby the registered keeper of a vehicle would be held liable to pay a civil penalty charge if a littering offence is committed by anyone in that vehicle.

As we wait for the introduction of these powers, we took the opportunity, as part of our commitment to supporting the National Litter and Flytipping Strategy, to review and test our previous campaign materials with a new audience.



This report summarises our national data and evidence from audits and public polling confirming that roadside litter is a significant issue. It highlights our approach to campaigning, our key learnings and, most importantly, indicates that reductions in roadside litter can be achieved with the right communication messages, engaged communities and partnership working with businesses and local authorities.

What the data shows us

91%

agree roadside litter creates a negative impression of Scotland.

[Scottish Litter Survey 2024](#)

88%

think roadside litter is a problem, rising from 69% in 2016.¹

[Scottish Litter Survey 2024](#)

56%

agree that there is more roadside litter in Scotland than there was 12 months ago.

[Scottish Litter Survey 2024](#)

1. 69% from YouGov, 2016.

A9 Roadside Litter Intervention

With growing public frustration at this issue and to complement ongoing changes to powers as part of the Circular Economy Act we focused our targeted behaviour-based intervention action on roadside litter.

The Circular Economy (Scotland) Act has powers to strengthen enforcement to address roadside litter. We look forward to the forthcoming introduction of a civil penalty charge for road users that litter from vehicles, something that we called for in 2017 as part of our roadside litter campaign and was supported by more than half of Scotland's local authorities.

We revisited our Give Your Litter a Lift campaign and carried out an extensive period of desk-based research alongside consultation with stakeholders. This resulted in the delivery of a Roadside Litter Intervention, as part of the National Litter and Flytipping Strategy Year 2 Action Plan (2024/2025), focused on Perth and Kinross, with the aim of raising awareness of and reducing litter that is generated by vehicle drivers on the A9.

Perth and Kinross was chosen to be the location for the intervention as we wanted to deploy a campaign that had both an urban and a rural focus. Broxden Junction on the outskirts of Perth where the A9 meets the M90 motorway carrying traffic from Fife and the Forth Road Bridge provided the urban focus. It is one of the busiest and most important road junctions in Scotland, with links to all eight Scottish cities. The village of Killiecrankie, which sits at the edge of the Cairngorms National Park and is a rich historical conservation area cleaving a pass where the Highlands meet the Lowlands, provided the rural focus.

Keep Scotland Beautiful developed the A9 Roadside Litter intervention with partners as part of the National Litter and Flytipping Strategy Year 2 Action Plan (2024/2025). Together we sought to test the effectiveness of different communication messages and channels to address roadside litter.

Objectives

1

Re-engage the public on the issue of roadside litter.

2

Update the design of roadside litter campaign materials.

3

Gather new data both urban and rural.

4

Raise awareness of food on the go related litter.

#RoadsideLitter

Delivery

Focus groups with users of the A9
14 participants took part
8 urban and 6 rural.



Physical materials installed at Starbucks Inverlmond with campaign materials created to include the Enjoy it on the way, Bin it on the go messaging.



Litter pick at Broxden Park and Ride.
11 people
6 bags of litter

Creation of updated physical and digital materials.

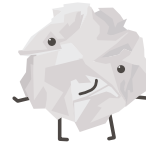
30 bus backs in Perth
150,610 people reached



Take it home bags distributed through Enterprise Rent-A-Car - a practical reminder to drivers to give their litter a lift.

Litter pick in Killiecrankie alongside Killecrankie, Fincastle and Tummel Community Council as part of Spring Clean Scotland.

25 people involved
15 bags of litter collected



#RoadsideLitter

Case study

Our 2016-2019 roadside litter campaign, funded by industry, introduced characters of the most common types of roadside litter to urge road users to 'Give you litter a lift, take it home!'

Behaviour change takes time, and familiar messaging is essential in embedding a sustained call to action.

The characters were used again as part of the A9 Roadside Litter Intervention, ensuring consistency of brand, tone and message while additionally targeting food and drink on-the-go packaging that is found by our roadsides. The messaging and design evolved to include the Enjoy it on the way, Bin it on the go messaging.

"You've got to split it and show the same scenery with litter all over it. So you can see that it can be beautiful, but you need to take your rubbish home."

