Keep Scotland Beautiful

# Scotland's local environmental quality in decline

A report by Keep Scotland Beautiful on developing a more strategic approach

March 2016

**This report will be of particular interest to decision and policy makers in the Scottish Government, public and private sectors. It will also be relevant to all those with a responsibility for managing urban and rural land, to community groups and individuals. It is a report which calls for action from us all – to reverse the decline in Scotland's local environmental quality.**

# Foreword

**Keep Scotland Beautiful campaigns, acts and educates on a range of local, national and global environmental issues to change behaviour and improve the quality of people's lives and the places they care for.**

For more than half a century we have taken action to improve local environmental quality. We know how much clean streets, playing fields free of dog fouling and unspoilt countryside mean to people. We also acknowledge the ongoing challenge of changing the behaviours that lead to poor environmental quality.

We are firmly established as one of the leading non-government organisations concerned about environmental quality. In the last decade, we have specifically been responsible for:

- Establishing Scotland's Local Environmental Quality Network
- Developing integrated support services for local authorities
- Establishing the national benchmarking monitoring system to measure the environmental quality of our communities (LEAMS)
- Carrying out over 150,000 environmental surveys across all parts of Scotland
- Training 5,000 local authority officers on how to use environmental laws and regulations, such as the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003, including how to issue Fixed Penalty Notices
- Supporting the Scottish Flytipping Forum, the Scottish Transport Litter Group and the Chewing Gum Action Group since their inception
- Leading Scotland's first national stakeholder event on dog fouling
- Delivering Scotland's first mass engagement multi-stakeholder anti-litter and environmental quality improvement campaign, Clean up Scotland
- Representing Scotland's interests in Europe as founder members of the European Litter Prevention Association and the Clean Europe Network

No other organisation in Scotland has as much data or experience measuring Scotland's local environmental quality. No other Scottish organisation is as focused on resolving, nationally, Scotland's local environmental quality.

Since 2002, we have supported Scotland's Local Environmental Quality network, which brings together partners from the public and private sectors with an interest in the quality of our environment. The production of this report would not have been possible without the significant contribution of the network members to the collection of environmental data and to the development of good practice.

I believe that we are well qualified to declare that Scotland's local environmental quality is in decline. And this is despite the substantial efforts of our local authorities and communities.

This report confirms that Scotland's local environmental quality is deteriorating and attempts to identify the reasons why, and outlines the actions that need to be undertaken to address this decline. We know that the reasons for this are complex, but are almost certainly linked to increased pressure on public spending, local environmental quality having a lack of strategic prominence and a disparate approach to dealing with the interrelated issues of, for example, litter and littering behaviour, clean ups, dog fouling, flytipping, environmental crime and weed growth.

It is time to acknowledge the challenge. It is time for strategic and coordinated action.

**Derek A Robertson**
Chief Executive
Keep Scotland Beautiful

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# 1. Executive summary

> *"The environment where we live and work, where our children learn and play really matters to us all. I want everyone living here and everyone who visits our country to be proud of Scotland..."*
>
> Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister, 2015

The acknowledged indicators of 'local environmental quality' are litter, dog fouling, flytipping, graffiti, detritus, weed growth and flyposting.

Against all these indicators, the environmental quality[1] of Scotland is deteriorating. The consequences of this decline, which first started around 2012 - 2013, are far-reaching due to the effects on individual health and wellbeing as well as local and national prosperity.

The current approach to tackling environmental quality does not work because it is short-term and deals with single symptoms of the problem (for example flytipping). Despite a number of positive measures[2] introduced by the Scottish Government and our local authorities, they haven't achieved as much as is required because the approach is rather fragmented and not sufficiently coordinated.

Without a more strategic approach, the gap will continue to grow between people's dissatisfaction about the state of their local communities, the volume of their complaints, the effort people put into cleaning up, and the priority attributed by policy-makers.

We think that local environmental quality would merit strategic consideration from a political perspective, as the collective goodwill exists across a wide range of stakeholders to get behind coordinated action.

The state of communities matters hugely to people whether they live in cities, the countryside or somewhere in between. It matters in the obvious ways but it also matters for health and wellbeing, and our economy.

After deterioration begins, the trend is then downward unless action is taken quickly. It can become a vicious circle. For example, physical context affects behaviour; run-down spaces are more likely to be affected by other anti-social behaviours[3], increasing inequality in our neighbourhoods.

Environmental quality needs priority attention. The evidence outlined in this report suggests that with political will, leadership and shared strategic action, we can reverse the deterioration and make sure that action to improve the environmental quality of Scotland really is prioritised.

[1] Local environmental quality is referred to as 'environmental quality' in this report.
[2] Appendix 1.
[3] Brook Lyndhurst, *Rapid evidence review of littering behaviour and anti-litter policies*, Zero Waste Scotland, 2012.

# 2. Background

## 2.1. Local environmental quality in decline

Scotland is a beautiful country. Most people in Scotland are proud of their country, care about their environment and want to live in clean and safe surroundings. But rather than improving, Scotland's environmental quality is now starting to deteriorate.

