

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 24 September 2025
14th 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. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 5 February 2025](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 2 December 2024.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 305 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

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

Clerks to the Committee
September 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: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2121 on 5 February 2025

The Deputy Convener: The first new petition is PE2121, which was lodged by Carolyn Philip, who I believe is with us in the public gallery. Welcome. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to run a campaign targeted at companies to raise awareness of the harms that are caused by roadside litter and the penalties that could be brought against responsible parties. We are joined for consideration of the petition by our colleague, Rachael Hamilton MSP—welcome, Rachael.

Keep Scotland Beautiful reports that 50 tonnes of litter are abandoned on Scotland's roadsides each month. The charity's annual Scottish litter survey of 2024 set out that 88 per cent of respondents viewed roadside litter as a problem in Scotland.

The Scottish Government's response highlights the 2023 national litter and fly-tipping strategy and year 1 action plan. The response states that that work recognises the importance of prevention through education and communication and of effective approaches to enforcement. On enforcement, section 18 of the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024, when commenced, will enable the issuing of civil penalties for littering from a vehicle.

The response informs us that the national litter and fly-tipping strategy delivery group has established a communications sub-group that will explore the best ways to deliver effective communication messages on litter and fly-tipping. Proposals put forward in the petition will be shared with the sub-group so that it can consider them as part of its on-going work to look at improving communications at the national level. However, the Scottish Government has indicated that direct mailing to local businesses and roadside signage would be a matter for local authorities or Transport Scotland.

The petitioner's response states that, although her group commends the amount of work that has been done in producing the action plan, she does not agree that the fundamental steps have been taken to address the point that is made in the petition. She points out that the action plan does not mention making companies responsible for securing loose items on open-back lorries. She states that large sums of money are spent each year to clean up litter and suggests that the money would be better spent on applying a workable and enforceable way of reducing litter in the first place.

Before I invite comments from the committee, I ask Rachael Hamilton whether she would like to contribute.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): Thank you, convener. I thank you and the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak in support of petition PE2121 on running a targeted roadside litter awareness campaign.

Like the convener, I welcome to the public gallery the petitioners, Carolyn Philip and Myra Watson, from Berwickshire anti-litter group. The group regularly co-ordinates litter picks throughout Berwickshire, including on the A1, which is one of the main tourist routes into Scotland. I also welcome around 30 other litter and gardening groups who are watching online. Members of the committee will be pleased to hear that groups from their own constituencies and regions, such as West Lothian litter pickers and Dundee litter pickers, are among those watching online.

We all know that volunteers such as Carolyn and Myra give up their free time to pick litter, out of the goodness of their hearts. They choose to do it with very little support from anyone, including the Scottish Government and cash-strapped local authorities.

Between March and April 2024, Keep Scotland Beautiful held its annual spring clean, in which 45,000 people from every local authority across Scotland took part in 3,564 registered litter picks. Those volunteers care deeply about the communities in which they live, and they recognise the importance of protecting Scotland's biodiversity through maintaining the cleanliness of our environment.

Recent statistics reveal that just over four in five people in Scotland—82 per cent—agree that they want to see more efforts to prevent litter in their area. A similar figure—81 per cent—express a desire for increased action to clean up litter locally.

Carolyn Philip, the lead petitioner, has said that, for three years, she and others have been writing to councillors, Government ministers, BEAR Scotland and Transport Scotland. She says that their responses have been patronising, thanking them for their hard work but not providing any positive or constructive solutions that are enforceable.

Despite the Scottish Government publishing the national litter and fly-tipping strategy that the convener mentioned, the landscape of who is responsible for collecting roadside litter, enforcing penalties and raising awareness of the issue remains confused and scattered. Furthermore, the pace of action by the Scottish Government is glacial, meaning that the blight of litter continues to have a significant negative impact on communities and our environment.

Keep Scotland Beautiful admits that we have reached the point at which there is a litter emergency, and that, without increased coordination and attention, the current situation is unlikely to change.

