

## Community Impact Statement - Smoking-related Litter

### Background

- Littering is an offence under Section 87 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.<sup>1</sup>
- Under Section 27 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, litter is defined to include products designed for smoking.<sup>2</sup>
- Smoking-related litter includes all items associated with smoking, including packets, pouches, matches, match boxes and lighters, along with items associated with e-cigarettes such as liquid bottles and box packaging. However, since it comprises predominantly of cigarette ends, this will be the focus of this statement.
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990 imposes a duty on local authorities and other landowners to keep land for which they are responsible, clear of litter and refuse; and on local authorities and the Welsh Government to keep public highways for which they are responsible, clean.<sup>3</sup>

### Scale and cost of the problem

- It is estimated that 122 tonnes of smoking-related litter is dropped in the UK every day<sup>4</sup> and that 244 million cigarette ends are littered in the UK every year (equivalent to the weight of 13 double-decker buses)<sup>5</sup>.
- Cigarette ends are the most common type of item littered by both the Welsh public (25%) and specifically by Welsh litterers (50%). The figures admitting to dropping cigarette packaging are 9% of the Welsh public and 10% of Welsh litterers.<sup>6</sup>
- By count, cigarette ends account for 66.3% of litter in England, while other smoking-related litter accounts for 12.4% of litter by volume.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 87. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/section/87>. Accessed: 19-10-20.

<sup>2</sup> Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, Section 27. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/16/section/27>. Accessed: 19-10-20.

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2007). *Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse and Associated Guidance 2007*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>4</sup> Eccleston, P. (2008). *Litter and fly-tipping facts*. Available: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/3339655/Litter-and-fly-tipping-facts.html>. Last accessed: 16.08.17.

<sup>5</sup> Keep Britain Tidy. (2015). *How can we change smokers' littering behaviour?* Available: [https://www.keeppbritaintidy.org/sites/default/files/KBT\\_How-can-we-change-smokers-littering-behaviour\\_2015.pdf](https://www.keeppbritaintidy.org/sites/default/files/KBT_How-can-we-change-smokers-littering-behaviour_2015.pdf). Last accessed: 19-10-20.

<sup>6</sup> Beaufort Research (2010). *Litter in Wales: Understanding Littering and Litterers*. (Unpublished).

<sup>7</sup> Keep Britain Tidy. (2020). *LITTER COMPOSITION ANALYSIS Summary Report*. Available: <https://www.keeppbritaintidy.org/sites/default/files/resources/20200330%20KBT%20Litter%20Composition%20Report%20-%20FINAL.pdf>. Last accessed 23-11-20.

- Smoking-related litter has been the most common type of litter present on the streets of Wales since Keep Wales Tidy began undertaking street cleanliness surveys across Wales on 2007-08. It was present on an average of 79.6% of streets across Wales in 2018-19.<sup>8</sup>
- Smoking-related litter is also a problem on our beaches. In 2019, cigarette ends were the second most common type of litter found on our beaches during the Marine Conservation Society's Great British Beach Clean, at 42.6 stubs per 100m.<sup>9</sup>
- The small size of cigarette ends makes them time consuming and costly to clean.<sup>10</sup> Smoking-related litter is particularly problematic when it gets caught in between paving stones or trapped in tree grates as this makes them difficult or impossible to remove by using normal cleaning techniques.
- It is estimated that cleaning up smoking-related litter in Wales costs £18.7 million per year (2012 figure).<sup>11</sup>

### Impacts on the local community

- A 2010 survey to the Welsh public found that:<sup>12</sup>
  - The people of Wales believe that smoking-related litter is a problem in Wales. People think that smoking-related litter has a negative impact on the areas in which it occurs. Cigarette ends were mentioned by 60% of people (the fourth highest) while its packaging was mentioned by 50% of people.
  - Welsh people also see this type of litter regularly, with cigarette ends seen by 54% of people (the most common item mentioned in the research) and its packaging mentioned by 32% of people.
  - Cigarette ends are one of only three items identified by the research as being high in both impact and extent.
- Smoking-related litter is a blight to our communities. Litter (including smoking-related litter) sends a signal that nobody cares. It therefore tends to attract more litter and can even lead to

<sup>8</sup> Moss, C and Jones, H. (2019). *HOW CLEAN ARE OUR STREETS? All Wales Local Environmental Audit and Management System Report 201819*. Available: <https://kwt.eu.rit.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=25600629-fd94-4f62-9d8c-f6579a0da8e0>. Last accessed 19-10-20.

<sup>9</sup> Marine Conservation Society. (2019). *Great British Beach Clean 2019 Report*. Available: <https://www.mcsuk.org/media/mcs-gbbc-2019-report-digital.pdf>. Last accessed 19-10-20.

<sup>10</sup> Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (2017). *Smoking Related Litter*. Available: <http://www.ciwm.co.uk/ciwm/knowledge/smoking-related-litter.aspx>. Last accessed: 19.10.20.

<sup>11</sup> Grant, A. (2013). *The economic cost of smoking to Wales: a review of existing evidence*. Available: [http://orca.cf.ac.uk/89325/1/cost\\_of\\_smoking\\_to\\_wales\\_2013.pdf](http://orca.cf.ac.uk/89325/1/cost_of_smoking_to_wales_2013.pdf). Last accessed 19-10-20.

