



# Time for a new approach: tackling the litter emergency

Update report

December 2022



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We support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



# Introduction

Our December 2020 Report – *Time for a new approach to tackling litter*, warned that the consequences for our communities of not dealing with the most publicly complained about environmental problem should not be underestimated and that we were facing a looming litter emergency – hidden in plain sight. Since then, people, communities and places across Scotland – from our largest cities to our smallest villages – have continued to be buffeted by global, national, and local challenges, touching all aspects of our lives.

In this update report, we highlight the continuing and ongoing decline in the quality of our local environments against a backdrop of the ongoing challenges we face in all our lives, some a lasting legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pattern of decline in our local environment is increasingly visible and is changing the fabric of our communities, and the way we feel about and relate to the places we live and love, our sense of well-being, and the way we think about the future.

We know that litter is a matter of significant public concern as highlighted in our recent *Scottish Litter Survey* and this deterioration in standards is also evidenced through our annual audits. The audit data paints a worrying trend and indicates that the decline is worsening at a disproportionate rate in our most deprived neighbourhoods.

This cannot continue. In 2013 we recorded our cleanest year. All our evidence and data now point to the fact there is a litter emergency in Scotland as ten years on, we have recorded our worst year. We recognise that the impact of COVID-19 continues to cause real challenges to those tasked with the duty to maintain cleanliness standards. However, litter continues to be dropped in our streets, parks, beaches and waterways. This is exacerbated by harmful behaviours and unsustainable patterns of consumption.

The time has come to tackle and respond to the litter emergency in the same way we have approached the twin climate and nature emergencies – with bold and collective action across all parts of society. Indeed, tackling litter will lead to important, positive impacts on efforts to combat climate change and halt biodiversity loss.

Positive progress has been made through our work with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders in reviewing the approaches that are currently taken across Scotland to tackle litter. Greater focus

must be targeted and allocated to those areas where it is most needed – communities in our most deprived areas who experience disproportionately the impact of multiple deprivation.

Finding new ways to engage and work with the people of Scotland is an important part of our determination to work collaboratively and with renewed positive certainty so that together, we can keep Scotland beautiful. Our work with communities and local authorities willing to make a difference, stepping up and trying out new approaches has empowered them to take positive action and make the changes required to influence and inspire greater environmental improvement.

Sustained and collaborative action from everyone is needed, if we are truly serious about turning the situation around and solving the issues that are driving the increasing levels of litter. We know that behaviour change is an important element to tackling the issue of litter, however in order for this change to happen we need for the litter emergency to be recognised.

Reversing the data trends and tackling the behaviours driving the decline in litter and local environmental quality standards requires that the long-term actions and outcomes detailed within the forthcoming National Litter and Flytipping Strategy are backed by appropriate investment, resourcing, and finance over the full decade long timeframe of the strategy.

Urgent action to restore our environment and revitalise our communities is needed to ensure that we can all be proud of the country we share and call home – this means that difficult decisions need to be made. However, for the sake of a clean, green, and sustainable future for Scotland and for our environment these decisions need to be made.

We need you to join us in our continued effort to better protect and enhance the places and spaces that we care so much about. This is important for our environment, our wildlife, our health, and our wellbeing. If we cannot respect and look after the places that we live in and love, then we have no hope of solving the climate and nature crises. Tackling these issues together, we know we can build communities we are all proud of and happy to call home.

Join us in our vision for a clean, green and sustainable Scotland, and help us tackle the litter emergency.

87%

of people believe that litter is an issue across Scotland.

81%

in the most deprived fifth of neighbourhoods report that they see litter 'very' or 'somewhat' often.

97%

of people support measures to improve waste disposal facilities to tackle litter.

Significant gap

between litter levels in the most and least deprived areas.

Two thirds

of local authorities saw an increase in the percentage of unacceptably littered sites since last year.

1 in 10

sites have unacceptable levels of litter.