I agree with Carolyn when she says that we need definitive action, not more talk. On that note, I will close by saying that I would like to add my full support to the aims of the petition, and I hope that the committee will give it due consideration.

The Deputy Convener: Do members have any suggestions or comments?

Maurice Golden: There is quite a lot in the petition, and it might help the petitioner if the Scottish Government could provide the context of roadside litter awareness campaigns and say who has been responsible for delivering them over the period in

which this Scottish Government has been in charge, since 2007. It would be useful for the committee to have that context.

I would like the Scottish Government to detail who has been responsible for any specific campaigns. I am aware of one that was run by Keep Scotland Beautiful from 2016 to 2019, but I am also aware that there has been varied responsibility for delivering litter awareness campaigns more generally. In 2011, there was the “Dunna chuck bruck” litter awareness campaign in Shetland, which I might have to declare as an interest, as I funded it.

It is important that the Scottish Government tells us how much funding has gone into roadside litter awareness campaigns each year—if it is generous, it might expand that to litter campaigns in general—and who is responsible for delivering them. It should also tell us what the assessment of the dumb dumpers phone line was. That was a national phone line, but if you call it now, you are instructed to call your local authority, which might not necessarily be set up to deal with the issue.

We should also ask the Scottish Government for further information on the national litter and fly-tipping strategy delivery group’s communications sub-groups—what a mouthful—including what actions will be taken at the national level to improve communications about littering. It is important that that action is taken nationally, as this is not purely a local authority issue. We should also ask what engagement has been done with stakeholders. It would also be worth asking whether the littering provisions in the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 will cover unintentional littering from commercial vehicles—I hope that they will, because the 2024 act will not deliver a circular economy if it does not deliver on litter.

It might be interesting to talk to other stakeholders who might have an interest in the issue. Rachael Hamilton mentioned those that manage our trunk roads, including Transport Scotland. I know from paddle boarding under the Friarton bridge how dangerous roadside litter can be, because lots of individuals will throw various things over the side of the bridge.

Finally, on extended producer responsibility, I would like us to ask how the Scottish Government is engaging with producers to help to co-ordinate litter collection and therefore reduce disposal costs, which I know many of the large companies and small producers are keen to do.

The Deputy Convener: Thank you for that comprehensive submission.

Fergus Ewing: I am impressed by how much Mr Golden knows about rubbish.

The Deputy Convener: Do members agree with the proposed action?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submissions

Transport Scotland written submission, 17 April 2025

PE2121/C: Run a targeted roadside litter awareness campaign

Thank you for your letter of 27 March requesting views on the actions requested in this petition.

Transport Scotland is aware that there has been an increase in discarded litter recently and that no matter how often our Trunk Road Operating Companies and Councils pick up litter it returns very quickly across trunk roads in Scotland.

As there has been an increase in discarded litter over the past few years we believe that there needs to be a change of mindset and a campaign undertaken to discourage people from dropping litter.

We will work with our Operating Companies, Keep Scotland Beautiful and Zero Waste Scotland to run a campaign targeted at companies and also the public to raise awareness of the harms caused by roadside litter and the legislation that is in place to penalise those who drop litter.

Scottish Government written submission, 23 April 2025

PE2121/D: Run a targeted roadside litter awareness campaign

Thank you for your correspondence of 27 March 2025 seeking some additional information in respect of public petition PE2121. Please find below the Scottish Government's response to the Committee's follow-up questions.

1. Which organisations responsible for publicly funded littering campaigns since 2007

A number of organisations have delivered publicly funded litter prevention campaigns since 2007. These include:

- **Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB)** – our long-standing delivery partner on public behaviour change and education campaigns.
- **Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS)** – delivered national communications on waste, recycling, and the circular economy, including anti-litter messages.
- **Local Authorities** – a number of local authorities have ran localised anti-littering campaigns, some using resources developed by ZWS.
- **Transport Scotland** – delivered trunk road signage and supported messaging related to roadside litter. Transport Scotland also uses its social media channels to share litter prevention messages, for example by supporting KSB's Spring Clean.

