



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Seacole Building 2
Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Dear Dr Carolyn Wilkins,

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The Litter Strategy for England, published in April 2017, set out our determination to tackle roadside litter, particularly on the Strategic Road Network. To understand the current situation, and the issues affecting local authorities and other land managers having responsibility for keeping these highways clean, we commissioned Keep Britain Tidy to carry out an independent assessment of the cleanliness of those parts of the Strategic Road Network where responsibility for cleaning and other maintenance is split between local authorities and Highways England.

Following analysis of the results of the road cleanliness survey, I am pleased to inform you that Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council achieved a passing grade, using the standards as set out in the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse. This category covers authorities with an average score equivalent to a grade B or above on one visit and no lower than a B- on the other. The attached note explains the survey methodology in more detail.

	Transect 1	Transect 2	Transect 3	Transect 4	Transect 5	Transect 6
Oldham	B+B	BB	BB	BB	B-B	B-B-

In the Litter Strategy, we set out our aim to publish the results of this survey, and to set a deadline for authorities falling below the standard set out in the Code of Practice to improve their performance within this Parliament. Before doing so, we would like to understand better how a higher standard can be consistently obtained by all. We would therefore like to explore and understand examples of good practice, as well as to hear your views on any particular issues and challenges that your authority faced in achieving the required standard. A questionnaire is attached below, which we would be grateful if you could complete and return to litter@defra.gov.uk by close of business in 20 working days. This will be considered in the context of the next steps set out above, as well as in our aim to explore and identify means to address the practical barriers to keeping our roadsides clear of litter, including issues relating to both cleaning and litter-prevention, so please be as forthcoming as possible.

In conjunction, Highways England believe that working in partnership is the best way to reduce littering alongside the A-roads which local authorities are responsible for cleaning and Highways England maintain. To formalise and facilitate this collaboration, Highways England have developed a pack of resources called "Tackling Litter Together". The pack focusses on identifying the barriers that can prevent local authorities from litter picking on these roads, and provides best practice examples and support, including health and safety guidance on sharing temporary traffic management. We would be interested to know as part of the questionnaire whether you have used this pack and your views on this approach in delivering results in your area.

Chris Preston,
Deputy Director, Resource and Waste

Annex A - Questionnaire

Congratulations on your success in maintaining a consistently high standard of roadside cleanliness. We would like to explore and understand how this is achieved, so that we can support others to reach the same standard. Please email your responses to litter@defra.gsi.gov.uk or to the address at the top of the first page.

- i. Please describe your approach to cleaning on those parts of the strategic road network and similar roadside land (e.g. scheduled visits vs ad hoc cleaning; in-house vs contractors etc.)
- ii. How much does your authority spend each year on cleaning litter from the strategic road network?
- iii. What practical considerations are taken into account when planning roadside cleansing?
- iv. Are there any bespoke initiatives in place to tackle roadside litter within your area?
- v. Please describe your experience of co-ordinating works and access for litter-picking with Highways England. Are you aware of the "Tackling Litter Together" pack? If so do you currently use it?
- vi. Please outline what you think has helped you achieve a consistent standard of cleanliness.
- vii. Please describe any specific issues or challenges you have faced in achieving a consistently high standard of roadside cleanliness on the strategic road network. How have these been mitigated/overcome?
- viii. Please include any other comments that you would like to make about your results.

Annex B Methodology

Sample Design

The field of survey was those roads in England within the Strategic Road Network where responsibility for clearing up litter lies with the local authority and responsibility for other maintenance, such as maintaining and repairing the road surface, lies with Highways England.

The total length of roadside and slip road in the field of survey (i.e. in scope) was estimated to be around 4,700 kilometres, including around 1,000 km of slip roads.

There are 194 local authorities with one or more roads in scope and all of these local authorities were intentionally included within the survey sample to ensure that data was collected from every local authority in scope.

In total approximately 450km of roadside and slip roads were surveyed across the 194 local authorities. The sample equated to an average sampling rate of about 10% of the length of all roadside and all slip road in scope. This was considered to be a large enough sample to provide robust data and a sufficiently representative assessment at national and local authority level.

Selecting transects of road for surveying

The survey was undertaken by Keep Britain Tidy. A list of all the local authorities in scope (i.e. those that have responsibility for litter-picking on some part of the Strategic Road Network where responsibility for litter-picking and other maintenance is split between the local council and Highways England) was given to Keep Britain Tidy, with means of identifying these roads using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software.

All transects were randomly selected.

