



Briefing 17 –04 January 2017

Developing a successful ‘binrastructure’ - litter bin policies, strategies and procedures

Key issues

- APSE is currently working with The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on developing a National Litter Strategy for England.
- APSE has agreed to write the chapters on ‘binrastructure’ which looks at how local authorities provide litter bins and other waste related street furniture and offers advice on future ‘binrastructure’, specifications, locating and procurement of litter bins, including development of strategies and policies.
- As part of the work towards developing the strategy APSE has carried out a short survey asking local authorities about their current litter bin practices as well as the behavioural change work they carry out to try to reduce littering in the first instance.
- This briefing note summarises the responses to the survey.

APSE was approached by DCLG and Defra to become part of a working group which was looking at the issues of *‘the design, number and location of public litter bins and other items of street furniture to help reduce litter at the local level’*. Amongst other things, this group would look at:

- Reducing litter through design, number and location of public litter bins
- The role of street design in minimising litter
- Methods and strategies including the use of ‘binrastructure’ to reduce commonly littered items.
- Working with the private sector/parish councils to reduce littering
- Identifying suitable strategies to address those areas prone to littering
- Improving the level of street litter recycling through improved ‘binrastructure’.

APSE felt that as well as the physical elements of keeping litter off the street, there was a need to acknowledge within the chapters the work local authorities are doing and could do regarding changing the behaviour of litterers, either through education or enforcement.

Survey Responses – A Summary

As part of this process APSE felt it was important that the views of local authorities themselves were taken into account and as such a survey was created to investigate and collate information about litter bin policies and practices as well as any behavioural change programmes being employed. The following is a summarised version of responses from 46 individual local authorities from across the UK.

Does your local authority have a litter bin strategy/policy which identifies the types of bins used and a location criteria?

Only 24% of respondents had a strategy or policy in place regards the types of litter bins to be used as well as clear criteria as to their locating. Many respondents generally placed litter bins out as a result of requests from the public or elected members or based on past historical need. A common issue was that, although many respondents were looking to standardise litter bins, often they suffered from a legacy of different bin styles and locations, many of which need removing or replacing but were finding it difficult due to reducing budgets.

Is there a single department within your council that is responsible for providing litter bins?

Almost 77% of respondents said that litter bin purchasing was under the control of one service head normally the street scene/ environmental services.

Approximately how many litter bins does your authority have per 1000 head of population?

The largest response was in the 0-10 per head of population which was reported by 45% of respondents. 24% reported 11-25 per 1000 head of population, whilst 22% reported having over 26 litter bins per head of population.

Do you have an accurate register/map of litter bin types and locations?

62% of respondents reported that they did hold accurate registers/maps, many were part of a GIS system (route optimisation), which was built into the collection rounds to improve operational efficiency.

Approximately what proportion of your existing litter bins are replaced each year?

88% of respondents replaced less than 5% of their litter bin stock on an annual basis, which is probably a reflection of reductions in street cleansing budgets. The remaining 12% replaced no more than 10% each year. This figure may suggest why there is such a legacy of old and different bins still being utilised by many local authorities.

Do you provide litter bins which offer recycling opportunities? If so, what types of materials do you ask the user to recycle?

Almost 50% of respondents offer recycling opportunities for street litter. Perhaps not surprisingly the main materials being recycled were paper, plastics, glass and cans. Despite

offering separate compartments within the same bin many respondents complained that contamination was a major issue and some had stopped providing dual litter and recycling bins because of this issue. Several respondents commented that separate recycling bins were a more effective way of recycling street litter.

Does your local authority provide signage or markers to identify where a litter bin can be found and/or the penalties for littering? (Please select all that apply)

52% of respondents did not provide any signage indicating either where a bin could be found or the penalties for littering. Less than 2% have signs which indicate where a litter bin can be found but 44% do have signs which indicate the level of fines for littering.

Does your local authority provide litter bins on public request or are they only installed where a need is identified by council officers? (Please select all that apply)

Many respondents answered that both public and officers requested litter bins but it did appear that the final decision as to whether a bin is sited is down to officers. Many only provide bins as replacements, new bins tend to be funded from community or ward budgets. Some respondents did state that often they remove bins where there is no longer a need and use these to meet new requests.

Has your local authority installed sensors within litter bins which notify litter collection crews when they require emptying?

Although still in its relative infancy, this technology was being used by over 13% of respondents.