# An update: 2020 to 2022

## What we called for

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In 2020 we outlined a number of proposals to highlight the seriousness of the situation we continue to find ourselves in, and to agree on a collective approach to averting a litter emergency. We believe now, as we did in 2020, that these proposals have the ability to galvanise communities, local authorities and other organisations to take action and to deliver significant and necessary improvements to local environmental quality across Scotland. We recognise the challenges that are faced by communities, groups and local authorities all over the country, and we are extremely proud of those who work each and every day to tackle litter. The action from these people helps to ensure that our beauty spots and neighbourhoods are places that we truly take pride in.






We have continued in our efforts to tackle the issues that influence and drive littering and littering behaviours through a range of actions across communities, in partnership with other organisations, and through celebrating the action taken by local groups across the country. The challenges faced on top of those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have made tackling the decline difficult, and as we reflect on the progress made since 2020, we must also look to the future with a renewed sense of urgency as we strive for a clean, green, and sustainable Scotland.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on legislative processes in Scotland continues to have an effect. For example, circular economy proposals previously consulted upon in 2019 were delayed and subsequently brought forward again in 2022. The cumulative impact of these delays to legislation are still being felt today, just this month the Scottish Government acknowledged that the new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy will now not be published until early 2023.







As we transition to a more circular economy there will need to be a collective shift both in the ways that the general public are enabled to readily and easily reduce, re-use and recycle the goods and packaging that they consume, and also in the ways in which producers and retailers are required to design and manufacture products and packaging that can be reduced, re-used and recycled. As legislation to support a more circular economy is brought forward, there exists the potential to influence and drive change in those behaviours that can impact upon the number and type of items littered including Extended Producer Responsibility schemes, the introduction of a charge for single-use coffee cups, and the Deposit Return Scheme set to be introduced in August 2023.

Table 1 details the key asks that we set out in 2020, and the progress achieved so far. It is important to take into account that the impact of COVID-19 is still being felt across communities and local authorities, and that throughout a large proportion of this report's timeframe people were still living under COVID-19 restrictions, both in their personal lives and in the actions that they were able to take. So, whilst significant progress has been made toward the asks we called for, we have not seen as much progress as we might have expected. We anticipate that a number of these asks will be brought forward as part of the new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy and its associated outcomes and action plan.

**Table 1: Our progress on the 2020 asks**

 2020 ask	 2022 update	Status
<b>Litter summit</b>	<p>In March 2021, we hosted the Scottish Litter Summit in partnership with Scottish Government and Zero Waste Scotland which was attended by key stakeholders. The aim of this summit was to reinvigorate a collaborative and collective approach to tackling litter and declining local environmental quality.</p> <p>A key recommendation from the summit was to see better alignment between the marine and terrestrial litter strategies. At the summit Scottish Government confirmed that a review of the 2014 Litter Strategy would treat litter and flytipping as separate but interrelated, and that they would bring forward a new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy in 2022 as well as a revised Marine Litter Strategy.</p>	
<b>Clear strategy</b>	<p>We welcomed the publication of the draft National Litter and Flytipping Strategy and the associated consultation. Working in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland and Scottish Government we delivered a range of engagement events throughout the consultation process making sure that a range of views on the draft strategy were incorporated into the final version which is expected in early 2023.</p>	
<b>National campaign</b>	<p>In our own consultation response to the draft National Litter and Flytipping Strategy, we renewed our call for a Scotland-wide national anti-littering marketing campaign. National marketing campaigns are more likely to succeed in embedding behaviour change if they are consistent and rolled out over a generation. Consistent messaging outlining the socially unacceptable negative outcomes of littering and its damaging impact on the condition of our communities could influence people to take pride in the quality of Scotland's local environments.</p> <p>In partnership with Zero Waste Scotland, we supported the national <i>Scotland is Stunning – Let's Keep It That Way</i> litter campaign messages in 2020 and 2021. This is a positive example of collaborative working at a national level with sustained, consistent messaging.</p> <p>Once embedded and easily recognisable, this messaging could be adapted to underpin campaign activity at a regional/local level or focused on a specific problem.</p>	



