

**NO
FLY TIPPING**

Tipping the Scales

An action plan to
fight fly-tipping

In the past decade, England has seen a steady increase in fly-tipping with the latest figures showing that the number of incidents reported by councils has increased to more than 1.15 million per year. This is just the tip of the fly-tipping iceberg as it only accounts for fly-tipping reported on public land and cleared by councils.

Fly-tipping has reached epidemic levels and taxpayers, landowners and the environment are paying the price. The cost of clearing up all this fly-tipping and associated investigations is estimated to be between £100 million and £150 million a year¹ and this does not include the environmental cost of hazardous materials being dumped in fields, by watercourses or on beaches or the cost to communities who are faced with the sight of waste dumped in their neighbourhoods on a daily basis.

This is against a wider pattern of increasing waste crime. Estimates suggest that up to a fifth of all waste is handled illegally, costing the UK economy up to £1 billion each year.² This undermines the business of legitimate operators and means that materials that should be reused or recycled instead end up poisoning our environment.

With consistently rising incidence rates, a sense of helplessness has crept in. Ninety-eight percent of the local authorities surveyed said that

fly-tipping is a problem in their area, with 70% saying that it is a major problem. More than half (54%) feel that they won't ever get on top of the problem. In addition, 79% of the public say that fly-tipping is an issue in their local area.³

Sadly, this shouldn't be surprising. Britain is drowning in a sea of waste - the average person in the UK throws away 380kg of waste each year.⁴ In England, it is estimated that about ten million items of furniture are thrown away annually. Just a quarter of the mattresses we throw away each year in the UK - more than five million - are ever recycled, with a material recovery rate of just 14%.⁵

Householders often don't know how to dispose of this waste responsibly. Bulky waste collections from retailers are expensive and council collections can take weeks or longer. Less than half of the public are aware that they have a duty to ensure the person taking their waste is licensed,⁶ and only a quarter would check that licence when handing over their waste.

¹ www.ciwim.co.uk/ciwim/knowledge/fly-tipping.aspx

² National waste crime survey 2023: results and findings

³ A Rubbish Reality: Our litter problem and why it matters (2025)

⁴ England's total household waste for 2023 was 21.7 million tonnes (UK statistics on waste) for a population of 57.1 million people

⁵ 2023 End of Life Mattresses Report, National Bed Federation

⁶ See "Terminology"

When the law is broken, the consequences for the criminal are not a deterrent to waste crime. Last year in England, just six per cent of fly-tipping incidents resulted in a fixed penalty notice (FPN) or prosecution.⁷ The average FPN issued was just £632 and the average court fine was just £530. With professional waste criminals profiting from the destruction of our environment and communities, these penalties are far from sufficient.

Keep Britain Tidy developed its first Fly-tipping Action Plan in 2017. Now, in 2025, we have revised it to offer a roadmap to address these issues and drive down the rate of fly-tipping across the country. This plan focuses on two key areas:

The first is to encourage and facilitate the legitimate disposal of goods. This means ensuring that licensing for carrying waste is stricter and easier to recognise,

that householders are educated on how to dispose of waste and that companies supplying commonly fly-tipped goods are doing their bit to collect, reuse and recycle those goods.

The second is to ensure that local authorities are better equipped to catch waste criminals and that, when apprehended, the consequences of committing waste crime act as a sufficient deterrent. This means stronger penalties including higher fines, points on driving licences and the crushing of vehicles used by criminals.

Only by coming down hard on the causes of fly-tipping and on those responsible for it can we get a grip on the epidemic of dumping that is blighting our communities and our countryside.

⁷ Fly-tipping statistics for England, 2023 to 2024 (Defra)



Methodology

The following action plan has been developed in conjunction with local authorities and the public. Twenty-one local authorities were consulted via a series of online focus groups to determine the key difficulties local authorities currently face in dealing with fly-tipping. Following these sessions, a survey of 135 local authority staff from 86 different local authorities was conducted to gain a wider understanding of their challenges and perceptions.

Finally, we conducted two nationally representative omnibus YouGov surveys, with samples of 2,100 and 2,222 UK adults aged 18+, to gain an understanding of public perceptions around fly-tipping, duty of care and support for action against fly-tipping. Both surveys were undertaken online, between 12th - 15th September 2025.

