



16th December 2016

Over £50m of public spending a year and Scotland's litter problem is as bad as ever. Time for a new approach?

A new litter study reveals a 1% increase in litter since the Scottish Government launched its new approach "Towards a Litter Free Scotland" in 2014. Supermarket carrier bag litter is up 38% over the same period, despite the introduction of the carrier bag charge two years ago in Scotland. The study, commissioned by the environmental organisation INCPEN and conducted by Keep Scotland Beautiful, was carried out across 120 sites in Edinburgh, Falkirk, Renfrewshire and Inverness.

Smaller items of litter were most common, with cigarette butts and gum making up the bulk of the total litter count. These smaller items accumulate over time and are among the most expensive to clean up. Taking the results without gum and butts, the top five kinds of larger pieces of litter were paper (9%), sweet wrappers (6%), soft drink cans (6%), plastic soft drink bottles (6%) and cigarette packets (4%).

Carrier bags represented under half a percent of the total litter count. The carrier bag charge was introduced in Scotland in October 2014 in a bid to tackle litter. However, the study suggests that charges do not change the behaviour of people who litter. It found that supermarket carrier bags have gone up, but other items that do not carry a charge have gone down - the number of drinks containers has decreased by 18% and coffee cups decreased by 36%.

Jane Bickerstaffe, CEO of INCPEN said "Two years on from the introduction of the carrier bag charge in Scotland and numerous campaigns to tackle litter, the problem is as bad as ever. This charge is not reducing the amount people litter. The study suggests that more charges and deposits on items such as disposable coffee cups and drinks bottles, will not make a difference. Unlike the bag charge which is avoidable if you take your own bag, imposing new charges would simply place additional financial strain on hard working families."



Experience of litter prevention suggests that the issue is best tackled through more innovative approaches to engaging communities and changing behaviour. For example, Hubbub's Neat Streets campaign, which is supported by INCPEN and launched in Edinburgh in July 2016, had significant impact in an earlier scheme in London.

Jane Bickerstaffe said "We have to look at fresh approaches to cleaning up our towns and countryside. There are many good local campaigns and initiatives but what's needed is a long term national programme that makes it socially unacceptable to litter anything. INCPEN recommends that governments look at how we change the behaviour of litterers, so they are proud of their environment and put all rubbish in a bin or take it home."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

A survey of 120 sites (30 each in Edinburgh, Falkirk, Renfrewshire, Inverness) was carried out by Keep Scotland Beautiful in October 2016, using the same methodology and sites as in 2014 (research conducted between December 2013 and February 2014).

Keep Scotland Beautiful has been collecting data on local environmental quality and cleanliness from the Shetland Islands to the Scottish Borders for the past twelve years using LEAMS (Local Environmental Audit and Management System).

Measuring Litter

INCPEN has commissioned litter count studies in the UK since 1997. It is the only scientifically robust series of studies that involve field work covering a wide range of land use types and counting the number of littered items which is the best measure of the cost of the cleaning up. It does not distinguish between accumulated and 'fresh' litter though its scientific basis means it is much more reliable than findings from clean-ups or consumers' reports of litter sightings.

Litter in Scotland

- Scotland's local authorities clear up 15,000 tonnes of litter each year and a further 26,000 tonnes are illegally flytipped
- Over half the population of Scotland have littered



- £46m per year is spent clearing up litter and flytipping
- £7m per year is spent on enforcement and education on litter and flytipping

Source: Zero Waste Scotland's 2014 report "Scotland's Litter Problem"

About INCPEN

The Industry Council for research on Packaging & the Environment is a group of manufacturers and retailers from across the supply chain who carry out research to understand the environmental and social effects of packaging and work together to promote responsible packaging for sustainable supply chains.

INCPEN has campaigned against littering for many years and anti-littering messages are a key part of INCPEN's highly respected materials for schools.

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