 2020 ask	 2022 update	Status
<b>Community focused educational programme</b>	<p>Since the publication of our 2020 report, we have developed and piloted <i>Litterate</i> – our innovative community-focussed education programme. The course empowers communities and strengthens their ability to tackle litter and waste by encouraging them to think about the personal, local, and work-place actions they can take in their local areas.</p> <p>Glasgow City Council was the first local authority to sign up to <i>Litterate</i> and has been piloting the programme within the city; and we have continued to argue for a greater focus on communities and the positive and influential role they play in tackling litter and waste across Scotland.</p>	
<b>Gather and monitor data</b>	<p>In partnership with Scotland's local authorities, we carry out annual local environmental quality surveys as part of the Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS). The data collected throughout the auditing process enables local authorities to develop evidence informed policies and campaigns and supports their duties under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the related Code of Practice on Litter and Waste (Scotland) 2018, to keep specified land and roads clean and litter free. We have been working with Zero Waste Scotland on the Litter Monitoring System (LMS) to allow for audits to be completed digitally providing spatial information, and on the methodology and sampling to align to the Code of Practice on Litter and Waste (Scotland) 2018. The system also promotes further data collection and management for informed decision-making on services.</p> <p>Community involvement in data collection by our Clean Up Hubs, Anchor Groups, and other community groups contribute to our citizen science database, adding a further layer of data that better supports the inclusion of a community-level perspective within our policies, reports, and other publications.</p>	
<b>Commission review of failing enforcement model</b>	<p>We welcomed the inclusion within the proposed Circular Economy Bill of an additional power to enable the registered keepers of vehicles to be pursued for littering offences occurring from their vehicle.</p> <p>The problems and inconsistencies with the enforcement system for litter fines across Scotland need to be urgently addressed, and we recognise that this is not an easy fix. We remain committed to our call for a commissioned review of the failing enforcement model for littering offences. Both the review of the enforcement model, and the registered keeper of vehicles power proposal were included in our response to the draft National Litter and Flytipping Strategy consultation.</p>	
<b>Establish an innovation fund</b>	<p>The establishment of an innovation fund would enable novel and exciting interventions to be trialled and tested at a local level, and over a sustained timeframe.</p> <p>We renewed our call for the establishment of a permanent fund in our response to the draft National Litter and Flytipping Strategy and believe that such a fund would encourage and enable participation and engagement by everyone – particularly if a citizen science/participatory element was included in the application and/or funding process.</p>	

# What we have done

Our *Time for a new approach to tackling litter* report set out our priorities for tackling litter and reversing the decline in environmental quality across Scotland's communities. However, when thinking about the efforts required to tackle the issues and challenges, no one could have predicted the wide-ranging impacts that COVID-19 and the related restrictions would have, nor could we have predicted the wider world events that continue to impact upon our day to day lives in December 2022. Whilst we may have wanted to see greater action and improvement in our aim to reverse the decline, we must also reflect on and celebrate the positive and collective action taken across Scotland during this time.

The last two years have been challenging for everyone, and our December 2020 report included a range of Stories from Lockdown and some of the actions that we took during the first phases of the COVID-19 Pandemic. As we transitioned out of COVID-19 restrictions, we welcomed a return to in-person events and activities, and despite challenges have consistently delivered on our proposed actions including the publication of a range of reports, new innovations and collaborations, and engaging with more local communities across Scotland.

## Interventions and Innovations

The Clean Up Scotland network now has **more than 100 Hubs** across 30 local authorities which we have supported to remove 101,928kg of litter across Scotland as detailed in our recent [Clean Up Scotland Hub Report](#). With much of our campaign activities impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, in 2021 we ran a Summer Clean with people pledging to litter pick over 75,000 miles. Our Spring Clean campaign returned in 2022, launched with the Minister for Biodiversity, Circular Economy and Green Skills.

Our [Upstream Battle](#)® on the Clyde programme expanded to **16 Anchor Groups**, and we launched our Professional Learning Programme on the journey of marine litter from source to sea available within West Partnership schools. In addition to the expansion of the programme along the Clyde, we launched Upstream Battle® on the Tay, along with the formation of nine new Anchor Groups tackling litter along the river and its tributaries.