This report sets out the evidence[4] which shows that Scotland's environmental quality is deteriorating, and will continue to do in the absence of new, collective strategic action to stop it. Highlighting why it is vital to reverse the trend, it sets out the implications of not doing so. Finally it proposes a range of coordinated actions for all stakeholders so that the best efforts of local authorities and our local communities are consistently replicated across Scotland.

## 2.2. National and local imperative

In Scotland, the picture is one of declining environmental quality standards. Between 2005 and 2013 Keep Scotland Beautiful reported an annual improvement. However, this improvement stopped in 2014, and began to reverse in 2015. It is likely that the impact of reduced funding for the public sector is only now beginning to be felt within local authority service departments which have the statutory responsibility for maintaining environmental quality standards. As a consequence, the inevitable outcome will be a steady decline in Scotland's environmental quality.

This goes beyond the cosmetic. Poor environmental quality affects people's physical and mental health, educational attainment, and life chances. This is also a social justice issue.

For more than a decade (see **Appendix 1**) environmental quality issues have been an element of different policies, regulation and campaigns, but the approach is not yet uniform. Keep Scotland Beautiful is concerned about the lack of collective strategy, policy and investment in improving and preserving the environmental quality of Scotland, which is vital for individuals, their communities and the economy, now and in the future.

With the Scottish parliamentary election fast approaching, Keep Scotland Beautiful and the members of Scotland's Local Environmental Quality Network are hopeful there will be time for our main political parties to include proposals on how they might seek to address the decline in Scotland's local environmental quality.

Keep Scotland Beautiful will be pleased to assist our politicians with proposals should there be a request to do so.

We believe it is important for this to be prioritised because poor environmental quality affects individuals and communities and the extent to which they, and Scotland, can flourish.

[4]This evidence is drawn from Keep Scotland Beautiful data including:
150,000 environmental surveys carried out between 2005 and 2015
Scotland's National Cleanliness Index
Analysis of performance of all 32 of Scotland's local authorities
Local, national and international research
Public perception surveys.



## 2.3. Statistical narrative

Zero Waste Scotland, *Scotland's litter problem quantifying the scale and cost of litter and flytipping*, 2013.
Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Framework, National Benchmarking Overview Report 2014/2015, 2016.
Keep Scotland Beautiful, *Local Environmental Audit and Management System data*, 2014/15.
Keep Scotland Beautiful, *YouGov survey 2015* (1,266 adults).
Ibid.
Keep Scotland Beautiful, *Environmental Protection Act survey data*, 2005-2015.
Keep Scotland Beautiful, *media monitoring data*, 2005-2015.

# 3. The problem

*"Litter is so ugly and an environmental hazard. Local councils have to deliver more services with less money, and unfortunately, cuts are made to environmental causes. It is important to keep Scotland beautiful, not only for commercial reasons of attracting tourism but for the mental wellbeing of Scottish people."*

Carol Bodwick, Rosebank Initiative Community Association, 2015

Litter, dog fouling, flytipping, graffiti, detritus, weed growth and flyposting are the visible indicators of poor environmental quality. Over the last ten years positive trends were established. For example:

- The number of local authorities which adopted the powers to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for litter and flytipping rose from 21 in 2005 to 32 in 2007[5]
- In 2011, litter fell to the lowest recorded levels[6]
- In 2012, dog fouling fell to the lowest recorded levels[7]
- In 2013, sites damaged by vandalism and graffiti fell to the lowest recorded levels[8]

But the improvement in standards has stalled, and is now, regrettably, in reverse. The National Cleanliness Benchmarking Report for 2014-2015[9] shows that, for the first time since records began, the trend of continuous improvement has ended. Preliminary results for 2015-2016 show that, across various indicators, standards have dropped to levels not seen this decade (see Figure 1).

Over the last three years:

- Significant levels of detritus: 7%-10%
- Significant weed growth 4.5% - 7%
- Graffiti 6% - 10%
- Flyposting 1.9% - 4.6% in town centres

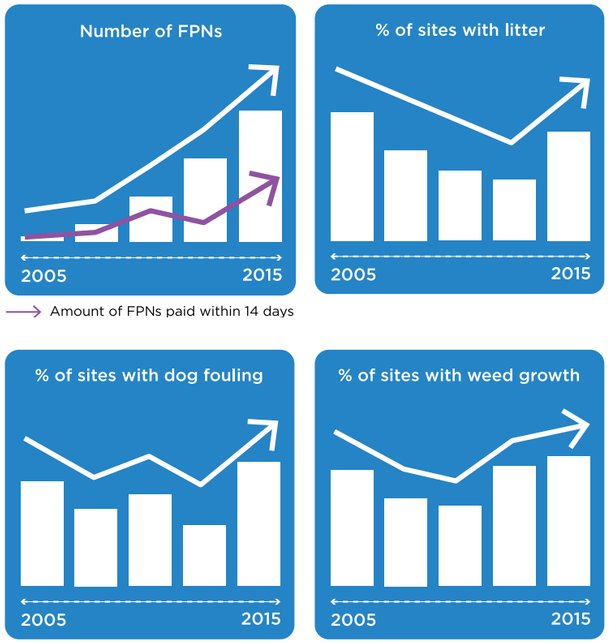



Figure 1, Environmental quality trends
[Graph sources - Keep Scotland Beautiful, Local Environmental Audit and Management System data 2004/05 - 2014/15 and Keep Scotland Beautiful Environmental Protection Act Survey 2004/05 – 2015/16.]