Data Collection

Data collection was undertaken by Keep Britain Tidy, via surveyors with experience of collecting data on site cleanliness and assigning cleanliness grades. Surveyors are quality assured to ensure that they are working in line with the assessment guidance in terms of delivery of the grading system. The surveyors undertook the survey in pairs - by working in pairs surveyors were able to calibrate one another's grading to ensure a consistent approach is taken to grading throughout the area, to provide assurances to the quality of the data.

Within each local authority in scope, where possible at least 2km of road was surveyed by taking at least five separate transects from roads in scope. The transects comprised:

- Three roadside transects at 500m in length
- Two slip road transects at 250m in length *(note if no slip roads were present and the authority had a sufficient length of in scope roads, four roadside transects were surveyed)*

Where this was not possible because the total length of roadside within the local authority was less than 1.5 km and/or the total length of slip road was less than 500 metres, all of the road and/or all of the slip road within the local authority was surveyed.

A maximum of six transects were surveyed per local authority, dependent on the length of road in scope within an authority.

Transects were surveyed and graded according to the same principles as the [Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse](#). The grades are A, B, C and D, with grades B and above being classed for this purpose as 'acceptable'.

Litter site cleanliness grades:

- A None of the issues present
- B Predominantly free with some minor instances of the issue*
- C Widespread with some accumulations of the issue
- D Heavily affected by the issue

*According to the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse, "It is expected that managers of land should, through monitoring and the appropriate use of resources, keep their land clear of litter and refuse so that it does not fall below a grade B and is cleansed to an A on a regular basis."

Where appropriate, the intermediary grades of B+, B- and C- were also used.

This survey follows LEQS methodology. The transects were graded as a whole taking in all litter and litter free areas and giving the transect a grade based on it's over all appearance. The grades were based on distribution throughout the transect as well as amount of litter.

On dual carriageways the central reservation was included up to the mid-point. Laybys were also included.

The data collected for each transect was:

- Surveyor id
- Date and time of survey
- Geo reference of the transect
- Local Authority name
- Trunk road number
- Type of site (road or slip road)
- Lay-bys presence (tick box)
- Grade
- Photo upload

The survey contractor conducted two surveys at exactly the same transect sites each time. The second survey was undertaken at between 35 and 63 days after the first survey. Two observations of each site was necessary in order to determine whether councils are falling below the required legal standard. (The statutory duty is to 'keep the highways clean'. Under the Code, as a last resort, if acceptable standards of litter and refuse are not met, response times have been set by which land must be returned to an acceptable standard. These are:

- 14 days for roadside land subject to a low intensity of use (such as “motorway and trunk road roundabouts and lay-bys, approach and slip roads connecting to these roads”); or
- 28 days or as soon as is practicable for land subject to “special circumstances” – i.e. where issues of health and safety and reasonableness and practicability are dominant considerations when undertaking environmental maintenance work (such as the carriageway, verges and central reservations of motorways and trunk roads).¹

Analysis of the Data

The data collected was used to score each transect on a scale of 0 to 5 inclusive, using the criteria below:

5	B or above on both visits
4	B or above on one visit, no lower than B- on the other
3	B or above on at least one visit and below B- on the other OR B- on both visits
2	B- on at least one visit, below B- on the other
1	C or C- on both visits, OR D with improvement by second visit (but still below B-)
0	C or below on 1 st visit, D on second

The grid below shows the possible different permutations:

		2nd visit						
		A	B+	B	B-	C	C-	D
1st visit	A	5	5	5	4			
	B+	5	5	5	4	3	3	
	B	5	5	5	4	3	3	3
	B-	4	4	4	3	2	2	2
	C		3	3	2	1	1	0
	C-		3	3	2	1	1	0
	D			3	2	1	1	0

The scores were then totalled for each authority and divided by the number of transects within the Authority to give an overall average score between 0 and 5.

¹ Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (2006) – table 1

These overall scores have now been categorised as

Pass: a score of 4 or above

Borderline: a score between 3 and 4

Needs improvement: a score of below 3

Statistical tests of the means of the different categories (Pass, Borderline, Needs improvement) confirmed that there was no significant difference in the amount of road that is in scope within the Authority between the three groups.

The same tests of the means of the different categories (Pass, Borderline, Needs improvement) also confirmed that there was no significant difference in the time between the two surveys between the three groups.

A chi-squared independence test was run to ensure that the results we found were independent of what rural class the authority is in. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between the rurality of the Authority and the results of the survey.