

17 October 2024

Dear Deputy First Minister,

Wales is facing a growing litter crisis, and – unless we act now – the damage could take decades to reverse.

Since 2007, Keep Wales Tidy has been tracking litter rates across Wales. While we have seen some improvements over the years, I am afraid things are now getting worse, and quickly.

Our 2024 surveys show a staggering 286% increase in the number of worst-graded ‘D’ streets since last year—these are streets with completely unacceptable levels of cleanliness. These are some of the worst results we have seen in the 17 years we have been conducting our surveys¹.

Litter is more than an eyesore; it damages our communities and actively harms our environment by polluting soil, water, and wildlife. Poorly maintained areas significantly affect people’s lives, especially in the most deprived communities where poor environmental quality is linked to worse health outcomes, higher crime rates, and lower levels of well-being. Maintaining clean streets isn’t just about looking good, it’s about building community pride and encouraging economic growth.

Once a community feels neglected, it is incredibly hard to reverse the damage. That is why we must act today, before the situation worsens.

What needs to happen now?

- **Commit to a National Plan:** We urge the Welsh Government to reconsider publishing a National Litter and Fly-tipping Prevention Plan, which could require councils to have formal plans to address these issues. Currently, we are the only country in the UK without such a plan.
- **Protect Budgets:** While we understand that budgets are stretched, it is vital that local authorities reconsider their spending on cleansing and litter prevention, including public education and enforcement. If we fail to act now, the long-term costs will far exceed the short-term investment.


- **Continue to push for an all-in Deposit Return Scheme:** We welcome the Welsh Government's ambition to introduce an 'all-in' Deposit Return Scheme by 2027. Our data suggests that including glass is essential, as littered glass rates have doubled in recent years. With comparable schemes in other European nations leading to a reduction in litter of up to 60%, it is clear we cannot afford further delays.
- **Implement EPR quickly:** Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes ensure that producers are accountable for the environmental impacts of their products throughout their lifecycle. It is crucial that the proposed scheme is rolled out without delay and that it extends to covering the cost of both preventing and cleaning up litter.
- **Explore new financial mechanisms** to enable local authorities, the third sector and community groups to address persistent litter issues. Initiatives such as the Visitor Levy should be considered, along with levies for single use cups and avoidable plastics.

This is a critical moment for Welsh communities, and we need your support to protect them.

The positive news is that we already have the tools to address these challenges, but we need decisive action from both national and local governments if we are to ensure a cleaner, greener future for Welsh communities.



Owen Derbyshire, CEO, Keep Wales Tidy



Haf Elgar, Director, Friends of the Earth Cymru



Jenni Hume, Director UK & Ireland, Reelooop



Karen Whitfield, Director, Wales Environment Link



Rhian Connick, Head of NFWI-Wales



George Monck, Chief Executive, CleanUp UK

Frances Cattanach, CEO,
North Wales Wildlife Trus

Lloyd Nelmes, Marine Project Officer,
Sea Trust Wales

Ella Smillie, Director and co-founder
Benthyg Cymru

Dom Ferris, Trash Free Trails

Lyn Cadwallader, CEO, One Voice Wales

Appendix

1. LEAMS survey report results comparing 2023-4 and 2024-5 surveys.

	Number of streets with grade		Difference
	2023-24	2024-25	
A -	90	131	+45.6%
B+ - ('acceptable')	324	311	-4.0%
B	1331	1193	-10.4%
C	57	123	+115.8%
D	14	54	+285.7%
Total streets surveyed	1,816	1,812	

It is worth noting that the percentage of streets graded 'B' and above (representing those streets of an 'acceptable level of cleanliness' saw a significant drop from 96.29% in the 2023-4 LEAMS survey to 90.6% in the 2024-5 survey. Based on 1,816 streets surveyed across Wales.