[5]Keep Scotland Beautiful, *Local Authority Environmental Protection Act 1990 Part IV Monitoring Survey*, 2001-2015.
[6]*Local Environmental Audit and Management System data 2005-2015.*
[7]Ibid.
[8]Ibid.
[9]*National cleanliness benchmarking report 2014-2015.*

Despite the fines (FPNs) for litter, flytipping and dog fouling increasing in recent years, in 2015 less than 50% issued for litter and dog fouling were paid within the statutory period[10]. Without the ongoing commitment of organisations using the powers available to them to issue FPNs, and the support of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), the payment rates are unlikely to increase.

It is clear that the criminal behaviours of littering and graffiti, for example, need to be nationally recognised.

meeting the acceptable cleanliness standards set in 2006[11], the presence of all environmental quality indicators are increasing. The effects of this are not simply aesthetic.

**"Individuals, their communities and businesses all bear the brunt of inferior environmental quality. They do not like it and they complain about it. And, despite all we know about what people and communities want and need, there is not yet a priority on policy measures to put it right."[12]**

[10]*Local Authority Environmental Protection Act 1990, Part IV Monitoring Survey, 2001-2015.*
[11]Scottish Executive Environment Group, *Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse (Scotland)*, 2006.
[12]Carnegie UK, *Streets ahead: how can we tackle poor quality local environments*, 2015 (unpublished).

## 3.1. Public perception map

Figure 2 shows some examples taken from Keep Scotland Beautiful surveys and local authority citizens panel or household surveys across the country. It shows that environmental quality matters to people. **These public perception findings highlight the gap between what people care about in their communities and the priority attributed to addressing it.**

### WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

**78% of people in West Dunbartonshire described dog fouling as the most common form of anti-social behaviour they experienced.**

### HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

**79% of people in the Highlands and Islands said the litter problem in their local community has stayed the same or got worse over the last two years.**

### ABERDEENSHIRE

**30% of respondents in Aberdeenshire said the cleanliness of streets had worsened since 2012.**

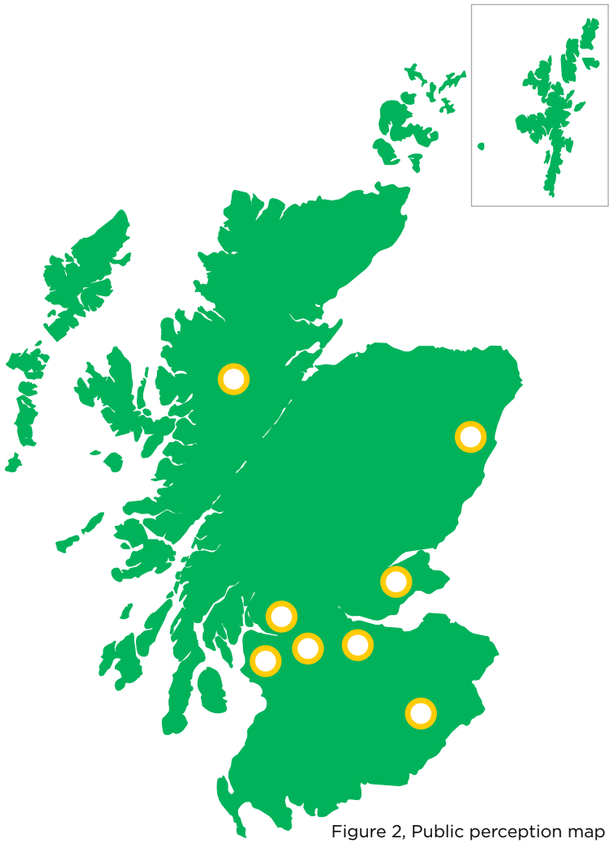


Figure 2, Public perception map

### WEST LOTHIAN

**In West Lothian, the most common forms of anti-social behaviour experienced were: dog fouling (51%) and litter (36%).**

### NORTH AYRSHIRE

**60% of people in North Ayrshire said dog fouling was a 'fairly big issue' in their local communities, followed closely by litter.**

### FIFE

**In Fife, dog fouling was cited as a 'major problem' by respondents while 62% said it was the top issue for improvement.**

### SCOTTISH BORDERS

**In the Scottish Borders, respondents cited that the main reasons for feeling their neighbourhood was a poor place to live was issues around anti-social behaviour and cleanliness.**

