

PE2121/B: Run a targeted roadside litter awareness campaign

Petitioner written submission, 6 January 2025

Thank you to the Scottish Government for its detailed response to our petition.

While we commend the amount of work done in producing the action plan, we do not agree that fundamental steps have been taken to address the point made in our petition.

Item 1 (year 1) states 'new powers' with the action through the Circular Economy Bill, which will need secondary legislation. This is not mentioned again in year 2 apart from under fly-tipping regarding data. It is obvious from the detail in the action plan that litter is taken extremely seriously at Government level but the simple act of making the companies moving loose or nylon/plastic covered items on open backed lorries responsible for ensuring they are securely covered, is not mentioned nor enforced. As this is a legal requirement already in place, it surely follows that it is the responsibility of Government to ensure that resources are provided to enable this to be enforced. We have been told many times over the past 3 years that the various bodies do not have the resources to enforce this law. Many, many thousands of pounds of public money are spent each year on the clearing up of litter – surely this money would be better spent on applying a workable and enforceable way of reducing the litter in the first place. No matter how many strategies and action plans are put in place, if they are neither workable or enforceable, they are a waste of time and money.

Many of the items in the Government's response have been repeated. Items 15 to 19 of the year 1 action are all duplications of work involving many groups and strategies, with no fundamental results.

The type of rubbish seen at the side of the main roads (e.g. A1) has not, in our opinion, been thrown out of car windows, although, most certainly a percentage has been. The main rubbish flies from the back of uncovered lorries or from neighbouring farms where net or plastic-covered animal feed has been placed in fields. We believe that a collection and study of all rubbish over a measured section of the A1 would show this to be true and provide data to back our petition. Therefore, we suggest that a collection and study take place. We have been provided with programmes of grass cutting and litter picking by Scottish Borders Council, Bear Scotland and East Lothian Council and know this work costs many thousands of pounds each year. While we commend this work, it is, without doubt, a wasted effort if the cause of the litter is not strongly and legally addressed. A large company has admitted that they have been made aware from other sources that lots of litter is being shed from uncovered lorries. In all our correspondence with the main bodies, Transport Scotland, Police Scotland etc we are told they do not have the resources to enforce the legislation already in place. As Transport Scotland is a Government body, we state our point that Government is in dereliction of its duty.

For 3 years we have been writing to local councillors, Government Ministers (Holyrood and Westminster), Bear Scotland and Transport Scotland. All responses acknowledge the problem with many rather patronisingly thanking us for the work we do in litter picking. All refer us to the National Litter and Fly tipping Strategy and the Circular Economy Act Scotland 2024. None state any positive or constructive solutions, that are enforceable.

In conclusion, we would like to see a National Anti-Littering Campaign delivered via TV, radio, press, social media, billboards and digital advertising as a rolling programme, ensuring that everyone is aware of their responsibilities. We would also like to see an Anti-Littering agenda embedded in the curriculum of secondary schools.

We are reminded, on entering Holyrood, that the Scottish Parliament aims to be transparent and to welcome its citizens in. We hope you will extend this welcome to us and allow us 5 minutes of your time to elaborate our arguments either at committee or personally with an MSP. We have tried on a number of occasions to secure a meeting with Fiona Hyslop MSP, our Cabinet Secretary for Transport, to discuss this matter. We have not been successful.