

Caru Cymru Guidance: Roadside Litter Summary



Why does roadside litter matter?

Litter is a blight on our streets and communities and costs us dearly. In Wales, trunk roads and motorways are managed by the Trunk Road Agencies (under the Welsh Government) and the remaining roads come under the responsibility of the relevant local authorities. Roadside litter data are particularly problematic to collect due to health and safety issues regarding high-speed traffic.

Data collected from a survey of Local Authorities and Trunk Road Agencies for Keep Wales Tidy's 2017 Tackling Litter on Our Roads reportⁱ forms estimates that roadside litter collection costs equate to over £3 million per year in Wales and many believe the problem is increasing.

Roadside litter cleansing may necessitate lane closures, the use of crash barriers and additional signage and therefore some agencies carry out litter picking at night to having the least impact on traffic. Simultaneously, this may reduce the risk to workers as over the past 10 years there have been 12 roadworker deaths and 50 occasions of roadworker injury on the road networkⁱⁱ.

*This guidance summary is designed to accompany the materials and messages designed through the Caru Cymru project.

*Key audiences for this document include local authorities, Town and Community Councils, National Park Authorities, Natural Resources Wales and other landowners as well as other agencies interested in developing policies to promote the responsible disposal of smoking-related litter.

*More information can be found on Keep Wales Tidy's roadside litter guidance paper (2022). Available on request.

How can we tackle roadside litter?

Infrastructure:

1. Local authorities and other landowners need to consider the right bin in the right place. Data collection and analysis would support the development of bin audits and should be regularly reviewed.
2. Bin removal from some areas, such as rural laybys, could help to reduce litter in those areas but should be kept under regular review.
3. Bins in laybys where the public would 'reasonably expect' facilities (such as rest stops and places where there are public toilets or food provision) should be maintained and can also be used to promote anti-litter messaging.

Interventions:

1. Traffic psychology suggests interventions are best placed in stopping areas to prevent overload and distractions whilst driving. Roadside signs on busy roads are not recommended.
2. Reducing litter on our roads is also supported by active travel agendas and the ambition to reduce vehicle use overall.
3. Commercial drivers have cited that the lack of facilities at rest stops, lorry parks and laybys is a significant challenge for them. Bodily waste and fluids at the roadside will continue to increase in severity unless action is taken to address these concerns.
4. Appropriate waste disposal policies and facilities by employers at depots and in-vehicle for commercial drivers will reduce the pressure to litter.

Messaging:

1. Messaging focuses vary for personal and commercial drivers and likely between urban and rural demographics.
2. Messaging placement is the most important aspect to consider, with many roads already saturated with necessary signage and driver attention 'at capacity'.
3. Messaging should consider the flow of external visitors into an area and how to 'connect' them with their destinations.

Innovation:

1. Changing behaviours rely on making the desired behaviour both easy and convenient, car bins are one way to overcome the lack of facilities and can support anti-littering campaign messaging in the process.
2. Innovative bins installed on roadsides need to be frequently maintained and would need to be long-term installations.

Community Action:

1. There are an unprecedented amount of litter picking volunteers to collaborate with at present in Wales.
2. Roadside safety is the largest concern regarding community group litter picking in these areas.
3. Adopt-a-Highway has been hugely successful elsewhere and is the only roadside campaign to have been thoroughly evaluated. The pilots in Wales with Keep Wales Tidy will be completed by mid-2022 with the view to rolling the scheme out nationally in due course.

Enforcement:

1. The legislation in Wales requires updating to put the onus of the offence on to the driver on a par with other driving offences to facilitate enforcement action for littering from vehicles.
2. Enforcement can be a useful tool, particularly in urban areas or major roads but is not a practical solution for rural or remote areas.
3. Enforcement signage alone is ineffective unless backed up by a real and visible threat of getting caught.
4. A litter awareness course and other means to address offenders directly will be more effective than enforcement alone by engaging directly with litterers and providing additional options for local authorities where chasing fines are a challenge.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

1. Monitoring high speed roads is not feasible but rest areas and laybys are much easier to collect data from and are recommended as key areas for interventions
2. Emerging technologies could play a role in gathering data on litter on roadsides in the future but are still in the very early stages of development.

References

ⁱ Keep Wales Tidy. (2017). *Tackling Litter on Our Roads*. Available: <https://keepwalestidy.cymru/caru-cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/09/Tackling-Litter-on-our-Roads-min.pdf>. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

ⁱⁱ Highways England. (2017). *Highways England highlights dangers faced by road workers*. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/highways-england-highlights-dangers-faced-by-road-workers>. Last accessed 28th Jan 2022.



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