Urban focus group participant



As part of the A9 Roadside Litter Intervention we sought feedback on existing and potential roadside campaign materials with drivers who use the A9. Focus groups facilitated by Diffley Partnership, highlighted that there was a desire for campaign materials to include comparison style photos. This finding was incorporated in the A9 Roadside Litter Intervention and updated social assets were designed highlighting the unspoilt beauty of one side of a rural road in comparison to a littered one on the opposite side. The post was then shared on our social media channels, where it was particularly effective on Facebook with **106,583** views, a reach of **70,044** and more than **600** interactions. This social media assets were shared with delivery partners including BEAR Scotland, Perth and Kinross Council, Stagecoach and Rabbie's Tours.

GIVE YOUR LITTER A LIFT

TAKE IT HOME

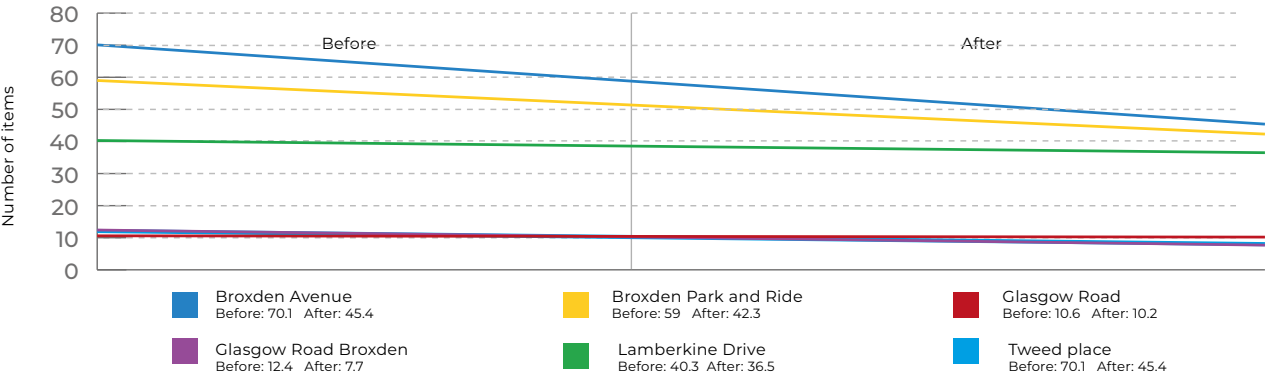


Outputs

Litter audits in Perth and Kinross

As part of the A9 Roadside Litter Intervention, we sought to gather location specific data by conducting litter surveys in both the urban and rural intervention locations. This data collection was led by Perth and Kinross Council which conducted litter surveys in both September 2024 and between January and February 2025.

Food and drink density



Findings

In September 2024 Perth and Kinross Council collected 24 bags of litter over a 30-day period in the Broxden area, weighing approximately 48kg. Rurally, three bags of litter were collected in Killiecrankie in one day, with a weight of 6kg. The raw data collected at both the urban and rural locations was then analysed to draw out any trends or key findings. The findings below have been selected from the wider data set to focus on Broxden Park and Ride and Killiecrankie. Given that the intervention had a focus on food and drink on the go, the data was analysed to identify whether there had been any reduction in the littering of these items from before and after the intervention was rolled out.

When isolating food and drink related litter at Broxden Park and Ride, before the intervention the average count was 59 and after the intervention it was 42.3, showing a decrease of almost 30%.

Similarly, several other locations around Broxden roundabout also showed a decline in food and drink related litter.



30%


decrease in food and drink related items at Broxden Park and Ride.

#RoadsideLitter

When isolating food and drink related litter, before the intervention at Killiecrankie South the average item count was 6.3 pieces and after the intervention it was 3.2 showing a decrease of around 50%. Contrastingly, at Killiecrankie North food and drink related litter went from 4.8 pre-intervention to 21 after intervention, with over a 400% increase. However, this large increase may be explained by Storm Eowyn which took place during the planned data collection period, resulting in both surveys being called off and the more extreme weather conditions impacting the composition and types of litter being found.