Litter and waste continue to be a priority within our education work; **25 Wrigley Litter Less Schools** were supported to tackle litter in their local communities in 2021, and our Eco-Schools Scotland Live Lesson initiative continues to deliver a range of litter and waste related learning. We piloted our Litterate community education programme with Glasgow City Council, and also launched the innovative LitterLotto® as a behaviour change intervention.

We continued to support and celebrate environmental improvement across communities and organisations, greenspaces and beaches through our range of awards and recognition initiatives including It's Your Neighbourhood, Beautiful Scotland, National Award for Environmental Excellence®, Green Key®, Green Flag Award®, and Scotland's Beach Awards. Despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen widening participation of groups and spaces in our awards and initiatives and have been pleased to see an increase in the number of groups and spaces awarded and celebrated for their efforts – including a great performance by Scottish groups and spaces at the UK Best of Best Green Flag Award ceremony in November 2022.





## Data and Monitoring

LEAMS has been the national performance indicator for street litter cleanliness since 2003/04, and in partnership with local authorities, we have carried out **23,672** individual surveys since our 2020 report with 12,803 individual sites surveyed during the last year. Local authorities play a key role in maintaining cleanliness standards across Scotland. The lasting impact upon service delivery from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic should not be underestimated, nor should the ongoing decline in the level of public resources. To support local authorities during these challenging times, we delivered a series of LEAMS and Local Environmental Quality seminars covering topics such as data, the role of public perceptions, and future planning and action. We will be hosting our next seminar in January 2023.

We have also continued to work collaboratively with Zero Waste Scotland to develop the Litter Monitoring System (LMS) which will improve consistency and transparency across the data collected. It also gives all data spatial information allowing it to be interrogated further and analysis with other data sets which will help in evidencing decisions on resource allocation. We have also been consulting on the methodology and sampling approach of LEAMS as we transition it to using LMS. We will continue to work in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders to support the auditing, monitoring and validation of standards and data.

Citizen science forms a key part of our data and monitoring work with people and communities contributing to a range of campaigns and initiatives. This data enables us to raise and amplify the concerns and issues faced across Scotland's communities; those issues identified can then be highlighted in our policy and research work. Since December 2020, we have published a range of reports detailing citizen science activities including our [Upstream Battle® on the Tay report](#).





## Collaboration and Influence

In partnership with Scottish Government, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, and Zero Waste Scotland we have worked to develop the new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy including enabling and facilitating communities and industry to contribute to the consultation on the new strategy. We were also pleased to support Scottish Government in their launch of the refreshed Marine Litter Strategy and welcomed the increased links between the two.

Scotland is a stunning place to live and work, and in collaboration with a number of other invested parties we have supported campaigns seeking to influence on a range of litter and local environmental quality related issues including: littering across Scotland's beauty spots through the #ScotlandIsStunning campaign with Zero Waste Scotland and others; a call for increased action on flytipping with Scottish Land & Estates; the environmental impact of disposable vapes with Marine Conservation Society and ASH Scotland; Scottish Water's call for a ban on wet wipes containing plastic; and, the UK-wide call for litter payments to form part of forthcoming EPR legislation with the UK Tidy organisations.

We have worked with a number of local authorities on collaborative cross-border action on tackling the issue of roadside litter. We worked with Falkirk Council to develop a portfolio of bespoke litter prevention collateral which aims to influence behaviour change across the council area and we are working with North Lanarkshire Council on a bespoke set of initiatives to support action to tackle litter.

UK-wide collaboration on forthcoming Extended Producer Responsibility proposals has formed an important strand to our work since December 2020 and with our UK partners, we responded collectively to the DEFRA EPR consultation and did extensive scoping work on the proposals for ground litter. More recently, with the announcement that ground litter EPR will only currently apply in Scotland and Wales, we have worked closely with our partners at Keep Wales Tidy to better align our approach to litter prevention including data, monitoring and interventions.