### GLASGOW

**In Glasgow city centre, the top environmental issues identified by respondents were: chewing gum (57%), litter (48%), vandalism (35%) and flyposting (33%).**

**Map References**

Hexagon Research and Consulting, *West Dunbartonshire Citizen's Panel Final Report*, 2014.
Keep Scotland Beautiful, *YouGov survey*, 2015 (131 adults in the Highlands and Islands).
Aberdeenshire Council, *Citizens Panel Survey*, 2014.
West Lothian Community Planning Partnership, *Quality of Life Survey*, 2013.
North Ayrshire, *People's Panel Report*, 2013.
Fife People's Panel, *Fife People's Panel Report*, 2014.
Ipsos MORI, *Glasgow Household Survey*, 2014.
Scottish Borders Council, *Scottish Borders Household Survey*, 2013.



## 3.2. How environmental quality affects individuals and communities

> *"We have noticed over the last couple of years the joy and real appreciation that our residents and visitors have shown towards the efforts made by the local business community. It has made the town centre a much more colourful place to be."*
>
> Joe Forte, Haddington Business Association, 2015

There is considerable evidence of the negative impact of inferior environmental quality on health, wellbeing and social cohesion[13 14 15]. Those who experience these 'environmental incivilities'[16] are more likely to be depressed, anxious and in poor health[17].

It is not solely the physical environment which matters, but also our subjective impressions of, and reactions to it. Perceptions of poor environmental quality have been shown to have adverse psychological effects on individuals[18].

The area in which a child grows up can affect their experience of childhood and long-term outcomes[19]. Children living in deprived areas are more likely to be growing up in an environment of graffiti, vandalism and poor-quality parks and greenspaces.

Physical context also affects behaviour, with run-down spaces more likely than good quality spaces (which are clean, green and safe) to be affected by anti-social behaviour[20] such as vandalism and graffiti.

Conversely, living in a clean, safe environment is good for everyone. Good quality public spaces, such as greenspace, are vital because of their positive effects on mental and physical health and wellbeing. They are also free to use and enjoy, providing opportunities for physical exercise, as well as for social, recreational and educational activities[21].

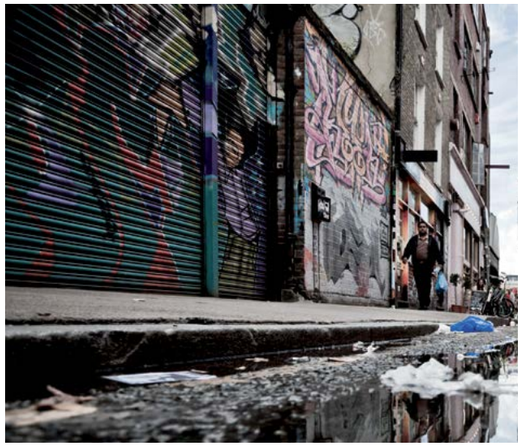
[13] Eunomia, *Exploring the indirect costs of litter in Scotland*, Zero Waste Scotland, 2013.
[14] Glasgow Centre for Population Health, *The built environment and health: an evidence review*, 2013.
[15] Greenspace Scotland, *The links between greenspace and health: a critical literature review*, 2007.
[16] Environmental incivilities include the visible indicators of environmental quality such as vandalism, graffiti, litter, dog fouling, flytipping, flyposting and abandoned or nuisance vehicles.
[17] *The links between greenspace and health: a critical literature review.*
[18] Ellaway, A. et al., *Associations between health and different types of environmental Incivility: a Scotland-wide study*, Public Health 123, no. 11 (2009):708-13.
[19] NCB, *Submission to the UK Government independent review of poverty and life chances*, 2010.
[20] *Rapid evidence review of littering behaviour and anti-litter policies.*
[21] Vadim Saraev, *Economic benefits of greenspace: a critical assessment of evidence of net economic benefits*, Forestry Commission, 2012.

## 3.3. How environmental quality affects social and economic prosperity

> *"The biggest complaint most folk have about their town centre is that 'it's dirty'. All too often, the state of a town centre reflects the health and wellbeing of its surrounding population, as well as its ambition, vibrancy and prospect as a place. Just get the basics right and the rest will follow. A clean town is a healthy town, a place to be proud of and a place to grow. Local government and partners must see that this as one of their most effective preventative investments."*
>
> Phil Prentice, Chief Officer, Scotland's Towns Partnership, 2016

There is a social and economic value to our surroundings, and the three most important factors people identified as being essential to improving the beauty of their local area were less litter, less vandalism/graffiti, and fewer vacant, run-down buildings[22].

There is also a correlation between environmental quality and regeneration. Well-maintained public spaces can help businesses attract customers and encourage investment in local areas[23 24]. And in some cases, well-planned and well-supported spaces may even have a positive impact on the price of surrounding domestic properties[25].



