

Dog Fouling:

What does Keep Britain Tidy want to achieve?

Keep Britain Tidy wants to see incidents of dog fouling substantially reduced by 2020 and all but eradicated by 2030.

What will Keep Britain Tidy do?

Keep Britain Tidy will continue to develop and scale new interventions, such as our We're Watching You campaign encouraging responsible dog ownership

Keep Britain Tidy will continue to support the concept of 'any bin will do' – providing widespread bin infrastructure for disposal of dog waste

Keep Britain Tidy will continue to develop and support campaigns and initiatives that focus on the responsibility of the dog owner to carry bags for collection and disposal of waste

Keep Britain Tidy will support local authority initiatives to incentivise citizen action, where information from citizen reporting schemes leads to issue of a fixed penalty notice for dog fouling or prosecution

Keep Britain Tidy will support local authorities where they decide to implement new rules under Public Space Protection Orders requiring dog owners to carry a bag for picking up after their dog

Keep Britain Tidy will continue to oppose interventions that require mass sampling or DNA collection from dogs, unless supported by government legislation and finance for both delivery and enforcement

Keep Britain Tidy will work with key organisations such as local authorities and the Dog's Trust to develop high profile campaigns aimed at discouraging dog fouling and in particular discouraging people from leaving bagged dog waste in public places

Keep Britain Tidy will continue to lobby for local authorities to be supported with sufficient finance to support effective investigation and enforcement of dog fouling

How can other organisations help?

Government

We want government to ensure that local authorities receive the necessary funding to enable an effective investigation and enforcement service, maintaining an effective deterrent against dog fouling

Local Authorities

We want all local authorities to provide an effective network of bins in known dog walking areas and dog fouling hot-spots, capable of receiving dog waste ensure they are serviced regularly. We want local authorities to maintain an effective enforcement service and make full use of current controls such as Public Space Protection Orders to ensure that dogs and dog waste are effectively controlled.

NGOs

We want NGOs, in particular animal charities such as Dog Trust, Battersea and RSPCA to continue in their efforts to raise the issue of dog fouling with their customers, ensure that advice on dog fouling is made available at the time animals are homed and support national Keep Britain Tidy awareness campaigns on the issue of dog fouling.

Background to the issue of dog fouling:

Dogs were first domesticated around 14,000 years ago, although mainly for hunting and protection. In recent times, dogs have been seen more as companion animals.

Pet ownership has been steadily increasing since the 1960's and current estimates suggest there are over 8.5 million dogs within the UK, up from under 5 million in 1965.

It is estimated that around 1000 tonnes of waste is deposited on our streets and other open public spaces every year. The vast majority (around 9 out of 10) of people pick up after their dogs and instances of dog fouling have been falling since 2001, with only 7% of the 7200 sites surveyed by Keep Britain Tidy in 2015 having dog waste on them. However, certain land use types are more prone to dog fouling with 13% of highways, 12% of high density housing areas and 11% of recreation areas having dog waste on them.

A study by the University of Central Lancashire in 2014 studied the habits of dog walkers. 8% of people surveyed said they would pick up dog waste only if it was on a path, whilst 3% were adamant they would never pick up after their dog. Hence, whilst the majority of dog owners are responsible and pick up after their dog, a substantial public nuisance can be caused by a small minority of individuals.

In addition to be both unsightly and unpleasant, dog waste can be harmful to people, animals and local environments. Dog waste can carry parasites such as ringworms, salmonella and tapeworms, which in some cases can cause blindness. Additionally, dog waste contains E. Coli and other harmful bacteria.

Dog fouling represents a real cost to the public purse and an estimate from 2005 puts Local Authority costs of clearing up dog waste at around £22 million a year, money that could be effectively utilised on other services.

At one time, specific dog waste bins were provided across the country, as dog waste was considered hazardous waste and hence requiring separate collection and treatment. However, recently more local authorities have reverted back to allowing dog waste to be put into general purpose litter bins as dog waste is no longer classified as hazardous, reducing local authority collection and disposal costs.

Recent innovation has seen a number of initiatives converting dog waste into energy, using anaerobic digesters either at commercial scale or at a household scale.

Why do people still allow their dogs to foul?

Keep Britain Tidy research indicated that people allow their dogs to foul because they often feel they can get away without being observed by a local authority officer or enforcement contractor.

The same research also suggested that most people who let their dogs foul do so at night or any areas that are not overlooked (such as alleyways), as they are unlikely to be observed.

A growing phenomenon is the littering of bagged dog waste. It appears that dog walkers don't wish to carry the bagged dog waste any distance before finding a bin. Recent research by Keep Britain Tidy and the Dog's Trust also suggests that many dog walkers leave their bagged dog poo in public places with the intention of collecting it at the end of their walk, but then forget. This may encourage others to litter their bagged dog poo, as the presence of the issue suggests that it is a socially acceptable practice.