Litter counts for Killiecrankie

	Killiecrankie South		Killiecrankie North	
	Before September 2024	After January / February 2024	Before September 2024	After January / February 2024
Total count	12.3	9.2	9.3	35.8
Food and drinks	6.3	3.2	4.8	21.0
Smoking related	0.8	1.8	1.8	5.3
Vaping related	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.2
Drinks related	3.3	1.3	3.0	12.2
Confectionery related	2.5	1.2	1.5	6.7
Fast food related	0.5	0.7	0.3	2.2
Paper	2.0	2.5	2.8	5.8
Dog fouling	0.0	1.3	0.0	3.2
Other	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.3



Learnings

Litter counts provide snapshots of the environmental quality in the immediate area and at the time conducted. The indicative trends reported in the results are specific to the intervention site and, as such, interventions should continue to be tested and monitored to understand the viability and transferability of their impact. Regarding Killiecrankie specifically the data set is limited due to its rural location and capacity to conduct audits. Environmental factors can also have a significant impact on the surveying of data.

50%
decrease of food
and drink related items
in Killiecrankie South.



#RoadsideLitter

Perceptions of roadside litter with users of the A9

Focus groups were carried out ahead of the intervention with support from the Diffley Partnership to collect qualitative data.

The objective of these focus groups was to gather insight into perceptions of roadside litter in Perth and Kinross, attitudes to the passed circular economy bill regarding the vehicle littering provisions and feedback on roadside campaign design concepts.

Encounters with roadside litter

Most focus group participants reported seeing at least some litter (on the A9).

"You don't notice that aspect of it when you're driving, you just see the litter at the side of the road, you think that doesn't look very nice... but it's when you're actually walking that I feel you notice it the most."

Rural focus group participant

"It's related to traffic and probably the tourist season, the A9 is busier in the summer... and the volume will be higher when the weather's better."

Urban focus group participant

GIVE YOUR LITTER A LIFT

TAKE IT HOME



Causes of roadside litter

Most responded with ideas about cultural or societal attitudes.

A sense that people can "get away" with littering on rural roads, with less chance of being caught compared to on urban ones.

Participants felt that infrastructure can play a part, with some citing a lack of bins to dispose of litter while "on the go" and highlighting how those bins they do come across are often full.

Weather was also cited as a cause in the urban group

"It is totally unacceptable, but it's very much a cultural thing. We just, as everybody says, we just don't seem to have any social responsibility whatsoever to take our own rubbish back home. It's quite simple...I've been behind people when litter is discarded, randomly, just out windows and whatever. But it's so difficult, isn't it, to pin the blame, as it were?"

Rural focus group participant

Consequences of roadside litter

Animals were brought up, both as a nuisance (attracting vermin) and in terms of the harm that they could face.

Danger to humans both the impact it could have on other road users and those who are tasked with cleaning it up.

"A lot of people are putting bags at the side of the bins and you just see birds or seagulls or polishing it and the next thing, it's everywhere."

Urban focus group participant

"It's the safety side of things. The amount of times we've had to avoid debris on the road or there's been litter blown in the road and you don't want it to hit you and that loss of vision for two seconds, do you know what I mean? So it's just the safety of it."

Urban focus group participant

Enforcement and regulation

Participants expressed general awareness of fines for roadside littering but lacked knowledge of specific amounts, with many feeling that the current penalty of £80 was insufficient.

Participants sensed that the wider public are unaware that such fines exist (current fines), and therefore they believe that they can litter by the roadside without consequence.

"I suppose it's the only way of linking the litter to the person. If it's on a camera and they're caught on a camera, they'll have the number plate of the car, and they'll be able to link that to the driver of the car, but not to the passenger. So, I suppose it is the way of actually making it more enforceable."

Rural focus group participant

The higher penalty of £200 was seen as a potentially effective deterrent, but participants emphasised that its success would depend heavily on consistent enforcement.

Conclusion

Roadside litter is a persistent and complex issue that stems from the behaviours of a minority of individuals and the perceptions, attitudes and norms that surround them.

Our learnings from leading the intervention in Perth and Kinross have revealed the depth of impact on communities and businesses, as well as the pressure put on the public purse as local authorities and duty bodies work to remove litter from roadsides - it's a thankless challenge that starts again as soon as it is done.