<sup>12</sup> Beaufort Research (2010). *Op cit*.

more serious crime as illustrated by the 'Broken Windows Theory'.<sup>13</sup> This is supported by the fact that 14% of Welsh litterers agree with the statement 'If an area is run down I don't see a problem dropping litter'.<sup>14</sup>

## Wider impacts

- Cigarette ends are not biodegradable. They are made of cellulose acetate, and each filter contains more than 12,000 of these individual plastic fibres.<sup>15</sup> Not only does this mean that cigarette ends can remain in the environment for up to 15 years,<sup>16</sup> but that they also turn into microplastic pollution<sup>17</sup>.
- Tobacco products - including cigarette ends - contain carcinogens, nicotine and toxins.<sup>18</sup> These leach into the environment within an hour of exposure<sup>19</sup> and can remain in water for up to ten years<sup>20</sup>.
- Not only has it been found that '*...one cigarette butt soaked in a litre of water for 96 hours leaches out enough toxins to kill half of the fresh or salt water fish exposed to them*', but it has also been suggested that the sheer amount of cigarette ends littered annually could leach out toxins which could have an impact on human health.<sup>21</sup>
- Cigarette ends are often dropped onto our beaches and directly down drains. Even cigarette ends dropped on the street are often transported by wind or water to our drains and from here they are carried by rivers to the coast.
- Cigarette ends have been found in the guts of whales, dolphins, turtles and sea birds who have mistaken them for food, which can have the following impacts:<sup>22</sup>
  - Leaching of toxic chemicals
  - Inflammation of the digestive system

<sup>13</sup> Kelling, G, and Wilson, K. (1982). *Broken Windows The police and neighborhood safety*. Available: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/>. Last accessed: 19-10-20.

<sup>14</sup> Beaufort Research (2010). *Op cit*.

<sup>15</sup> Martin, T. (2020). *How Cigarette Butts Pollute the Environment*. Available: <https://www.verywellmind.com/world-cigarette-litter-facts-that-will-shock-you-2824735>. Last accessed 20-10-20.

<sup>16</sup> Marine Conservation Society. (2008). *Cigarette Litter on Beaches – Marine Conservation Society Statement*. Available: <http://www.mcsuk.org/downloads/pollution/no%20butts%20on%20the%20beach.pdf>. Last accessed: 19-10-20.

<sup>17</sup> Root, T. (2019). *WHAT'S THE WORLD'S MOST LITTERED PLASTIC ITEM? CIGARETTE BUTTS*. Available: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/08/cigarettes-story-of-plastic/>. Last accessed 20-10-20.

<sup>18</sup> Novotny, T. (2014). *Time to kick cigarette butts – they're toxic trash*. Available: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22229750-200-time-tokick-cigarette-butts-theyre-toxic-trash/>. Last accesses: 20: 10-20.

<sup>19</sup> Clean Up Australia. (2017). *Cigarette Butts Fact Sheet*. Available: [https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/ed061800/files/uploaded/clean\\_up\\_australia\\_cigarette\\_butts\\_factsheet-2017.pdf](https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/ed061800/files/uploaded/clean_up_australia_cigarette_butts_factsheet-2017.pdf). Last accessed 20-10-20.

<sup>20</sup> Root, T. (2019). *Op cit*.

<sup>21</sup> Novotny, T. (2014). *Op cit*.

<sup>22</sup> Marine Conservation Society. (2008). *Op cit*.

- Blocking the gut - which can result in death
- Cigarettes can also be ingested by children. Research into accidental ingestion of cigarettes and cigarette ends in the USA in 1997 found that a third of the 146 infants in the study experienced illness, with vomiting the most common symptom (reported by 87% of those effected).<sup>23</sup>
- If not properly extinguished, cigarette ends can cause fires. In 1985, 56 people were killed and more than 250 injured by a fire at Bradford City Football Club, and in 1987 a fire at King's Cross Underground Station claimed 31 lives - both disasters are thought to have been started by smoking-related litter.<sup>24,25</sup> In 2011, the UK Government announced that '*...careless disposal of cigarettes is the single biggest killer in house fires*'.<sup>26</sup>

Jones, H. Keep Wales Tidy, October 2020.

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<sup>23</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health. (1997). *Ingestion of Cigarettes and Cigarette Butts by Children -- Rhode Island, January 1994-July 1996*. Available: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00046181.htm>. Last accessed: 20.10.20.

<sup>24</sup> BBC. (2015). *Bradford fire: The Valley Parade disaster 30 years on*. Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/32388297>. Last accessed: 20.10.20.

<sup>25</sup> BBC. (2012). *King's Cross fire 25th anniversary marked*. Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20383221>. Last accessed: 20.10.20.

<sup>26</sup> UK Government. (2011). *Smoking time bomb: cigarettes the most deadly cause of house fire fatalities*. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/smoking-time-bomb-cigarettes-the-most-deadly-cause-of-house-fire-fatalities>. Last accessed: 20.10.20.