> *"Firms and businesses looking to locate in any particular area will always take the cleanliness of the immediate environment into consideration."*
>
> Clare Ferry, Project Manager for Business Support at Clyde Gateway, 2016

[22] ResPublica, *A community right to beauty: giving communities the power to shape, enhance and create beautiful places, developments and space*, 2015.
[23] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *The social value of public spaces*, 2010.
[24] APSE, *Park life, street life: managing demand in the public realm*, 2015.
[25] CABE, *The value of public space: how high quality parks and public spaces create economic, social and environmental value*, 2003.



A VisitScotland survey[26] found that scenery and landscape were the principal reasons for visiting Scotland. Preserving these is vital for economic sustainability, for employment and for future investment. The tourism sector is important to the economy. According to the Scottish Government, spending by tourists in Scotland generates, directly and indirectly, around £12 billion of economic activity in the wider supply chain and contributes around £6 billion to Scottish GDP (about 5% of total Scottish GDP). Employment in the tourism-related industries sector (as measured by the Scottish Government's Tourism Growth Sector) was 196,000 in 2014 – accounting for around 7.7% of employment[27].

> *"Scotland's unique natural environment is the number one reason why people visit our beautiful country. It is therefore vitally important that we continue to work together, with Keep Scotland Beautiful and other partners, to ensure our stunning natural landscapes are well protected, attracting visitors from around the world time and time again."*
>
> Mike Cantlay, Chairman of VisitScotland, 2016

[26] VisitScotland, *Scotland visitor survey 2011/2012*.
[27] http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/Tourism.

# 4. The challenges

## 4.1. Greater priority and overall strategic action

> *"I know that there are a lot of big issues we deal with and big challenges facing Scotland but I did street surgeries throughout the constituency during the summer and the issue of litter and dog fouling came up time and again. I wanted to highlight this in Scotland's parliament, and make the point that it is not acceptable, and whilst I support education and culture change, I also want tougher action on those who don't clean up their dogs mess and litter our streets and parks."*
>
> Alex Rowley speaking as MSP for Cowdenbeath, 10 February 2016[28]

Despite clear commitment and many welcome developments from the Scottish Government, such as the national litter strategy[29] and the imminent increase in the fine for dog fouling, the focus is on single issues led by different ministerial portfolios and directorates. Keep Scotland Beautiful believes that it is vital that these positive measures are considered as part of a wider strategy for improving Scotland's local environmental quality.

Although local authorities are to be commended for their efforts to maintain environmental quality standards, their ability to keep doing so is now in question. Recent local authority budget consultations have proposed reducing enforcement officers, cleansing services and ground maintenance. The anticipated reduction in services budgets for 2016/17 is a further threat to environmental quality, and sends the wrong message to local communities.

The Scottish Government, public bodies, business, industry and third sector organisations need to work together, and collectively make environmental quality a priority.

To effectively meet this pressing challenge, Keep Scotland Beautiful has set out the actions that we believe will start the journey to reverse the decline in environmental quality.

[28] http://www.alexrowley.org/litter-and-dog-fouling-a-national-issue/.
[29] Scottish Government, *Zero Waste: towards a litter free Scotland; a strategic approach to higher quality local environments*, 2014.

## 4.2. Strategic leadership and direction

There have been many positive developments including policies, regulations and campaigns on issues such as litter and dog fouling. (**Appendix 1**) Individually, these have all had short term impacts in improving environmental quality.

However, the various elements which make up local environmental quality spread across different ministerial portfolios and directorates of the Scottish Government. This can make it difficult to achieve more cohesive, strategic coordination.

Cross-directorate working, including environment, justice, education, marine and transport, must be promoted if real progress is to be made on environmental quality.

The Scottish Government is best placed to provide the requisite leadership and direction because, as the First Minister said, "The environment … matters to us all" (2015). Only when this has been addressed in a holistic manner can Scotland begin to reverse the decline in environmental quality.

## 4.3. National Performance Framework

The National Performance Framework (NPF)[30] provides the strategic direction for policy-making in the public sector. It is based on national outcomes and indicators, to which all public services in Scotland are aligned. It aims to make sustainable improvements to public services and quality of life[31]. It comprises a purpose, five strategic objectives, 16 national outcomes and 50 national indicators, that measure progress against economic, health, social and environmental targets[32].

The NPF contains indicators to measure the perceptions people have of their neighbourhoods as places to live, as well as local crime rates. But while these indicators recognise the influence of local areas on quality of life, they do not connect to environmental quality holistically. There is no dedicated government minister or directorate responsible for all the indicators of environmental quality. The ministers or directorates which do have some element of responsibility are also responsible for other diverse issues which are unconnected to environmental quality and have different priorities.

As we move towards a new term of Scottish Government, there is a chance to rectify this. We need to do so if we are to make the places we care about clean, healthy and sustainable.

**Case study 1**

**Ministerial leadership – Scotland's Towns Partnership**

Derek Mackay MSP formed Scotland's Towns Partnership in 2012 when he was Minister for Local Government and Planning. He led the initiative by bringing stakeholders together on the Town Centre Action Plan to regenerate urban areas. It is a good example of coordinated, joined up action promoted by a Scottish Government minister.

