

Beyond the litter pick

Ideas to tackle littering that go beyond picking it up



Ready to go further?

Start your journey today



Litter-picking tackles the symptoms of the litter problem without tracing it back to the source. No sooner have you finished tidying up, than the problem rears its ugly head again.

This guide will show you how to go further. How to channel the enthusiasm from previous litter picks – inspiring communities to prevent litter in the first place.

From surprising techniques taken from behavioural science, to a targeted messaging toolkit, this guide will help you address Scotland's litter problem in innovative ways — ways that deliver for the long term.

We've included lots of inspirational examples from across the UK and beyond. You'll find more detailed case studies of selected examples at the end of this guide.

Prevention is better than clean-up

Local authorities and other land managers find themselves in endless cycles of budget-draining clean-ups. Education and enforcement have changed the agenda slightly, but there's still plenty of work to do.



That's where behavioural science comes in. We can influence the choices people make by understanding the things that motivate them:

Incentives – offering someone a little something for their trouble can get them to do things they may not otherwise consider.

Social norms – we're most likely to adopt a behaviour if we think everyone else is already doing it. Even if they're not.

Social messengers – people naturally rate information based on where they got it from. The sources seen as most reliable? 'Experts' and people 'the same' as them.

Affect – anyone can make a bad decision when they're in a bad mood. This effect is so common it's a cornerstone of behavioural science.

Prominence – the human brain is skilled at filtering irrelevant information; making things more obvious helps us to see them again.



Planning – don't ask people to think. Communicate exactly what you want them to do, preferably with a contingency plan to handle common obstacles.

Priming – planting subtle cues can short-circuit the decision-making process altogether, and make people change their behaviour without even realising.



To turn these insights from behavioural science into a proper litter prevention plan, follow these four key steps:

- **Identify the problem.**
- **Set your aims.**
- **Define success.**
- **Measure and evaluate the outcomes.**

The creators of Australia's straight-talking litter campaign, 'Don't be a Tosser' did exactly that:

- **Littering behaviour** – people throwing cigarette butts onto the ground instead of into a bin.
- **Aims** – to set a new social norm: that dropping cigarette ends is a disgusting habit.
- **Success means** – reducing cigarette litter by 50%.
- **Measurement** – based on the **58%** (and rising) litter rate before the campaign, experts predicted 80% of cigarette butts would soon be littered. During the 'Don't be a Tosser' campaign, the **figure fell to 33%**.

This provocative line was also adopted at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park to tackle fly-tipping, with similarly impressive results. You don't need to be original to make a difference – building on the success of others can be just as effective.

How to inspire behaviour change

People don't always behave rationally. The choices we make are consistently unpredictable, so persuading people to behave differently is a complex business. Here are some techniques proven to work.



INSPIRE

Put together a community, not just a litter pick

Standard litter-picks tend to attract people who are already concerned about the litter – they're unlikely to litter themselves. By changing our approach and recruiting volunteers in new ways, we can reach people who aren't yet engaged with the litter issue: the litterbugs themselves.

This isn't just about targeting culprits. It's about bringing diverse groups together, giving them a chance to exchange skills, combine efforts and boost community spirit. It leaves people with more pride in their local area and a desire to do more — the start of lasting change.

Community communications

Creating your communications at a community level lets you tailor messaging to the local situation. Dunna Chuck Bruck – a Shetland-wide litter prevention campaign – used its local focus to full effect, communicating in the local lingo and focusing on the specific litter issues that were rife on the island. 30 years after it was introduced, the campaign is still going strong.

Regenerating the community

Boosting community pride and empowering communities to tackle local issues can both reduce littering. Local improvement projects, from gardening to urban regeneration, are great ways to achieve these aims.

Large-scale projects are normally run by external organisations or often involve multiple agencies. Ayrshire Council's Adopt a Street scheme, now with 205 streets under the care of residents, shows that they can be successful for local authorities and communities too.