Our partnership with Keep New Zealand Beautiful celebrated its first year with a focus on data, knowledge and ideas sharing on litter and littering behaviours. Local solutions can have a global impact and we look forward to jointly seeking new innovative solutions to the common issues of litter and waste.



# What is the situation now?

Litter continues to be a topic of significant public concern, with our latest public perceptions data showing that 87% of people believe that it is an issue across Scotland<sup>1</sup>. The Scottish Litter Survey is our annual assessment of the perceptions and attitudes of the public towards litter and littering behaviour.

In addition to our perceptions data, we work in partnership with local authorities to coordinate the national programme in Scotland for Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS). This system provides valuable data and analysis of local environmental quality and provides a national picture of current standards. The transition of LEAMS to use the Litter Monitoring System (LMS) in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland is improving both consistency and transparency, and will continue to measure LEQ indicators including litter, flytipping, dog fouling, weed growth, vandalism, and graffiti.

The significant public concern voiced in the Scottish Litter Survey corroborates with the picture across Scotland evidenced in the data collected through LEAMS. The data continues to show that the trend in littering and LEQ is one of decline.

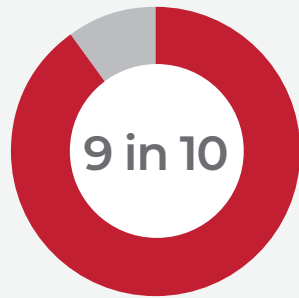
This chapter consists of two sections; first it will consider why it is that litter is a matter of significant public concern; and secondly it will set out the analyses of the data collected.

## How does the public feel about it?

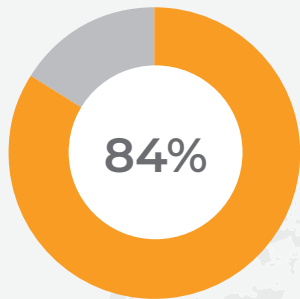
The first Scottish Litter Survey was produced and [published in 2021](#) in association with the Diffley Partnership as part of their Understanding Scotland Series. The updated [Scottish Litter Survey for 2022](#) found that litter remains a matter of significant public concern with 87% of respondents indicating that they believe litter continues to be an issue.

The proportion of respondents to the survey living in least deprived areas reporting that they saw litter 'very' or 'somewhat' often was 68%, compared with 81% of respondents living in most deprived areas. The survey results also indicated that people deem the impact of litter on animals and the environment to be the most concerning consequence of littering. This was followed closely by the negative perception that people believe litter has of their local area, along with the effects that it has on the health and wellbeing of local residents, and the impact that high levels of litter might have upon causing an increase in anti-social behaviour.

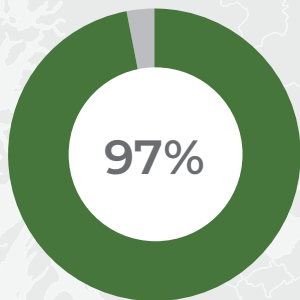
Respondents perceived food and drink packaging to be the most frequent type of litter observed. The perception is that all litter types are now more commonly seen across local areas. A high level of support to tackle and prevent litter was indicated amongst respondents with **nine in ten** setting out their support for educational and behavioural campaigns, and **84%** indicating support for strengthening fines and penalties. There was almost unanimous support for measures to improve waste disposal facilities with **97%** of respondents indicating their belief that this would be an effective initiative in tackling the issue of litter.



Support for  
educational and  
behavioural  
campaigns



Support for  
strengthening fines  
and penalties



Believe improving waste  
disposal facilities would be  
effective in tackling litter

<sup>1</sup> Keep Scotland Beautiful in association with Diffley (2022) Scottish Litter Survey



## What does the data tell us?

For the past two decades we have collected national data on street cleanliness and local environmental quality (LEQ) using the Local Environment Audit and Management System (LEAMS).

Our [2020 Report](#) described and explored the trends in the data between 2003 and 2019/20, noting that 2014 marked the turning point after a decade long trend of improvement in conditions. More recently, the data has shown a drop in standards to levels previously unseen and continues to show a widening gap in the state of LEQ between the most and least deprived areas across Scotland<sup>2</sup>.

