



Chewing Gum – Potential solutions and ideas for minimising impact

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Key Points

This briefing covers the potential solutions and ideas for minimising the impact of chewing gum litter. The information contained within should be useful in the development of your own authority's response to dealing with chewing gum litter.

1.0 Introduction

Over the years there have been many APSE network queries submitted regarding chewing gum and the problem that it presents for local authorities. Councils spend thousands of pounds cleaning up chewing gum litter every year, and over the last several years between 14.3% and 46.0% of responding councils to the APSE State of the Market in Street Cleansing planned to introduce education campaigns on chewing gum litter.

Some facts that illustrate the problem for local authorities include:

- According to Zero Waste Scotland, on average each piece of gum costs 3p to buy but £1.50 per square metre to clean up.
- In 12 weeks of fieldwork for a journal article ([link](#)), only one instance of gum littering was observed and caught on camera by researchers, highlighting how difficult it is to spot.
- Research has shown that gum litterers are not from “stereotypically antisocial people” and instead are made up of a “diverse cross section of society”.
- Research also showed that the people who did litter gum did so inconsistently, and that they knew what the right thing to do was and did it most of the time; the littering of gum was influenced by a very specific set of circumstances that led them to rationalise doing it.

2.0 Potential solutions

Here are a range of products that could help with minimising gum littering or assist with the cleaning up of the issue.



Gumdrop

Herefordshire Council trialled Gumdrop, a bin designed specifically for the disposal of waste chewing gum (pictured left) in their town centre, train stations, bus stops, etc which resulted in a 46% decrease in gum litter. When filled, the bins are collected and recycled into three more Gumdrops, making it a closed loop recycling process. They also offer a smaller on-the-go Gumdrop keyring that can be given out to people which can be returned when filled to collection spots. The full case study can be found on their website [here](#), and more information about Gumdrop can be found [here](#). Some

councils have also used a similar product called [Gummy Bin](#).

Gumstick

SmartStreets have a product called [Gumstick](#), which is a specially printed biodegradable, recycled card that can be printed in a range of designs and attached to lampposts in public places to encourage people not to litter their gum and to instead stick it to these boards. There are similar products available such as [Gummy Wall](#). [Preston City Council](#) used a similar approach with an alternative product and found that the use of gum boards reduced gum litter by nearly 80% in the city. More information and sample designs can be found on SmartStreets website by [clicking here](#).



Machines for the removal of gum (e.g. Gumbuster)

Several councils, such as [Leicester City Council](#), are either using or trialling the use of machines specifically designed to remove gum. The [Gumbuster](#) uses a heated environmentally friendly detergent to help dissolve dried chewing gum with a scraper to remove any remains.





Other systems such as the [i-gum](#) use a gas powered burner combined with environmentally friendly cleaning chemicals to remove gum. There are also other approaches such as dry steam cleaning and high pressure washers. Consideration should be given to various

different systems to find the right type for your authority and workforce.

3.0 Campaign ideas and resources

Below are a few campaign ideas / resources that are available in relation to chewing gum littering.



Chalk-based paint

[Salisbury City Council](#) are using chalk-based paint to highlight problem areas and raise awareness of the issue with chewing gum litter in the area. They were recently faced with a £36,000 bill to clean up chewing gum litter.

Free unbranded design materials

Mars Wrigley have set up a website called tacklegumlittering.co.uk that features a range of unbranded designs to encourage people to bin their gum. It features sign templates, bin designs, banners, bus stop displays and more that are all free to download in editable design formats. The effectiveness of the materials was tested in the January 2020 Journal of Litter and Environmental



Quality article entitled 'Testing new behaviour change methods to tackle littered gum' which can be accessed [here](#). The average reduction in littered gum was 41.8%. [Zero Waste Scotland](#) also provide many free litter-related context specific designs as part of their anti-litter campaign toolkit.

Mascots

As highlighted in [Zero Waste Scotland's](#) article on chewing gum litter, the use of mascots can be a good way to promote a chewing gum campaign.

[Borough of Poole Council](#) enlisted their pink gum-blob mascot to raise awareness of a £75 fine for dropping gum, and handed out books of chewing gum disposal paper. They also had a competition to name the mascot. This approach led to a 20% drop in chewing gum litter.

A step-by-step guide on campaigns

The Chewing Gum Action Group has a [5 point step-by-step guide](#) on their website on how to run a chewing gum litter campaign, and provides advice on engaging with local businesses/retailers/schools/local media and how to measure the effectiveness of your campaign.



School lesson plans and resources for learning

The Irish Government run a [Gum Litter Taskforce](#). As part of their engagement with schools, they offer a free actor-led workshop tour with a theatre-in-education session. They also have a website that offers free lesson plans, teachers notes, posters and activity cards - www.chewitbinit.com.

Other creative campaign ideas:

- [A pop-up woodland](#) at a train station in Brent named 'Gum Forest' – research showed that “people’s perception of how natural a space is influences whether they’re likely to drop gum there”
- [A pop-up living room](#) where people are encouraged to drop their chewing gum in, to make people think about how they treat the cleanliness of the outdoors compared to their own houses

4.0 Commercial services

Some local authorities such as [Derby City Council](#) and [Oxford City Council](#) offer chewing gum removal as a commercial services to private customers and businesses in areas such as car parks, footpaths, retail environments, parks and school



areas. With the cost of investing in specialist equipment for the removal of chewing gum that many local authorities have purchased, it is worth considering whether introducing a service as part of your local authority's commercial services would be worthwhile.

5.0 Other best practice

- **Campaign website page** - [Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council](#) have a very good example of a clearly structured campaign page detailing the problem of chewing gum waste with some facts to inform residents why they should dispose of it in a bin.
- **Fixed Penalty Notice website page** – [Belfast City Council](#) have a clear, well laid out page on their website highlighting all of the different things that can lead to you being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (including littering chewing gum). They also list the amount of fines that have been given out each month.
- **Zero Waste Scotland's Litter Knowledge Network** – [Zero Waste Scotland](#) have an excellent website featuring research, imagery and best practice advice on litter prevention. The website features an article on [preventing chewing gum litter](#).

6.0 Groups to get involved in

Chewing Gum Action Group

[The Chewing Gum Action Group](#) has coordinated campaigns with many different local authorities and their work has led to a significant drop in chewing gum litter in those areas. Their website has information on previous campaigns, news, how to run campaigns and information on how to get involved with the group.



APSE advisory groups

APSE has a sub-group of the Parks, Grounds and Streets advisory group in collaboration with Zero Waste Scotland and others called the Litter Managers Network specific to issues with litter for local authority managers and councillors to attend. These meetings are free to attend for APSE members. [Click here](#) for future dates and [here](#) for future meetings of the national APSE Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance advisory group.

7.0 APSE Comment

APSE welcomes the sharing of best practice on reducing littering behaviours through our APSE network query system and through advisory groups.

For those who would like to undertake quality inspections as part of their litter monitoring process, we would recommend considering **APSE's Land Audit Management System**. It is a useful monitoring process that can be carried out by any officer as part of their normal daily working routine with the inspection based on what the public would see. The Street Cleansing inspection covers 'staining/gum' as one of the 11 items to inspect. More information on the system can be found [here](#).

APSE has set up a COVID-19 Information Hub to deal with frontline service issues as they arise, ensuring greater resilience and learning between each other during this difficult time. You can access this hub by [clicking here](#) and you can also join our WhatsApp Support Network by [clicking here](#).

Garry Lee
Research & Coordination Officer

Louise Melville
Principal Advisor (Scotland)