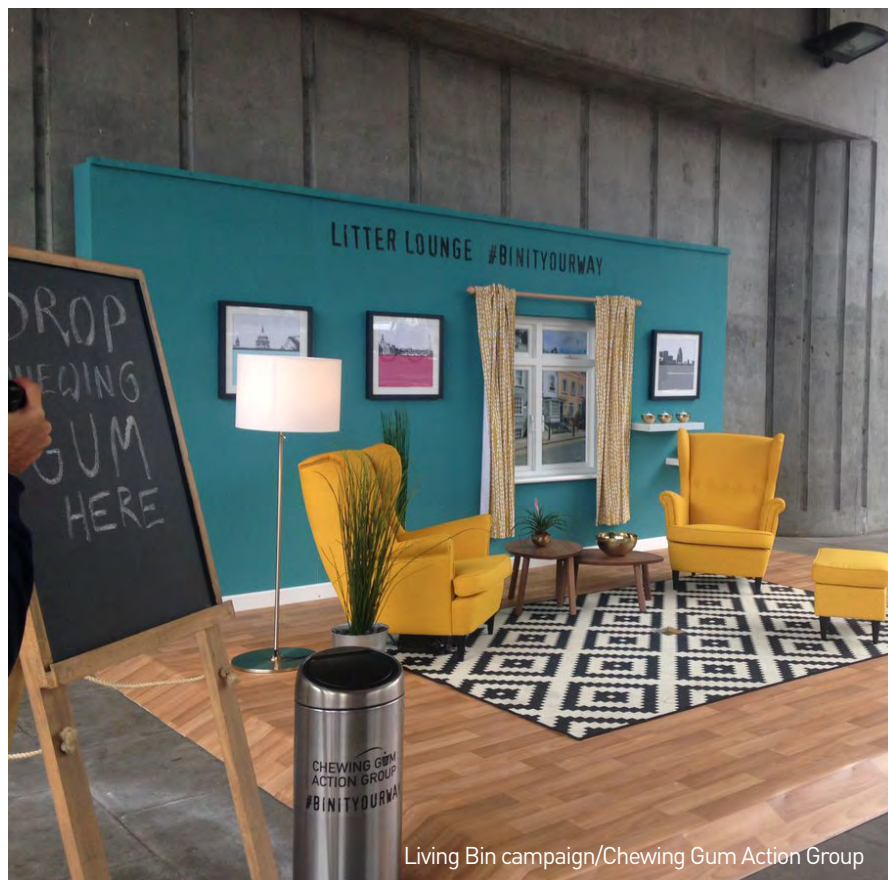
Award schemes

Cash incentives or small giveaways are a tried and tested way to swing people's commitment towards a subject. But incentives don't always have to take such a tangible form.

Awards for outstanding environments – from the cleanest beaches to the best nights out – have proven to motivate communities to clean up their act for the long term. Dock Park in Dumfries and Galloway went from a state of disrepair to winning a Green Flag three years in a row.

The Green Flag Award isn't alone in generating positive results – there are many similar schemes running in Scotland – from local initiatives like the Tidy Business Edinburgh Award to wide-scale programmes like European Clean-Up Day.

Hand over control



Living Bin campaign/Chewing Gum Action Group

Even hardened litterers are unlikely to drop cigarette butts on their own living room floor. Or stick their chewing gum to their own car window. That's because people only tend to litter in places they care little about.

The flip-side is that they don't litter as much in areas they love. In theory, this means that we can clean up our communities by making communities, businesses, schools and volunteer groups care more deeply about their neighbourhoods.

The reality seems to match the theory. Lambeth Parks lets community groups decide what happens to their local parks. The chair of the Friends of Parks group reported that local people are now more motivated to contribute to the parks' upkeep since they can now take ownership of, and receive praise for, change.



CAMPAIGN

Living Bin

The Chewing Gum Action Group transformed a busy east London street into the Litter Lounge, a living bin that challenges public behaviour around responsible gum disposal.