In 2020 we warned against underestimating the consequences of not dealing with litter and wider LEQ issues, and litter continues to be dropped across our streets, parks, and beaches – exacerbated by unsustainable patterns of consumption.

The data reflects the perceptions of the Scottish Litter Survey respondents – with 81% of those living in Scotland's most deprived areas reporting seeing litter 'very or somewhat often' compared with 68% of those living in least deprived areas.

We know from the dataset that the number of sites with a significant presence of litter has continued to rise across our most deprived areas, whilst the trend has remained relatively stagnant across those areas considered least deprived.

In 2013, we recorded our cleanest year. Ten years on, the evidence and data now point to a litter emergency as we yet again record our worst year. Analysis of the data that we collect along with the polling data gathered should act as a pertinent reminder of the impact that we have on our local environment, and that if we are serious about tackling the issue we need to find bold, innovative and engaging ways to work together to keep Scotland Beautiful.

Figure 1 highlights a number of the key statistics of our LEAMS National Benchmarking Report 2021-2022.

<sup>2</sup> Keep Scotland Beautiful (2022) LEAMS Validation Data



**87%**

of people believe that litter  
is an issue across Scotland.



**1 in 10**

sites have unacceptable  
levels of litter.



**97%**

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**Significant gap**

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**Two thirds**

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**81%**

in the most deprived fifth  
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Figure 1: LEAMS 2021/22 Key Statistics

## Litter

Over the last year, the national LEAMS dataset shows that two thirds of Scotland's local authorities have seen an **increase** in the percentage of unacceptably littered sites, with **1 in 10** sites audited across Scotland recording unacceptable levels of litter<sup>3</sup>. This year has again seen the **highest percentage** of sites with fast food related litter in ten years<sup>4</sup> (21.9% of sites audited).

Our data shows that not only is the gap between most and least deprived areas widening, but that those communities within most deprived areas are experiencing a **disproportionate increase** in the number of sites recorded with a *significant presence*<sup>5</sup> of litter. There was a 10.8 percentage point rise from 2020 to 2022 in most deprived communities compared with a 1.5 percentage point increase in those considered least deprived<sup>6</sup> - this is illustrated in Figure 2.

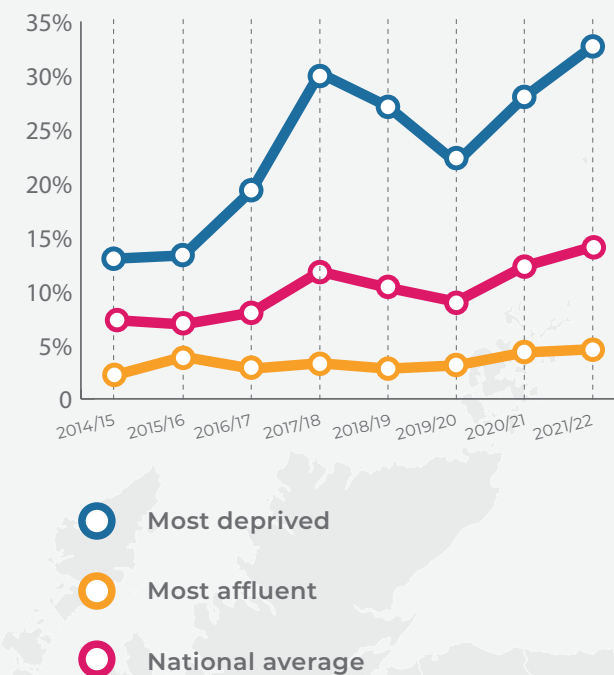
The overall gap **is the largest we have ever recorded** at 28.1 percentage points – nearly triple the gap recorded in 2014/15. This is significant, as the average national trend hides the high levels of significant presence of litter across Scotland's most deprived communities – the national average is represented by the middle (red) line in Figure 2. The upper (blue) line in the graph illustrates clearly the narrative felt in our most deprived communities, with the lower (yellow) line showing a much lower presence of significant littering in the least deprived communities.