Terminology

The terminology used to describe features of waste regulation is not static and is liable to change over time as new regulations come into effect. In this report, we have tried, where possible, to use language that is common throughout the sector and that is accessible to lay people. For example, the accreditation known commonly as a “waste carrier licence” is more properly termed a Certificate of Registration, and the Government is, as of publication of this report, moving towards a permitting system. To avoid confusion we have used “waste carrier licence” throughout, although the recommendations will apply to the future permitting system.

Similarly, under the Government’s proposed reforms to the waste carrier broker and dealer system, waste carriers, brokers and dealers will be known either as “controllers” or “transporters”.

Throughout this report, we have used “carrier” to describe individuals or businesses who are paid to remove and process waste as this is the current terminology used in the sector.

Shut down rogue operators with tougher licencing

Waste criminals are currently living their best lives. Fly-tipping incidents the size of a small van load are the most commonly reported,⁸ and a staggering 40% of all fly-tipping incidents are now reported by local authorities as having been dumped by rogue traders rather than individuals.

Most of the public don't know how to identify a rogue trader. Our latest research shows that only a quarter of people would ask to see a waste carrier licence (26%) and even fewer (20%) would check whether a waste carrier is listed on the Environment Agency's Register of Waste Carriers, Brokers and Dealers before paying them to remove and dispose of their waste.

More alarmingly, only nine per cent of people would feel "very confident" in their ability to verify the legitimacy of a

waste carrier licence if shown one by the person or company they'd paid to take away their waste. What's more, of those who have used a waste carrier in the past, but didn't check the company/ask to see licenses, almost half (42%) simply trusted that they were a registered waste carrier because of their advert, so didn't feel the need to check. Taken together, these figures shine a light on how and why illegal waste carriers continue to commit waste crimes while going undetected. It is simply too easy for rogue operators to fly(-tip) under the radar, going unchallenged by both the society and the system in which they are operating .

⁸ The most common size category for fly-tipping incidents in England in 2023/24 was equivalent to a "small van load" (31% of total incidents):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fly-tipping-in-england/fly-tipping-statistics-for-england-2023-to-2024>



Eighty-six percent of local authorities agree that providing licensed waste carriers with a physical licence that is easily recognisable and difficult to forge would help reduce incidents of fly-tipping and 95% agree that making it mandatory for waste carriers to display their licence number on any vehicle they are using to transport that waste would help cut fly-tipping. This would boost awareness of the licensing system and allow for easier checks by householders, police and the Environment Agency.

Currently, the Environment Agency offers an online tool that allows consumers to check whether a specific business has a waste carrier licence. But a search based on a postcode will throw up results including primary schools, hospitals and charities such as Keep Britain Tidy! It does not provide the easy identification of operators who remove domestic waste with the correct licence to carry that waste.

Ninety-three percent of local authorities surveyed said they would welcome an online tool that identified registered waste carriers prepared to collect household waste in their area, with 71% strongly agreeing that being able to easily find a legitimate local operator would help cut fly-tipping.

We recommend:

- That to prevent fraud, all waste carrier licences should carry the business's name and licence number and be manufactured and designed to be difficult to forge. Any vehicle being used to collect waste from households should be required to clearly display the waste carrier licence number on it.
- That the Environment Agency's register for licenced waste carriers should aim to operate in such a way that it becomes an essential tool for all householders looking for a legitimate local domestic waste removal service.

These measures would help the public identify and subsequently employ legitimate waste carriers, reduce the risk of waste being fly-tipped and in turn protect the public from unwittingly breaching their duty of care.

Raise public awareness

Making it harder for rogue traders to operate, while imperative, is only part of the solution to eradicating fly-tipping in this country.

We must also educate the public on their legal obligation to dispose of waste responsibly, known as their duty of care. More than half of people (55%) don't know that they are legally responsible for what happens to the waste they pay a person or a company to take away for them.

Educating the public around their duty of care, and how to dispose of their waste responsibly, will not only help cut off the supply of waste to illegal operators, it will also reduce the number of individuals who fly-tip in their local area without fully understanding the consequences of their actions.