PARTNERSHIPS

Work in partnerships

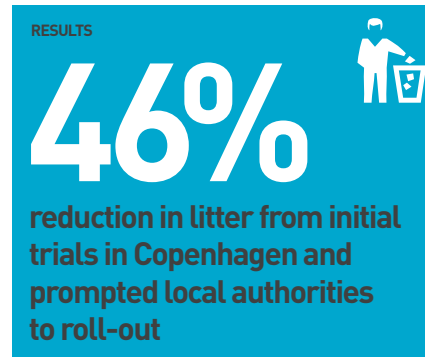


Litter and flytipping aren't matters local authorities can tackle alone - partnerships with other land managers, businesses and community groups is a must to tackle the problems once and for all.

In the county of Ceredigion in Wales, local authorities removed rubbish from privately-owned land, free-of-charge. The only condition was that landowners had to install better flytipping prevention measures, such as barriers and signage. Flytipping reports decreased while the measures were in place. Several Scottish local authorities have similar schemes in place.

Nudge nudge

Telling people what to do risks getting their backs up. 'Nudging' them towards the right decision is often a more effective alternative. Nudge techniques can induce subtle changes in behaviour, and reduce the amount of litter on the street.



Copenhagen is the gold (or rather, green) standard in this area, with behavioural science experts and local authorities working together to redesign bins for the better. Bright colours make each bin easier to see, smart design makes them easier to use, and clever footprints painted on the floor make it psychologically harder to walk on by. Initial trials achieved a 46% reduction in litter – and prompted local authorities to roll-out the measures across the entire city.

A pilot scheme at Stirling University showed that this approach has the potential to work in Scotland as well.

Rochford Borough Council launched a similar 'nudge' where bins were transformed into charity collection boxes – the more litter deposited, the more money would be donated. During the trial, litter levels were reduced by 42% and continued to fall even once the wraps had been removed – reaching an impressive 63% reduction overall.



Get inventive with incentives



From council-wide competitions to new outdoor play equipment for the tidiest parks, there are lots of ways to persuade people to bring positive change to an area. The best results come when local business and local authorities partner up.

In 2015, Recycle and Reward vans were dispatched across Scotland – from a music festival in Stornoway to IKEA stores across the central belt. The idea behind these reverse vending machines is simple: put in empty bottles and cans, and get money or discount vouchers back. The pilot schemes delivered a dramatic increase in the amount of plastic being recycled – and crucially – less plastic with the potential to be littered.

Schemes like this have the potential to transform all types of litter hotspots, from schools and community centres to supermarkets and green spaces.

By definition, litterers have little-to-no interest in litter prevention. If we want them to change their ways, we first have to give them a reason to get on board. Incentives can be a great way of doing this.

Communications with impact

People respond to communications messages that are relevant to them at the point where they see them. Our Targeted Messaging Toolkit is packed with creative, context-specific messages you can adopt as your own.



Cleaner Canals Science was a partnership between Scottish Waterways Trust, Glasgow Science Festival and Zero Waste Scotland

Push the boundaries

Don't limit yourself to posters; take a look at what others have done – almost anything's possible with a little imagination.

LITTER PREVENTION MESSAGE

Communication resources

The Zero Waste Scotland litter prevention toolkit contains free artwork for litter prevention communications that you can adapt to suit your event.

IMPACT

Citizen science



Citizen science helps people to learn through involvement, not lectures. The Cleaner Canal Science project took local students outdoors to monitor and measure the litter problem themselves – producing data that could be used by litter prevention experts. The effects of this exercise in student engagement were impressive:

- **25% increase** in the number of pupils who 'care/care a lot' about litter (from **52.8% to 66.1%**).
- **91% of pupils that took part reported that they 'enjoyed the project/enjoyed it a lot'.**

Don't be a tosser (bin your butts)

Who? Sustainability Victoria

Where? Victoria, Australia

Partners

Australian Hotels Association, Butt Littering Trust, City of Melbourne, Clubs Victoria, Department of Human Services, EPA Victoria, Liquor Licensing, Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Litter Action Alliance.

Objectives

To reduce cigarette butt littering by 50%, outside 20% of Victoria's social venues.

Audience

Smokers, venue managers.

