

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 5 February 2025
2nd Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2121: Run a targeted roadside litter awareness campaign

Introduction

Petitioner Carolyn Philip

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to run a campaign targeted at companies to raise awareness of the harms caused by roadside litter and the penalties that could be brought against responsible parties.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2121>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 4 November 2024.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 289 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.
6. The Committee has received submissions from the Scottish Government and Petitioner which are set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

7. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
January 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2121: Run a targeted roadside litter awareness campaign

Petitioner

Carolyn Philip

Date Lodged

4 November 2024

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to run a campaign targeted at companies to raise awareness of the harms caused by roadside litter and the penalties that could be brought against responsible parties.

Background information

We are members of various local environmental groups who regularly clear litter in Berwickshire. We have held regular meetings with Bear Scotland, Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and have had representatives of Transport Scotland and East Lothian Council attend. The issue is predominantly on the A1 which is obviously a main tourist route into Scotland. The litter in this area, and many other areas, is mainly caused by uncovered lorries, nearby farms, fast food outlets and landfill. We work closely with SBC and each volunteer has 'adopted' a lay by to try to keep clean.

We believe that companies should be aware of the impact of roadside litter and how their activities may be contributing to the problem. They should be made aware of the penalties for littering through an awareness campaign. The campaign could include signs on the roadside, targeted information letters, and targeted online advertisements.

Annexe B: SPICe briefing on PE2121



The petitioner is calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to run a campaign targeted at companies to raise awareness of the harms caused by roadside litter and the penalties that could be brought against responsible parties.

Roadside litter in Scotland

Keep Scotland Beautiful (a Scottish charity) states that [50 tonnes of litter is abandoned on Scotland's roadsides each month](#). According to [the annual Scottish Litter Survey 2024](#) (published November 2024 and also carried out by Keep Scotland Beautiful), which tracks public perceptions of litter, around nine in ten people in Scotland view litter as a national problem. Seven in ten people believe it is a problem in their local area. People are more likely to view litter as a problem in the least affluent communities and in urban areas.

The 2024 survey set out that 88% of respondents viewed roadside litter as a problem in Scotland. More than 90% of respondents said roadside litter creates a negative impression of Scotland, and more than 50% of respondents thought there is more litter on roadsides than a year ago.

The [Scottish Government's National Litter and Flytipping Strategy](#) (published 2023) recognises that roadside litter is an issue in Scotland, stating that audits undertaken by both local authorities and Keep Scotland Beautiful, covering 12,803 individual sites assessed for local environmental quality in 2021/2022, found that litter is a "widespread issue on hard standing areas, open spaces and road verges, observed on four out of every five sites audited".

The Strategy also has [an associated Action Plan for 2023-24](#). It does not specifically mention roadside litter but includes potentially relevant workstreams, such as collaborative work between agencies and local authorities and support for communities. Key public bodies and groups with actions under the plan are the Scottish Government, Keep Scotland Beautiful, SEPA and Zero Waste Scotland.

Previous Keep Scotland Beautiful roadside litter campaign

Keep Scotland Beautiful [ran a roadside litter reduction campaign, 'Give Your Litter a Lift' from 2016-2019](#). The charity also states that it has worked with partners to [develop and test targeted interventions and infrastructure to tackle the issue](#) and has worked with Road Operating Companies to build understanding of the origins, scale and impact of roadside litter.

Who is responsible for roadsides?

[Section 89 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990](#) places duties on certain organisations to, so far as is practicable, ensure that their land or land that is under their control is kept clear of litter, and to ensure that public roads for which the body is responsible are kept clean. [Statutory guidance was published in 2018](#) on complying with these duties which sets out which bodies are subject to them ([also discussed on the Keep Scotland Beautiful website](#)).

Offences and penalties

Littering in a public open space is a criminal offence under [the Environmental Protection Act 1990](#) (section 87). A person who has littered can be issued with a fixed penalty notice of £80 or could be prosecuted and risk a fine of up to £2,500. Local authorities also have [powers to designate certain areas as Litter Control Areas](#), which places duties on the occupier to ensure it is kept free of litter as far as practicable.

[Section 18 of the Circular Economy \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#), when commenced, will enable the issuing of civil penalties for littering from a vehicle. This new civil penalty regime allows for the registered keeper of the vehicle to be held responsible for littering from that vehicle. This change [stemmed from a 2021 Scottish Government review of Scotland's national litter strategy](#).

Wider circular economy policy

The Scottish Government's commitment to transition to a circular economy, with associated aims to reduce waste, increase recycling and reuse and tackle 'throwaway' culture, are also relevant to how litter is addressed. Specific interventions include the planned [Deposit Return Scheme](#) and developments in [Extended Producer Responsibility](#), which seek to put more responsibility on to producers for how products are disposed of. More detail is set out in [the draft Circular Economy and Waste Routemap](#).

Alexa Morrison, Senior Researcher

2 December 2024

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Annexe C: Written submissions

Scottish Government written submission, 2 December 2024

PE2121/A: Run a targeted roadside litter awareness campaign

Thank you for your email of 04 November on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee in relation to Petition PE2121 regarding a call for the Scottish Government to undertake a campaign targeted to raise awareness of the harms caused by roadside litter and the penalties that could be brought against responsible parties.

The Scottish Government is committed to taking action to address litter and flytipping in Scotland. In 2023, we published a new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy and Year One Action Plan. The Strategy recognises the importance of prevention through education and communications; good infrastructure and services and effective approach to enforcement to ensure it acts as an effective deterrent and working in partnership with a range of partners, including businesses and community groups.

One of the actions for the Scottish Government within the initial Action Plan was a change in legislation to introduce new powers to impose a civil penalty on the registered keeper of a vehicle from which a littering offence is committed. This legislative change was completed as part of the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 and will be implemented in due course. This is just one of a number of actions that have been progressed and full details are in the [National Litter and Flytipping Strategy Update and Year 2 Action Plan 2024 - 2025](#).

The National Litter and Flytipping Strategy is delivered in partnership with SEPA, Zero Waste Scotland and Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB). As part of the Year 2 actions, Keep Scotland Beautiful is working with Perth & Kinross Council to trial a roadside litter intervention in to raise awareness of roadside litter issues. It updates KSB's previous national roadside litter campaign [Give Your Litter A Lift](#) and has the potential to inform future interventions. More information can be found on the KSB website; [Perth and Kinross buses wrapped to curb roadside litter | Keep Scotland Beautiful](#)

The National Litter and Flytipping Strategy Delivery Group, which includes representatives from a range of delivery partners (including a representative for local authorities), has established a communications sub-group that will be exploring how best to deliver communication messages effectively on litter and flytipping. The proposals put forward in the petition will be shared with the sub-group so they can consider them as part of their ongoing work to look at improving communications at a national level. However, some of the actions suggested in the petition, such as direct mailing to local businesses and roadside signage would be a matter for a local authority or Transport Scotland, depending on the target area.

More broadly, from 2025 the implementation of packaging extended producer responsibility reforms across the UK will move the full net cost of managing

household packaging waste from local authorities to producers, ensuring more packaging is made recyclable or reusable. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that the full net cost recovery of packaging waste also includes packaging in street bins and litter in Scotland. The intention is to bring this obligation forward in amended legislation. This has the potential to cover costs associated with communications to prevent littering.

I would like to thank you again for raising these concerns with the Scottish Government and I hope that you find this response helpful.

Circular Economy Division

Petitioner written submission, 6 January 2025

PE2121/B: Run a targeted roadside litter awareness campaign

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.