The partnership supports the Scottish Government's continued commitment to towns. It has resulted in better informed policy-makers, more effective practitioners, better connected governance mechanisms, better value investment decisions, and more sustainable and attractive towns.

[30] http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/NPFChanges.
[31] http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/indicator/neighbourhood.
[32] Ibid.

## 4.4. Community planning: empowering local communities

*“ Local environmental quality issues directly affect community wellbeing with its impact on public health, both mental and physical; on low level incivilities; and on economic issues such as business investment and tourism. These complex, interrelated matters need to be tackled in a strategic and integrated way. Aberdeenshire Environmental Forum is concerned about the degradation of local environmental quality locally and nationally. We are actively lobbying for it to be acknowledged by all political parties and addressed in a coordinated way as a priority of the community planning system as a lead to all bodies and agencies involved. ”*

George Niblock, Convenor, Aberdeenshire Environmental Forum, 2016

Despite national and local research consistently showing that people are significantly concerned about the condition of their neighbourhoods, environmental quality has a low profile in most local authority Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs).

Under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) will be required to consult and engage with the third sector, business and local communities to ensure that their views are central to determining local priorities and outcomes. This new approach to community planning will mean that CPPs must develop, report and publish annually on local outcomes improvement plans which replace SOAs. These plans will be important for setting priorities for developing and providing services, including in relation to environmental quality.

The Christie Commission (2011) recommended that the public, private and third sectors should support communities by[33]:

- Using the provisions in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to embed community participation in the design and delivery of services
- Maximising resources by using those which are available from the public, private and third sectors
- Prioritising preventative measures to reduce demand and inequality

[33]Christie Commission, *Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services*, 2011.



### 4.4.a. Greater prioritisation: strategic action

*“ We engage with, and support communities who wish to make a difference to their neighbourhoods because we recognise the invaluable contribution that they make. There are a growing number of inspiring volunteers, school and community groups, who give up their time to help make Aberdeen the beautiful and green city that it is. This network of people, who have pride in their own neighbourhoods, add value to the services provided by the local authority. ”*

Councillor Jean Morrison MBE, Aberdeen City Council, 2015

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a legal framework to support the empowerment of community bodies, local communities and communities of interest across Scotland. It aims to transform the way they participate in the decision-making processes of government, particularly at a local level. The Act provides for communities to lead change for themselves. However, it does not equip them with the knowledge, skills and expertise to do so. Affluent communities with well-developed civic infrastructure and associated knowledge, skills and expertise are most likely to use the provisions of the Act.

The Scottish Government, local authorities, third sector and CPPs should provide advice, support and investment to prevent less affluent and disadvantaged communities from being left behind and increasing inequalities.

Local communities need to know about the local outcome improvement process so that they can be part of decisions. Local outcome improvement plans and locality planning seem to mark a return to an area-based focus on disadvantaged communities and need. This means that local people and community organisations can be more involved than before in saying what their community needs. It is an opportunity for them to take action to reverse the decline in environmental quality.

*“ The fantastic results that Dundee has recently achieved in Britain in Bloom, in the face of increasing challenges, are due to great partnership working with local groups, such as Bonnie Dundee and Broughty Ferry in Bloom, as well as the commitment of workers on the ground – and just getting out and doing it! ”*

Peter Sandwell, Environmental Asset Manager, Dundee City Council, 2015

## 4.4.b. Communities: taking action

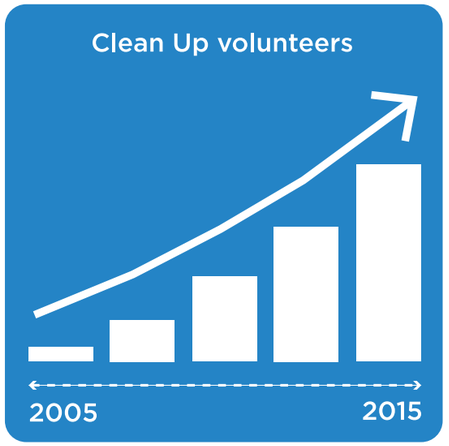
When communities are engaged, supported and empowered they can be a catalyst for, and contribute to, long-term, sustainable change.

Over the last decade, communities have done ever more to maintain standards and enhance their neighbourhoods[34] (see Figure 3). The sense of civic pride which leads to organising clean ups, inspiring greenspace improvements, forming environmental action groups and participation in neighbourhood volunteer programmes is a positive foundation for future development.

Individual actions taken to clean up litter and flytipping have increased from 11,500 a year to almost 300,000 a year over the past ten years[35]. Combined with community improvement projects such as community gardens, intensive street redesign, or enhancing community buildings, they add value to clean-up activity[36]. Community projects are coming forward in greater numbers to seek recognition for the work being done to improve local environments[37].

**This significant combined effort of individuals to improve environmental quality of the places they care for is likely to mask the true picture of the declining standards recorded in annual benchmarking audits. The role of community action to support the work of the public sector service departments must not be underestimated. Despite this, more still needs to be done and we must not lose momentum.**

Even with individuals coming together in this way, cleanliness standards are likely to continue to decrease unless these efforts are coordinated and integrated. If communities continue to work in isolation, the wider impact will be reduced. Like other partners, communities cannot do it on their own.