Background

Authorities anticipated a sharp increase in the amount of cigarette litter when a ban on indoor smoking came into effect. Research showed that Australian smokers felt persecuted and so a tough-line campaign was unlikely to produce a good result. A more light-hearted approach was needed.



What they did

State-wide communications featuring the provocative, attention-grabbing headline 'Don't be a tosser' and a clear call to action – 'Bin your butts'. This was rolled out on posters, bus shelter ads and radio ads. More than 8,000 campaign toolkits were mailed out to pubs, clubs and other licensed venues across Victoria. Other tactics included a campaign website, PR activity, and e-newsletters. 'Butt Champs' also gave out free personal ashtrays at participating venues.



Sustainability
victoria

IMPACT

The Results



- Two-thirds of local governments in Victoria ran the campaign.
- Before the campaign, littering rates were at 58%, forecast to increase to 80%. During it, littering fell to just 33%.
- 66% of smokers binned their butts during the campaign, up from 42% beforehand.

Why it worked

- **Strategic partnerships** – with the hospitality industry and local and national authorities.
- **Effective infrastructure** – the campaign was supported by an increase in bin numbers.
- **Novel approach** – smokers responded positively to the tongue-in-cheek tone.

University 'Nudge' Pilot

Who? KSB and Stirling University
Institute of Social Marketing

Where? Stirling, Scotland

Partners
Keep Scotland Beautiful

Audience
Town centre shoppers and visitors.

Background

This project built on an intervention carried out in Copenhagen in 2011. In the original study, a 46% decrease was reported by the experiment team in the proportion of wrappers which ended up on the street.

This research extended the original work to look at impacts over a longer period.



What they did

Researchers replaced the normal black bins within the study site with green ones, to make them more visible. They also painted brightly-coloured footprints leading up to each one to prompt passers-by to register the 'correct' action.

Littering behaviour was monitored after one week, four weeks and eight weeks. Researchers distributed free, individually-wrapped confectionery to people across the study site and measured how many wrappers were correctly binned versus the number dropped on the ground.



IMPACT

The Results



Findings indicated that the interventions reduced litter throughout.

Recycle and Reward

Who? Zero Waste Scotland, HebCelt Festival

Where? Stornoway, Isle of Lewis

Audience

Festival-goers – particularly weekend-ticket holders.

Background

HebCelt is a small music festival, held in July. It attracts around 4,500 people per day. The HebCelt recycle and reward activity in 2013 was part of a wider Recycle and Reward pilot scheme that ran at 12 sites across Scotland.



What they did

Festival attendees could recycle their drinks bottles and cans and get rewards in return. This was done at a reverse vending machine – where people could put rubbish in and get freebies back. There were no other recycling facilities for bottles and cans at the festival.

Three recycling machines were used, each in an area with high footfall, good visibility and easy access. The machines were clearly branded and festival staff roamed the site promoting their use.

The machines automatically rejected all non-recyclable items. Rewards (in the form of prize vouchers) were issued at random. 170 prizes were won over the three days, including an i-Pad, several i-Pod Nanos, T-shirts/hoodies, and drink and snack vouchers.



IMPACT

The Results



Based on figures from the previous year (adjusted for increased ticket sales) waste was expected to increase by 43%. In fact, it reduced by 10%. The site was almost entirely litter free throughout the festival.

- **65% of all cups sold were put in the machines.**
- **19% of all bottles and cans sold were deposited.**
- **12% of machine users said, unprompted, that tackling litter motivated them to use the machine.**
- **17% of respondents commented that the festival site was cleaner than in previous years.**
- **51% of HebCelt attendees used the machines.**

Why it worked

The simplicity of using the machines was a major plus point, and made the scheme especially popular with children. Even though rewards were not guaranteed, the chance of winning prizes still proved to be an effective incentive.



Dunna Chuck Bruck



Who? Shetland Amenity Trust

Where? Shetland

Objectives

- To increase environmental awareness.
- To encourage community engagement.
- To increase participation in local environmental activities.
- To link with national initiatives and awards schemes.
- To promote local environmental services.