Of those who have used a person or private company to get rid of large household items, one in five (20%) said they had never checked whether they were legitimate (by checking the

Environment Agency's register, asking to see a waste carrier licence and/or their registration number).

We must continually help the public to understand their duty of care, and the importance of ensuring their waste is disposed of legally. This includes seeking out a licensed waste carrier, checking their licence, getting a receipt and warning them that if an operator will only take cash, this should be a red flag.

The need for ongoing public education around duty of care is evident, with 83% of local authorities agreeing that this would aid in reducing fly-tipping. But the majority (72%) of local authorities don't have the resources they need to educate their residents on the topic.

We recognise the need for a national drive to educate the public. We are therefore launching a new campaign with local authorities in November 2025, under the banner of Fight Fly-tipping Fortnight, and would encourage all local authorities in England to support it.



Cut the criminals off at source: create a circular economy for bulky waste

The waste system has not kept pace with the growing rate of consumption. Often, individuals need to dispose of items to make space for new purchases but find it difficult to do so. Getting on top of the fly-tipping crisis in this country means getting to its root cause and cutting off the supply of waste to illegal operators.

While some steps have been taken, such as optional take-back schemes for large household items and white goods offered by some manufacturers and retailers, these are not moving the dial on our fly-tipping crisis. In fact, almost one in five people (17%) aren't aware of optional take-back schemes and a third (33%) have heard of them but never used them. Local authority collection services are often chargeable and can take weeks. Storing bulky goods in the meantime is often inconvenient or simply not an option, with householders often resorting to storing items outside, reducing opportunities for reuse or recycling. Using household waste recycling centres is not always an option for householders, especially if they do not have access to a vehicle.

An Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for bulky items would ensure that manufacturers are responsible for the things they produce

throughout their lifecycle, from manufacture and sales through to collection, reuse, refurbishment, recycling or disposal at the end of the product's life. As part of this, we are recommending the introduction of a mandatory take-back scheme, as part of the purchase price of commonly dumped larger items such as white goods, furniture and mattresses.

This not only places the onus of waste management on those producing the items and takes it away from the taxpayer, it also encourages responsible, sustainable manufacturing that lends itself to a circular economy. The vast majority of the public (86%) support an EPR scheme for large household items that includes free take-back. What is more, both the public (86%), and local authorities (86%) believe that such a scheme would help reduce the number of large household items, such as fridges, sofas and mattresses, that are fly-tipped.

Several European countries run an EPR scheme for mattresses, mandating producers to be responsible for the product at the end of its life. In the Netherlands, which introduced an EPR scheme for mattresses in 2021,

approximately 65% of mattresses are collected by producers, of which 75% are considered to be in suitable condition for recycling.⁹ Currently, due to a lack of specialist equipment, just 24% of mattresses in the UK are recycled at the end of their life, meaning just 14% of all materials that go into making mattresses are recovered.¹⁰

By providing customers with a free, convenient, fast and legal method of disposal, not only can we reduce the likelihood of householders fly-tipping directly, but we cut off the supply to criminal waste operators. An Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for bulky items would ensure that manufacturers are responsible for the things they produce throughout their lifecycle, from manufacture and sale through to collection, reuse, refurbishment, recycling or disposal at the end of the product's life.

We recommend:

- The introduction of a mandatory take-back scheme for commonly dumped bulky items such as white goods, furniture and mattresses.



⁹ <https://europur.org/mattress-recycling-in-europe/>

¹⁰ End of Life Mattresses Report, National Bed Federation (2023)

Join the dots to help local authorities tackle the problem

Fly-tipping is an ever-increasing and costly issue for local authorities across the country, and often it is local authorities who are responsible for clearing up masses of waste being dumped in our public spaces.

Almost all (98%) local authorities say that fly-tipping is a problem in their area, with more than two thirds (70%) saying it's a major problem. In addition, more than half (56%) of local authorities say the problem has worsened in the past year.