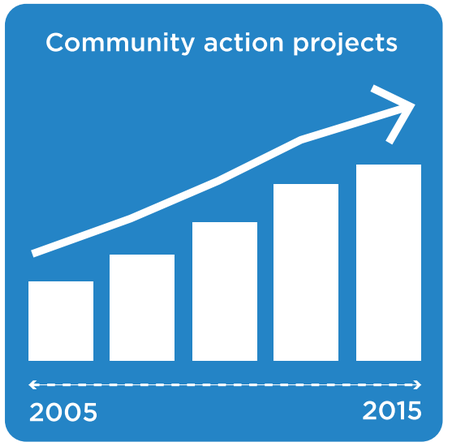




Figure 3, Community action

[34]Keep Scotland Beautiful, *Beautiful Scotland and It's Your Neighbourhood community growing registration data 2007 – 2015.*
[35]Keep Scotland Beautiful, *Clean-up volunteer statistics*, 2006-2015.
[36]Eunomia, *Litter prevention, community engagement: options paper*, Zero Waste Scotland, 2014.
[37]*Beautiful Scotland and It's Your Neighbourhood community growing registration data 2007 – 2015.*



## 4.4.c. Funding community action and innovation

> *"Fife Council recognises the vital effort that the communities make to improve their local environment. We support our community groups through the Floral Enhancement Grant and also 'in kind' assistance where possible. It is significant that in these challenging financial times, the number of active community groups is on the increase and their activities help to reduce anti-social behaviour and greatly enhance the civic pride of the residents, making their respective communities a better place to live, work and visit."*
> Keith Jackson, Parks and Community Events Officer, Fife Council, 2015

There are many examples of community initiatives, usually developed with support from the local authority, other public bodies and charities, to take practical action to improve environmental quality. This is a template. We need to do more to share experience, promote good practice, and help communities take action for themselves, including those struggling to address similar issues.

Funding for new community projects has worked in areas where little has previously been done. Small grants for environmental quality projects realise good returns on investment given the added value of volunteer hours and the benefits of local empowerment.

**Case study 2**
**Spreading the message: Cove in Bloom[38]**

*"We take part in Beautiful Scotland to provide an incentive to those involved in the work we are doing to improve and beautify our area."*
Wendy Suttar, Cove in Bloom, 2015

When Keep Scotland Beautiful launched National Spring Clean, Cove Community Council was one of nine groups in the Aberdeen City Council area which registered and organised a litter pick. Since then, the group has organised annual litter clearing events. But litter picking was just the start. Cove Community Council went on to establish 'Cove in Bloom' and, in 2008, this group entered the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' award, a joint Keep Scotland Beautiful/Royal Horticultural Society initiative.

This gave the volunteer-led group the ideal opportunity to 'green up' the local neighbourhood within a structured framework. Cove in Bloom has risen through the award categories from 'improving' to 'outstanding', leading to 'distinction' in 2012.

Encouraged by this, the group entered the Beautiful Scotland competition in 2013. It has now won a silver medal for three successive years. This recognises the volunteers' commitment to horticultural achievement and environmental improvement and to encouraging other people in the community and in neighbouring villages to get involved.

The volunteers work closely with the local authority and share their successes with other areas. One volunteer from the group is now a mentor for other 'It's Your Neighbourhood' groups in Scotland.

[38]Keep Scotland Beautiful, *Community Grant Scheme (Case Study)*, 2015.

## 4.5. Hard choices: prioritising resources

The very challenging financial climate means that all sectors face challenges and this is a major threat to Scotland's environmental quality.

Between 2010/11 and 2014/15 Scottish local authorities lost 11% of their spending power[39]. If budget cuts continue at their current rate, important local authority services could be radically undermined.

Efficiency savings alone are not covering the funding gap for services departments and it will be challenging for local authorities to maintain grants to community and voluntary organisations at current levels. In addition, local authorities are having to make difficult choices such as reducing the frequency of litter clearance, ground maintenance and waste collection services and cutting community wardens. Service departments are vulnerable to cuts. Their budgets have sustained some of the largest reductions in recent years, with overall spend reducing by 14% since 2010/11[40].

Across the UK, some local authorities are preparing to cut a further 20% from their street cleaning budgets and 50% from their parks budgets in 2016/17[41]. This is significant because, compared to other services, cuts to services which maintain environmental quality have the earliest and most substantial impact on communities[42].

Given the financial climate, 'more money' is unlikely. But there are ways of mitigating the risk and threat to environmental quality. This includes principles of cooperation and collaboration: of looking after one another and not just looking to our own; of empowering communities rather than leaving people to struggle; and of adding value to the best efforts of the local communities which are already showing great enterprise in protecting and improving environmental quality.