Audience

Island residents

Background

Dunna Chuck Bruck was originally launched in 1986. It targeted abandoned vehicles, agricultural scrap and the 'bruck' (rubbish) that regularly washed up on the island's beaches. Initiatives such as Da Voar Redd Up (the largest voluntary clean-up operation in the UK), and a free waste pick-up service were integral to its success. Due to public demand, it was revived in 2012.

What they did:

This on-going litter-prevention campaign provides a range of resources, runs community clean-up days and generally educates islanders about the importance of disposing of their waste in the right way.



IMPACT

The Results



Perceived effectiveness by Shetland Amenity Trust: 7/10

- Perceived effectiveness: 3/5
- Longevity of impact: 3/5
- Practicality in Scotland: 4/5
- Replicability/versatility: 4/5
- Cost of implementation: 4/5
- Ease of monitoring: 2/5

Why it worked

The scheme is tailored to the local area to increase islanders' motivation to get involved. This campaign doesn't take itself too seriously. It tackles a serious topic with a sense of humour – with positive results.



Green Flag Awards

Who? Dumfries and Galloway Council

Where? Dumfries

Partners

Friends of Dock Park, Heritage Lottery Fund, Landfill Communities TrustSolway Heritage.

Background

Dock Park has always been an important part of the local community. But over time, it had fallen into disrepair. In 2012, Dumfries and Galloway Council and the Heritage Lottery fund each invested £1m, with the aim of honouring the park's history while equipping it to better serve the local community.



To make the park one of the best in Scotland, with something to offer all ages and interests for years to come.

What they did

The council involved local residents in plans from day one, asking for input on facilities, activities and design. Central to this were the Friends of Dock Park, established in 2010.

The Friends now run regular events and activities to keep the park at the heart of the community. User surveys sent out on Facebook keep the wider community engaged. To promote the park further afield, the group opened an exhibition in the Dumfries Museum and published three associated books.

IMPACT

The Results



Friends of Dock Park has grown from a small group of passionate volunteers to an organisation with 15 regularly active members and a mailing list of more than 40 people.

"You only have to visit Dock Park most days to see just how popular it is with visitors and local families alike. They see it as a real jewel in the crown for Dumfries."

(Colin Smyth, Chair of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Committee)

This increase in community engagement means the park is now less likely to suffer from littering.

Why it worked

The Council involved the community and focused on their long-term goals throughout. The close partnership with the Friends of Dock Park was also key, as this group now ensures the park stays litter-free.

Lambeth Co-Operative Parks Programme

Who? Lambeth Council

Where? London

Partners

Streatham Common Co-operative and other local community groups.

Objectives

To work more closely with the community to provide better park facilities.

Background

Following budget cuts, Lambeth Council was looking for an innovative way to maintain its green spaces with restricted funds.

What they did

Handing over day-to-day running of the parks solved two littering problems at once – bridging the budgetary gap for clean-ups and re-engaging the community so they don't litter in the first place.



YOUNG LAMBETH COOP

YOUNG LAMBETH COOPERATIVE
LAMBETH COUNCIL'S PARTNERSHIP
WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE COMMUNITY
TO COMMISSION SERVICES IN A NEW WAY

The Cooperative Parks Programme was created in July 2013 and implemented in 2014. This meant local community groups gradually adopting parks in a three-stage process:

- **Stage 1** – park maintained and run by the council.
- **Stage 2** – park run by a partnership between the Council and the community.
- **Stage 3** – park fully maintained and run by the community with support from the council in a purely monitoring role.

CAMPAIGN

Lambeth Parks Challenge

The Lambeth Parks Challenge invited people to set up their own virtual park, and take on the roles of designer, manager and gardener. Lambeth Council use the designs and comments of Lambeth people to help shape future park planning.

IMPACT

The Results



A council officer reported, "So far there is a much better quality service on the ground [at The Rookery] because people care, and they are spending the funding that they do have more wisely". Local people are more motivated because they can now take ownership of, and receive praise for, change.

Why it worked

This project encourages the community to re-embrace its green spaces. This renewed sense of care makes people less likely to litter – and more willing to intervene if they see others dropping their rubbish.