Despite the pressures on local authorities to deal with waste being illegally dumped across the country, 72% say that they don't have the resources they need to effectively enforce fly-tipping penalties and more than half (54%) feel that they won't ever be able to get on top of the problem. We need to ensure that local authorities are supported to tackle fly-tipping, recognising their importance within a joined-up approach to dealing with this crisis.

Currently, the documented activity of suspected waste criminals is held by different authorities and agencies. Fixed penalty notices are not stored centrally and not all non-police waste crimes are recorded on the Police National

Computer. This means that the conviction is not necessarily available to other authorities who may come across the same criminal in their borough. This can lead to "county lines" criminals taking advantage of the system, collecting FPNs in multiple local authority areas, because there is no evidence base building to identify them as serial offenders.

Ninety-four percent of local authorities agree that developing a platform for themselves and other enforcement bodies to share intelligence and information relating to suspected illegal waste carriers would help reduce incidents of fly-tipping.

We recommend:

- The identification of an appropriate agency to hold all available data on waste crime convictions, made available to all agencies, authorities and law enforcement bodies responsible for the prosecution of waste crime.

Strengthen enforcement and penalties

As well as cutting off the supply of waste to illegitimate waste carriers, we must also ensure that those who dump waste illegally face consequences that fit their crimes.

While local authorities can (and do) take fly-tipping cases to the magistrates' courts, often the fines handed down by the courts are insignificant in relation to the crimes committed. Councils told us that the average fixed penalty notice they issued for fly-tipping was £632, compared to the average court fine, which for 2023-2024 was just £530. This provides an incentive for suspected waste criminals to pursue a court case, which can be a drain on local authorities and fails to deter repeat offenders. In fact, almost three quarters (74%) of local authorities say that when they take a fly-tipping case to court, the penalties handed down by the courts are too low to act as a deterrent.

To this end, 95% of local authorities feel that ensuring fines handed down by magistrates' courts are at least as high as the FPN would deter fly-tippers.

However, we also need to look beyond fines to ensure that the consequences of fly-tipping encourage legitimate waste handling. This should include specific consequences for waste criminals that use vehicles to fly-tip - namely points added to driving licences and the crushing of vehicles used - being made available to the enforcing body. Magistrates should also have the option to prevent those with a criminal conviction relating to waste from handling waste in the future. Almost all local authorities agree that giving fly-tippers points on their driving licence (93%) or banning individuals with a waste crime conviction from working with waste in the future (92%), would help to reduce fly-tipping.



Awareness should be raised to ensure local authorities are more confident to utilise all the enforcement powers available to them. While local authorities can, for example, seize and crush vehicles, almost two thirds (63%) say that there are logistical challenges in using these powers that act as a barrier to implementation. Eighty-four per cent of local authorities agree that making the powers they have to confiscate and crush vehicles used to fly-tip clearer would be welcome and would lead to a reduction in fly-tipping.

We recommend:

- The Sentencing Council for England and Wales should recommend that fines for waste crimes are at least as high as the fixed penalty notices offered to those accused of waste crime in lieu of prosecution.
- On top of Defra's commitment to support local authorities to confiscate and crush vehicles used to carry out fly-tipping, we would welcome other deterrents such as banning those found guilty of breaking waste laws from any future handling of waste.

This will ensure that there are consequences for illegitimate operators, responsible business is encouraged and bad actors are not allowed to handle waste.