It is also interesting to note that the impacts of austerity and local authority budget cuts have not made much of an impact in those areas considered to be least deprived, with the dataset showing a range of 2.4 percentage points (low of 2.2% of sites to a high of 4.6%). This is compared with a range of 19.7 percentage points in the most deprived areas (low of 13.0% to a high of 32.7%).

Our LEAMS National Benchmarking Report 2021-2022 found that cigarette litter was recorded in **62.7%** of all sites and continues to be the most commonly littered and most frequently recorded litter type (constituting 53% of all litter items counted)<sup>7</sup>. Despite the prevalence of cigarette litter and the significant damaging environmental impact – particularly the micro-plastic fibres found in cigarette filters – these items are not as visible to the general public as some other litter types.

More visible forms of litter, but that occur less frequently include food and drinks packaging. This type of litter was observed in **60.4%** of all sites audited with these results suggesting that for the third consecutive year there has been a marginal decrease in the presence of food and drinks packaging recorded<sup>8</sup>.

Figure 2: Percentage of sites with a significant presence of litter



<sup>3</sup> Keep Scotland Beautiful (2022) National LEAMS Benchmarking Report

<sup>4</sup> Keep Scotland Beautiful (2022) National LEAMS Benchmarking Report

<sup>5</sup> Defined as Grade C or Grade D as outlined in the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (Scotland) 2018

<sup>6</sup> Keep Scotland Beautiful (2022) LEAMS Validation Data

<sup>7</sup> Keep Scotland Beautiful (2022) National LEAMS Benchmarking Report

<sup>8</sup> Keep Scotland Beautiful (2022) National LEAMS Benchmarking Report





## Flytipping

Our data shows that flytipping was observed at **2.3%** of audited sites<sup>9</sup> in 2021/22. This was an overall decrease in the average number of sites recording flytipping, however the average figure obscures the disparity in the range of data recorded between the most and least deprived.

In Scotland's most deprived areas our data shows that, 2019/20 aside, there has been an increase in flytipping year on year since 2017/18 culminating in a gap between the most and least deprived areas of 5.1%<sup>10</sup>. Figure 3 illustrates very clearly the continued observed increase in flytipping in the most deprived areas – the upper (blue) line, and the significant gap to the lower (yellow) line representing observed flytipping in least deprived areas. The middle (red) line shows the average observed flytipping.

## Other LEQ indicators

Wider LEAMS LEQ monitoring includes analysis of a further range of indicators; weed growth, detritus, dog fouling, and graffiti. With much of local authority frontline services decimated in the COVID years, the last two years of data reporting are impacted across a range of factors including restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the delivery and operationalisation of services.

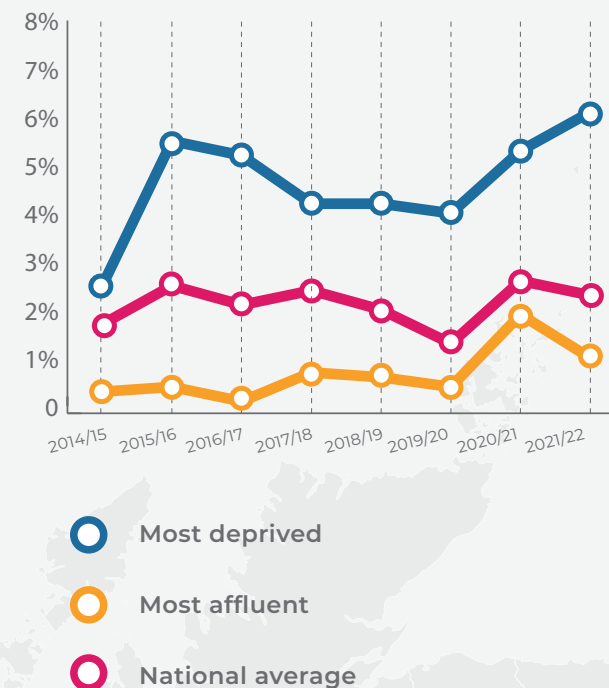
Since the last report there has been a marginal improvement in the presence of weed growth from 56.1% in 2019/20 to **54.7%** in 2021/22 (46.2% in 2020/21). Despite the overall improvement, there was an increase in the number of sites recording significant presence from 9.4% in 2019/20 to **10.4%** in 2021/22 (12.6% in 2020/21).