2. How much funding has gone into roadside litter campaigns since 2007?

Between 2007 and 2014, KSB received public funding from WRAP and then ZWS to support its *Clean Up Scotland* programme. While not exclusively a campaign, this supported a wide range of litter and flytipping prevention activity including data collection, local and national campaign elements (such as the annual Spring Clean), and community engagement.

KSB and ZWS have delivered or supported a number of roadside litter campaigns since 2007, KSB campaigns often utilise a mix of public and private sector funding. For example, KSB secured approximately £400,000 in private sector funding between 2016 and 2019 to develop and deliver the *Give Your Litter A Lift* campaign.

KSB's Year 2 action, as part of the delivery of the National Litter and Flytipping Strategy, was a pilot intervention on roadside litter, in Perth and Kinross, which was funded by grant funding from Zero Waste Scotland, and support from partners such as Perth and Kinross Council, Starbuck's and McDonalds.

ZWS has also contributed to roadside litter prevention. In 2014, it delivered the *Flinging's Minging* campaign as part of the Transport Litter Week of Action, with posters, banners and social media assets for use by partners. Unfortunately, ZWS no longer hold records for the cost of this campaign.

In 2021, ZWS launched the national campaign *Scotland is Stunning – Let's Keep It That Way*, supported by Scottish Government and Keep Scotland Beautiful. The campaign featured relevant imagery and delivered a strong anti-litter message across media channels and won a number of awards. While not exclusively focused on roadsides, the campaign was developed to be flexible, and assets could be tailored to be utilised by local authorities or other organisations to create local assets. The total spend for this campaign was £114,000.

In addition, ZWS and KSB have supported broader activity contributing to roadside litter prevention. Examples include the *Forth Valley Litter Intervention* (which achieved a 10% reduction in food and drink packaging litter), KSB's *#ChooseToReuse* and *Conscious Consumption* campaigns, and the development of toolkits such as ZWS's *Anti-Litter Campaign Toolkit* and *Litter Prevention Toolkit for Food and Drink on the Go Retailers*. These initiatives have included messaging, behaviour change tools and sector-specific engagement aimed at reducing litter, including from vehicles.

Since 2018, KSB has also received Scottish Government funding via Marine Fund Scotland to deliver its *Upstream Battle* campaign, which supports the Marine Litter Strategy and includes upstream litter awareness in communities located near transport routes and waterways. No specific amount is allocated to communications actions.

While detailed cost data is not available for some historical interventions, the examples above demonstrate a mix of public and private investment in roadside litter prevention across the last two decades.

3. Information on the assessment made to close the ‘Dumb Dumpers’ phonline service

The Dumb Dumpers phonline and online reporting tool closed on 31 March 2023, following a strategic review led by SEPA. The closure reflected a shift in public behaviour, with the vast majority of flytipping reports now submitted directly to local authorities, a more effective route for investigation and enforcement.

Key considerations in the decision included:

- Less than 5% of Scotland’s total flytipping reports came via Dumb Dumpers.
- Most Dumb Dumpers reports were simply redirected to Local Authorities, often duplicating direct public reports.
- A 2022 public perceptions survey found 92% of respondents would report flytipping directly to their Local Authority, with only 3% preferring Dumb Dumpers.
- A 2019 survey of Local Authorities found most preferred direct public reporting due to concerns around double handling and delays.
- The service was no longer deemed fit for purpose and did not allow the public to receive feedback on outcomes.

These decisions were informed by research into public perceptions of flytipping undertaken by Diffley Associates for Zero Waste Scotland in 2022: [Flytipping Survey | Zero Waste Scotland](#)

Flytipping reporting is now more straightforward, as it is always made to the relevant Local Authority via postcode-based services. Flytipping investigations remain the joint responsibility of Local Authorities and SEPA, with roles being further clarified through the work being undertaken through the extension of the SEPA led trial of a new enforcement approach model as set out in National Litter and Flytipping Strategy Year 2 Action plan.

