

The background image shows a close-up of a weathered yellow wall with a drain. A clear plastic bottle with a blue cap lies on the ground in front of the drain. The drain is made of metal grates and has some debris inside. The overall scene suggests a focus on environmental cleanliness and waste management.

# Taking action together

The Keep Wales Tidy approach to tackling  
Local Environment Quality

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gymru'n wales  
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Keep Wales Tidy operates a holistic approach to tackling persistent problems associated with poor local environment quality (LEQ) to prevent and reduce the adverse social, economic and environmental impacts that they have on our society. These problems cannot be tackled in isolation, they require a step change in collaboration, and prevention must be at the heart of our efforts.

Through our many years work on behavioural change, we understand that the most persistent issues that we see every day cannot be overcome through a 'one size fits all' campaign. Although there is still a role for consistent, national messages and coordinated actions to highlight the impact of certain LEQ issues, our focus on prevention requires different interventions and a different approach. This extends to general environment improvements (based on locality and demographics) to different types of litter (based on area, litter behaviour and sources).

To achieve this, we need to target the sources of the problem and address behaviours, as well as looking at other policy instruments and actions that we can take forward with all agencies who have an interest in helping us to achieve our vision of a beautiful Wales, cared for and enjoyed by everyone.

These actions need to be developed in partnership and will require new relationships to be formed which recognise the multifaceted nature and impacts of environment quality on areas outside the 'environment' to other realms such as health and well-being, the economy, transport and housing.

The policy landscape of Wales offers a unique opportunity to take action through local and regional collaboration; to meet national ambitions for how we treat and access our environment, prevent waste and wasteful behaviours, encourage sustainable economies, improve health and well-being and support our wildlife to flourish.

This approach, together with our values as an organisation, guides all that we do, from our practical work to community engagement, from Eco-Schools to Blue Flag, Green Flag and Green Key, and from policy to behaviour change.

## Our values



# Collaboration

**Collaboration is key to any successful intervention which tries to bring about positive social change.**

Keep Wales Tidy already works with a range of stakeholders across Wales and beyond to support and develop solutions and overcome shared barriers, from local authorities, to Welsh Government, community groups, businesses, and other not-for-profit organisations.

However, there is a need to extend our relationships further, to demonstrate the links between our work and the work of those in the health sector, housing, economy and elsewhere where we know a strong correlation – and shared priorities – exist.

# Community engagement

**Increasing the role of the community in looking after and improving their own areas is one of the most powerful and sustainable ways to achieve results.**

However, we know that some communities are less likely to engage than others, particularly for local environment issues. This can become a ‘Catch 22’ scenario where a poor environment can cement feelings of isolation and disengagement. As well as the third sector and public representatives in those areas, there is a role here particularly for local businesses and town councillors to take steps towards genuine engagement around local environment concerns, supporting those communities to take action and feel ownership of their outdoor spaces.

# Prevention

**Prevention of environmental deterioration and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles cannot happen overnight, but this must be our overall ambition in order to protect the future.**

We need to reduce our consumption of raw materials, the plastic we buy and the waste we create. Dealing with our waste, especially if it ends up in the wrong place as litter, costs more than time and money. It impacts our land and rivers, our beaches and our wildlife and has a significant impact on the well-being of our communities. Prevention and overall reduction can be achieved through engagement, education and other interventions to promote positive behavioural change. A combination of all of these, together with legislative and fiscal mechanisms at a government level, will create the environment needed for cultural and societal change.

# Messaging

**Keep Wales Tidy understands that positive messaging is significantly better received by the public and we do not advocate the use of negative campaigns or images for the purpose of promoting responsible environmental behaviour.**

There is a great deal of research about messaging, almost all of which draw to the conclusion that simply saying ‘No’ or ‘Don’t’ have little effect. Similarly, our research has shown that negative messaging is more likely to be ignored or ill-received. The role of generic anti-litter messaging is to raise the profile of the issue and to keep it on top of the agenda, whilst some campaigns may have a positive effect, it is unlikely to stay in people’s minds for any longer than the campaign is run or to amend habitual behaviour of offenders.

Different problems require different solutions and interventions and the term 'litter' and all that it encompasses needs to be seen as a series of different behaviours, sources, types and motivations.

Keep Wales Tidy regularly update policy papers and advice with guidance on how to tailor solutions to our most persistent issues. We want to work with our local authority partners in particular, to develop local strategies aligned to their needs with shared actions and goals that meet Welsh Government ambitions laid out in the Litter Prevention Plan for Wales.

## A greater role for business – small and large

**Business has a key role to play in local environment quality and many organisations already recognise the adverse impacts of being associated with litter and are taking action.**

Efforts to tackle litter would be enhanced by increased collaboration between businesses, particularly in areas which face shared and persistent issues, such as out of town retail parks or industrial estates.

The efforts of small businesses can have a powerful impact on local areas and can also enhance public perceptions. This does not have to be by financial means but small actions such as cleaning up outside their stores or offices, creating 'Litter Free Zones', would be a significant contribution to many town centres. Engaging smaller businesses however is not always easy, so we need to identify better routes of engagement and create a new message and a narrative that will resonate with smaller businesses who are often pushed for time and resources.

## Policy and legislation

**Most actions to tackle local environment quality require a more localised, or regional response based on partnership and collaborative effort. However, there are some issues which will require policy and/or legislative change.**

Some of these will be specific to facilitate local actions (for example, an amendment which shifts the burden of proof to the driver for littering, on a par with other driving offences) while others may require national mobilisation, such as the introduction of new fiscal mechanisms to support waste reduction. Our approach is to work closely with Welsh Government to shape relevant discussions around necessary changes and to advocate our work throughout the public sector and Welsh Parliament.

## Evidence and research

**Gathering Wales-specific data is a priority for Keep Wales Tidy and our LEAMS surveys form the basis of our evidence gathering across local authorities in Wales.**

For some litter issues, we have a great deal of data and evidence showing what measures are effective. However, there are other issues that we need to collect new data for, such as littering from vehicles. Where data has not previously been collected, Keep Wales Tidy have created behavioural trials or 'nudge' techniques to try to identify what works – and what doesn't. There is still a lot to be explored in the area of social marketing to tackle persistent LEQ issues and success is dependent on a range of factors.

Our policy papers are based on peer-reviewed evidence (where it exists), LEAMS data, stakeholder discussions and robustly monitored trials. We also seek to use examples and case studies from elsewhere in the world where an intervention has proved successful. Our European and international partners in the

Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) ensure that we are always in touch with new developments and learning from across the world.

## Well maintained, accessible, high quality green and blue spaces

**Our public parks and beaches, places where the natural environment is allowed to flourish, offer havens to humans and wildlife alike.**

Yet it is only in recent years that the importance of green infrastructure is being recognised in policy for its multiple social, economic and environmental benefits. Quality green spaces can reduce pollution, linked to asthma and heart disease, reduce symptoms of depression and mental illness, alleviate flood risk, provide wildlife habitats and increase biodiversity, they can enhance productivity and innovation and provide spaces for bringing communities together.

It is critical for our environment, society and economy that we maintain these spaces and create more of them, particularly in our urban areas where they have a significant role to play in improving air and noise quality and enhancing health and wellbeing.

It is crucial then, that the guardians of these spaces - local authorities, councils, community groups - have the tools and resources available to them in order to manage these places effectively. Restricted budgets are putting these places at risk of neglect and new solutions are needed to ensure these areas are not lost.