We know that addressing the issue can't wait:

- Litter costs Scotland more than £1 million a week to clear up. Litter is particularly challenging and costly to remove from roadsides because it is dangerous and whole or parts of roads often need to be closed to allow cleansing to be carried out while ensuring safe working conditions.
- Public frustrations and complaints about litter by roadsides are growing and generating local community activists who are keen to drive action by raising the issue with elected members and via the Scottish Parliament.
- Litter is not something we want to greet tourists with, but it is something that they will remember. When visitors do not see the picture postcard Scotland we sell them they may not return. Businesses have voiced concern over the emotional and economic impact of roadside litter in areas that depend on tourism.

We need a combination of preventative behaviour change campaigns to educate and engage those who litter, improved infrastructure to support those who want to do the right thing in the right context and location, and effective enforcement – delivered over a sustained period of time.

Tackling roadside litter at source and preventing the behaviours which lead to waste becoming litter in the first place will take time, millions of pounds in investment and multiple interventions, actions and collaboration opportunities. In lieu of such funding we are committed to moving forward the actions we can, rather than waiting for everything needed to fall into place.

To kickstart action we hosted a roadside litter roundtable at the end of March in Perth and presented our roadmap to tackle the issue. At the roundtable we identified three strands of action which we aim to drive forward including strategic asks of the Scottish Government, of industry and corporate organisations and of local authorities and communities.

Our proposed roadmap, Mapping out a way forward to tackle roadside litter, outlines our commitment to drive action forward, and our wider asks. (Appendix 1).

What you can do

- Join our coalition to inspire positive action to tackle roadside litter.
- [Signpost people to the Community Litter Hub](#) for good practice, facts, information and resources.
- Work with us to test and share our campaign materials, supporting behaviour change in your communities.

We published two blogs focussed on roadside litter to capture valuable insight from the community council, businesses and volunteers of Killiecrankie and share our journey of raising awareness of the roadside litter issue over recent years. You can read both of these blogs on our website.



[The long road travelled to tackle roadside litter.](#)



[Roadside litter is everyone's problem.](#)

Appendix 1 - Mapping out a way forward to tackle roadside litter

We are calling for collaboration to drive forward a five-year roadmap to tackle roadside litter. We aim to:

- Create a collaborative coalition of organisations to reduce roadside litter in Scotland.
- Continue to deliver interventions and test messages to create effective behaviour change campaigns.
- Increase knowledge transfer and good practice between coalition members and communities.



Our five-year road map

We have identified three strands of action needed to make an impact on roadside litter by 2030.

Our strategic asks of national government

- Roadside litter should be given priority as part of the National Litter and Flytipping Strategy for Scotland. The strategy must be used as a vehicle to drive action.
- Scottish Ministers should facilitate a conversation with all duty bodies – both road operators and local authorities with a responsibility for clearing litter our strategic and rural roads to improve co-ordination. The current inconsistent approach to litter clearing activity can no longer continue.
- The littering from vehicle provisions laid out in the Circular Economy Act must be used as a deterrent and the flaws in the current enforcement model must be fixed. Work should be carried out now to help duty bodies understand how to effectively use the new provisions ahead of them coming into force.

88% of people agree that the owner of a car should face a fine when litter is thrown from a vehicle by them or a passenger (ScotPulse, 2016)

Our strategic asks of industry and corporate organisations

- Industry bodies, retailers, and businesses should increase their engagement and support of behaviour change and prevention campaigns.
- Businesses should ensure employees are aware of duties when transporting goods and provide appropriate training for their drivers to minimize accidental littering
- Through extended producer responsibility or other means, businesses should support litter prevention, education and bin and waste management.

71% agree with the general principle that producers should bear financial responsibility for managing packaging waste and litter caused by their packaging. (Diffley Partnership, Understanding Scotland Series, 2024)

Our asks of local authorities

- Local authorities should consider directing funds from Extended Producer Responsibility payments or other levies, such as a tourism levy, to support action in tackling litter and littering behaviours.
- Local authorities should promote our campaigns and signpost communities to the Community Litter Hub, where we can share examples of best practice, facts and information, resources and provide an opportunity to support community capacity building.
- Local authorities should continue to work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities on shared road networks to ensure users see consistent messaging and practices

85% support educational and behavioural campaigns.



We support the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keep Scotland Beautiful is your charity for Scotland's environment. We work with you to help combat climate change, reduce litter and waste, restore nature and biodiversity and improve places. We aim to inspire changes in behaviour to improve our environment, the quality of people's lives, their wellbeing and the places that they care for.



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