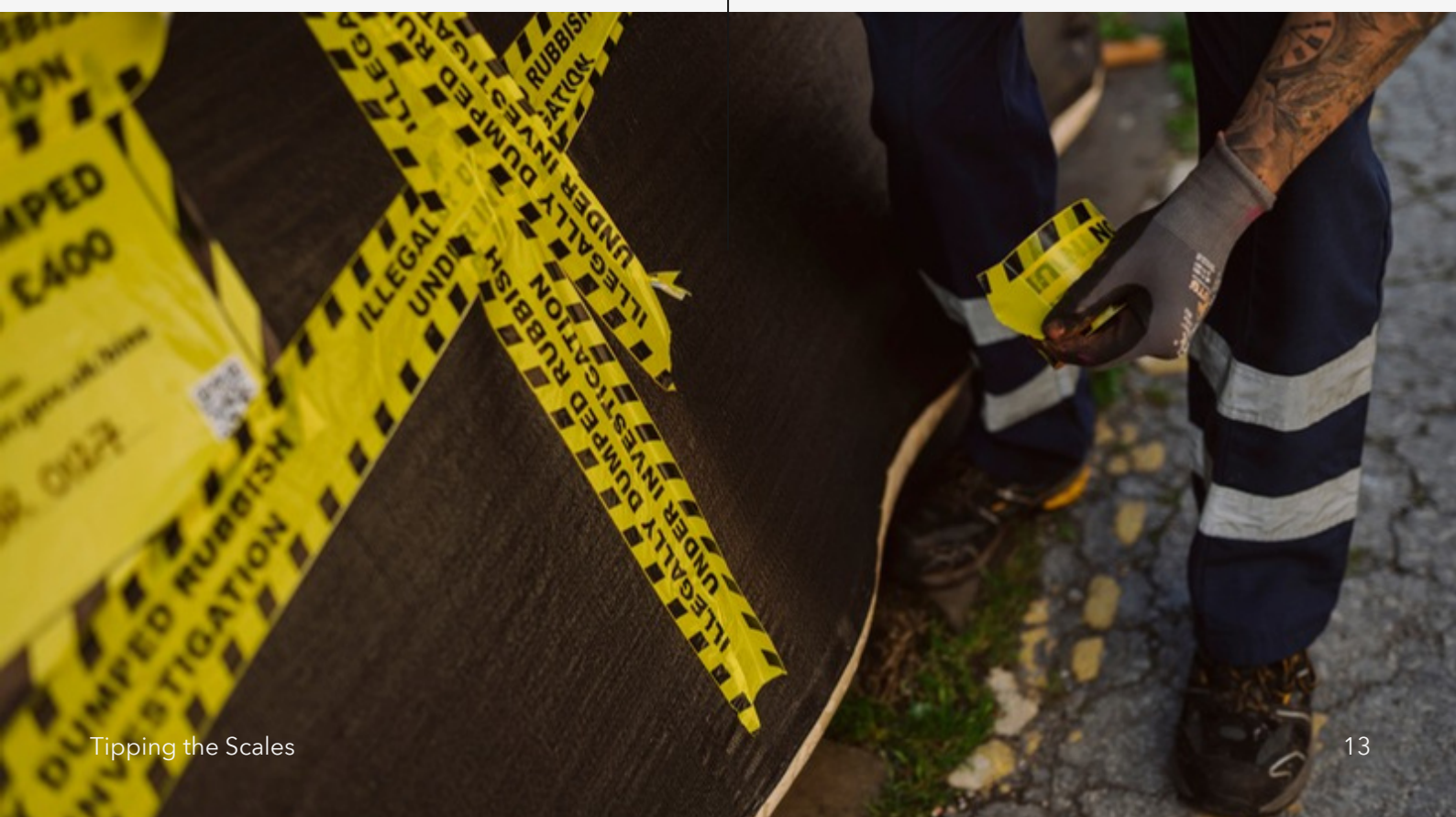
Practical support for local authorities

Faced with increasing incidents of fly-tipping year on year, we recognise local authorities need to take a strategic approach. We recommend that all local authorities produce a fly-tipping strategy setting out a plan of action that reflects the nature of the fly-tipping problem in their area and reflects the best methods for tackling their problem at the local level. For example, making greater use of behaviour change techniques, where it is residents directly fly-tipping rather than waste criminals. Currently, less than half of local authorities (45%) have a fly-tipping strategy in place.

Keep Britain Tidy will support local authorities to tackle fly-tipping. In addition to our new campaign aimed at raising householder awareness of their duty of care, and carried out with local

authorities under the banner of Fight Fly-tipping Fortnight, we will continue to:

- Develop behaviour change techniques, such as our crime scene investigation tape intervention and social impact stencil interventions, which reduced fly-tipping by up to 73% in hotspots in the London Borough of Newham.
- Train local authority environmental enforcement officers through our Enforcement Academy.
- Support local authorities to develop effective fly-tipping strategies.
- Share best and new practice through the Keep Britain Tidy Network, our community of local authority waste professionals.



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