The presence of detritus has risen from 61.5% of sites as reported in our 2020 report to **64.5%** in 2021/22 (53.3% in 2020/21). In a similar picture to weed growth, detritus has seen an **increase of 3.3%** in the number of sites recording significant presence since the last report (9.2% in 2019/20; 12.3% in 2020/21; 12.5% in 2021/22).

In the last year there has been an overall increase in the total number of sites recording a presence of dog foul, bringing the total to 7.2% of sites. This marks a marginal improvement of 0.2% on the figure reported in our 2020 report of 7.9% (6.1% in 2020/21).

Graffiti was recorded at **6.7%** of sites in 2021/22 which was an increase of 2.6 percentage points on the recorded figure of 4.1% in 2019/20 (6.4% in 2020/21).

Figure 3: Percentage of sites with flytipping



<sup>9</sup> Keep Scotland Beautiful (2022) National LEAMS Benchmarking Report

<sup>10</sup> Keep Scotland Beautiful (2022) LEAMS Validation Data

# Looking forward

## Tackling the litter emergency

In 2022 we supported a range of stakeholders to engage with and contribute to the Scottish Government's consultation on a new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy which gained a high level of participation. Analysis of the consultation dataset shows overwhelming support (88% of respondents) for the development and adoption of a national anti-litter campaign along with high levels of support (80% of respondents) for conducting further research to understand the full range of drivers behind littering behaviours. Furthermore, the responses indicated strong support for a number of other actions that we called for in December 2020, including targeted and innovative interventions and a programme of education and behaviour change.

The strong support for proposals set out in the consultation for the new strategy, along with our perceptions and data evidence shows that litter remains a matter of significant public concern. People across Scotland care about their local communities and the places that they live. However, many are unhappy about the condition of the environment around their home and neighbourhood and know that its cleanliness has a wider impact within their local area and beyond.

Despite the many other pressing issues that we are currently facing, the environment – including the local environmental quality of our neighbourhoods – is something that matters to us all. Across Scotland people care about the places and spaces that we live in, work in, and visit and we are all very proud to call this stunning country home.

We have consistently highlighted the issue of unacceptable levels of litter across Scotland along with the interconnected and declining standards of local environmental quality. We know that this is not a simple problem to solve and that solving it requires a systems-wide, collaborative approach with a wide range of stakeholders.

However, the importance of the issue can no longer be ignored and, given the litter emergency that we now face, the consistent manner in which it has failed to be adequately resourced cannot and must not continue. We are not alone in our concerns and know that many others share in our desire to see greater levels of resource allocated to tackling the issues of litter and local environmental quality.

Importantly, we will need collective effort alongside meaningful resources to deal with the emergency and Keep Scotland Beautiful will continue to work collaboratively with all who are willing to tackle the litter emergency and create a litter-free and litter-free Scotland. Working together, this is a problem that we can overcome and will also lead to important and positive impact on our efforts to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

The reality is that current behaviours and approaches are not enough to influence the trend of decline that we have now been reporting for a number of years, and so we will work with others to review and assess current approaches to tackling the issue of littering and ask whether, as individuals we are doing enough.

The publication of the new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy has been delayed into 2023 and we await its launch with anticipation. No further delay in its publication or implementation is acceptable to us, and we have been clear in defining what our asks for the new strategy are whilst also emphasising that it must be supported by a fully financed and resourced action plan over its lifetime. In addition, we hope that forthcoming ground litter proposals within Extended Producer Responsibility will provide Scotland with additional funds for litter prevention and to help us tackle the litter emergency.

**With collaborative and collective action, and adequate resources we can tackle the litter emergency together.**

**Together we can  
keep Scotland  
beautiful, and leave  
a cleaner, greener  
environment for  
future generations.**





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, and protect and enhance the places we care for.



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