4. In light of the UK extended producer responsibility scheme for packaging, what action the Scottish Government is taking to engage with producers to help coordinate litter control and reduce disposal costs

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging is being implemented this year on a four nations basis across the UK. It will move the full cost of dealing with packaging waste from households away from local taxpayers and councils to the producers, applying the ‘polluter-pays principle’. Packaging EPR will also incentivise businesses to reduce excess packaging, to design and use packaging that is easily recyclable, and encourage use of reusable and refillable packaging.

The Scottish Government remains committed to the principle that packaging EPR should cover the full net costs of both binned and ground litter cleanup and disposal. We want to ensure packaging EPR disincentivises producers from using packaging that contributes to litter, and that they take responsibility for the costs of littering

across Scotland. We are working as four nations to agree how best to achieve this and what is needed to phase in obligations in a robust, fair and transparent way.

The Scottish Government also remains committed to the delivery of a successful Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers to increase recycling rates for single use drinks containers to at least 90%. The introduction of this scheme in October 2027 will help to reduce litter including from our roads and will make a contribution to a more circular economy.

The Scheme Administrator, PackUK, appointed to deliver the UK's packaging EPR scheme, must also deliver public information campaigns to provide consumers and businesses with information about how to recycle, re-use and dispose of packaging, and prevent packaging from becoming litter. In developing the public information campaigns, the scheme administrator should consider how they will complement campaigns delivered at a local and national level. PackUK is expected to set out its plans for public information campaigns in its Strategy and the specific activities it proposes to conduct for the coming year in its Operational Plan.

5. What actions will be taken to improve communications about littering at a national level

While the National Litter and Flytipping Strategy Delivery Group recognises that there is interest in a national campaign on litter it is not currently something that can be achieved within the resources available to delivery partners. Current actions on communications are included in the Year 1 update and Year 2 action plan and will continue to be reported on in the next update and action plan for year 3. Going forward, there will clearly be a need to ensure that the introduction of new legislation, like the introduction of the littering from vehicles civil penalty, will require communications to raise awareness of the new penalty regime.

Through the Communications Sub-Group the delivery partner organisations are working on expanding opportunities to engage with stakeholders and the public as much as possible within the resources available, this is mainly achieved through online channels, press releases highlighting activities undertaken to deliver the Strategy and by attending relevant events, this is an ongoing process that will be continued through the 6 years of delivering the Strategy.

Transport Scotland has indicated that they are planning to run a targeted litter campaign in 2025 working with the National Litter and Flytipping Strategy delivery partners, which will look to encourage behaviour change, enhance infrastructure and services and consider enforcement.

6. Whether the sub-group will consider a national campaign targeted at companies

The NLFS Communications Sub-Group was established to ensure consistent messaging and improved coordination across partners. Its role includes, supporting delivery priorities, sharing communications activities and ensuring the maximum reach of the communications actions that delivery partners take.

The Group has not discussed the potential of a national campaign to businesses as there would not be resources to undertake this activity at this time. However, this will be added to the Group's workplan so they can consider what action could be taken, within existing resources.

7. Whether the forthcoming littering provisions in the Act will cover unintentional littering from commercial vehicles.

Section 18 of the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024, once commenced, will enable the Scottish Ministers to make regulations providing for the issuance of civil penalties for littering from vehicles.

The civil penalty regime will apply where an authorised officer is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that a littering offence under Section 87 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 has occurred from a vehicle. This standard is lower than the criminal threshold of "beyond reasonable doubt".

The powers are sufficiently broad to include scenarios where litter is unintentionally released from improperly secured loads and not retrieved. In such circumstances, a civil penalty could be applied where the facts support a breach of Section 87.

Section 18 has not yet been commenced. The Scottish Government will consult on draft regulations, including the procedure, appeals mechanism, and exemptions, in due course. A date for commencement will be confirmed following consultation.

I hope this information is helpful.

Circular Economy Division