Has your local authority introduced bins known as 'smart bins', where either increased size, sensors or compaction facilities are provided as part of the bin?

Again, although still relatively new, over 21% of respondents had installed or were trialling such technology. Most of the larger compaction type bins were being located in town or city centres.

Have any novelty bins been introduced to encourage people to use them? For example talking bins, bins which if used contribute.

Only 4% of respondents recorded that they had installed such bins. This is an area which the National Strategy has said could be used as a significant behavioural change element in preventing the act of littering.

Do you offer rewards to people who use bins? For example 'golden tickets' which offer a prize and are given out by council officers observing people using bins.

Perhaps not surprisingly none of the respondents stated that they carried out such activities. This is an area which has been cited as being successful in other behavioural change programmes such as promoting residents to recycle their domestic waste.

Do other organisations provide or sponsor litter bin provision?

Over 36% of respondents replied that they received sponsorship or private/third sector provision of litter bins. However most stated numbers were low. The main 'providers/sponsors were town and parish councils, local businesses and well-known fast food outlets.

Do you require fast food outlets to provide litter bins as part of the planning requirements?

Surprisingly only 26% of respondents said yes to this question. Fast food outlets and bars being the main providers of litter bins.

Do you have anti-litter education campaigns and/or litter enforcement officers? (Please select all that apply and provide details)

The highest response was with regards to litter enforcement officers, with over 78% of respondents stating they had these posts. 56% stated they ran anti-litter campaigns. Less than 6% had neither.

Advisory Group comments

At the last Street Cleansing and Refuse Collection Advisory Group held on the 15th of December 2016, APSE gave a presentation on the aims of the National Litter Strategy for England and in particular the work around the 'binrastructure' element. Some of the main comments which came out were:

- More emphasis needed on prevention. Need to be proactive not reactive. Spend less on "binrastructure" more on behavioural change.
- Need to get into education system (schools etc.) need to overcome difficulty of being excluded as anti-litter education is no longer part of curriculum.
- Packaging / fast food still the biggest problem. These organisations need to be part of the national strategy. Currently they tend to have "voluntary codes". Also messages need to be clearer on packaging on how to dispose/recycle them.
- Need to shift emphasis from operations to prevention. Need to co-ordinate with others who carry out litter collection – fast food outlets, industrial estates, community payback, volunteers etc.
- Hard hitting messages needed like the "Don't be a tosser" campaign – seat belt campaigns, drink & drive and smoking have all been successful using this approach.
- Attitude of parental generation needs to change to guide today's young generation.
- Make better use of social media to deliver message.
- Using public realm itself to deliver message – signage, 'binrastructure', innovative street-based anti-litter campaigns
- Remove street furniture etc. to make cleaning easier.
- Government needs to recognise that local authority budgets are decreasing and this is impacting on non-statutory services such as street cleansing. Whatever shape the strategy takes, it needs to be deliverable at local level.

APSE Comment

APSE is pleased that it has been asked to be a part of the working group, as it allows APSE the opportunity to represent local authorities' views and practices which can then be reflected in the final document. There is a real need for the document to be helpful and offer guidance rather than being too prescriptive. Equally it needs to be practicable and deliverable, thereby avoiding the need for local authorities to have to find extra resources.

The document aims to look at a number of areas which affect and are affected by litter, including: the collection and monitoring of data, education and awareness, improving enforcement, better cleansing and litter infrastructure, aquatic and marine environments and fly tipping.

Government wants to see the strategy delivering improvements in personal responsibility for avoiding littering, improved environmental quality both physically and with regards to the public's appreciation of a clean place to live and work, better co-ordination between organisations by them being better equipped to provide customers and staff with consistent messages, facilities and efficient services. And finally, reducing the scale of clear up required, whilst at the same time as reducing the negative costs of litter and fly-tipping on wider society.

By producing a coherent clean-up plan the government will work with local authorities, campaign groups and businesses, including fast food restaurants and manufacturers of chewing gum, confectionary and soft drinks to try to reduce the occurrence of litter.

APSE feels that Government should take a lead on this issue by offering realistic guidance and as is the case with Scotland's litter strategy, provide some element of funding for projects which aim to reduce litter and fly-tipping through information, infrastructure and enforcement interventions as well as the funding of pilot projects to trial and evaluate interventions with potential for wider application.

APSE will continue to be involved with the development of the strategy to ensure local authority views and experiences are highlighted, and inform its membership about progress as it occurs.

Wayne Priestley Principal Advisor