[39] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *The cost of the cuts: the impact on local government and poorer communities*, 2015.
[40] *National benchmarking report 2014/15.*
[41] *Park life, street life: managing demand in the public realm.*
[42] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *The cost of the cuts: the impact on local government and poorer communities*, 2015.



## 4.6. All sectors working together

The public, private and third sectors need to collaborate to ensure a more strategic and coordinated approach to tackling declining environmental quality. Each sector can make different contributions and together, the sum will be greater than the value of its parts. We need more integration and more innovation.

This collaboration would, for example, help to prevent the environmental crime and anti-social behaviour which diminish environmental quality.

**Case study 3**

**Joint working to reduce dog fouling in Glasgow**

The 2011 Glasgow Household Survey identified dog fouling as the biggest environmental issue in local areas, with over half (57%) of respondents identifying it as a significant or moderate problem.

So, the following year, Glasgow Community and Safety Services (now Community Safety Glasgow), on behalf of the Clean Glasgow campaign, developed a campaign with Elderpark Housing Association, Glasgow City Council and Keep Scotland Beautiful to reduce dog fouling in public spaces and encourage responsible dog ownership.

The year-long campaign encouraged responsible behaviour, educated local residents and issued fines with the result that:

- 85 registered social landlords signed a 'dog fouling charter'
- 637 fixed penalty notices were issued for dog fouling
- The streets were cleaner*
- Fewer people thought that dog fouling was a problem in the area (reduced from 57% of respondents in 2005 to 14% in 2012)

This shows what can be achieved when the public, private and third sectors work together with communities and use their resources collectively.

Scotland's Local Environmentally Quality Network shared this example of 'good practice' which resulted in other areas introducing similar campaigns.

*Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS) score

### 4.6.a. Economic benefits

*“As responsible community retailers we are committed to improving the quality of the local environment. We know that good environments make healthy communities, and that, in turn, is good for business. We have been encouraging our members to become involved in local environmental quality improvement campaigns for the benefit of their businesses.”*

Abdul Majid, President of the Scottish Grocers Federation, 2016

Clean, safe local environments are good for business. The private sector, including small businesses and large industries, can build on the positive relationships between them and their customers, employees and local partnerships.

Increasing joint working and collaboration between businesses, public bodies, the third sector and communities can stimulate pride and care in local neighbourhoods and encourage action – a safeguard in the face of budget cuts.

Nearly 50 areas across Scotland are either developing or have an operational Business Improvement District (BID) in place. BIDs can provide a collective voice on issues such as cleansing and provide a mechanism for businesses and local communities to take action.

**But all of this needs a long term plan and strategic action. This plan must bring all these sectors and interests together, to share good practice, to use existing networks, to pool resources and replicate local successes in other areas.**

# 5. Taking action

We need to take action now to stop the decline in environmental quality and the consequential effects on individuals and communities. Individually, we all have a part to play in the turnaround that must happen. So much of the answer lies in our own individual behaviour, and changing attitudes in personal responsibility. However, for standards to start improving again, coordinated national action is required.

As one of the leading non-government organisations committed to tackling the decline in Scotland’s local environmental quality, there are a number of actions that Keep Scotland Beautiful would like to see taken forward.

**Keep Scotland Beautiful is** calling for:

- National leadership to make reversing Scotland’s declining environmental quality a higher priority
- More strategic, integrated and coordinated action to conserve and improve Scotland’s environmental quality
- Further empowered and supported community action
- All sectors to use existing resources more effectively and creatively
- National Government officials to take the opportunity to engage with Scotland’s Local Environmental Quality Network to learn from those that work directly at the ‘coal face’
- Local authorities and other bodies with statutory responsibilities to work in partnership with communities and the third sector
- A review of the effectiveness of enforcement as a deterrent measure and the potential to look more widely than environmental legislation for assistance. For example, for littering from a vehicle to become a road traffic offence.

**Keep Scotland Beautiful will actively contribute through leading, planning and implementing a strategy for environmental quality. Over the coming year it will stimulate this by:**

- Involving all sectors in a conversation to explore what we need to do collectively to conserve and improve Scotland’s environmental quality
- Encouraging all political parties to include environmental quality in manifestos and action plans
- Advocating for the establishment of a Scottish Parliament cross-party group on environmental quality
- Exploring ways to improve Keep Scotland Beautiful’s support to local authorities, public bodies, landowners and communities working on environmental quality
- Engaging and empowering communities to take part though meaningful local initiatives

**Scotland requires individuals to take responsibility and change their behaviour. This needs collective action by all stakeholders to address the decline. For this to happen there is a requirement to educate all age groups and sectors.**

# 6. Recommendations

## Keep Scotland Beautiful makes the following recommendations:

**We ask the Scottish Government to take the lead and:**

- Make tackling Scotland's declining environmental quality a higher strategic priority
- Consider how environmental quality can be embedded into the National Performance Framework
- Develop a long-term strategic approach to drive up and maintain national environmental quality standards
- Establish a task force, led by a designated minister, to develop a long-term approach connected to all relevant policy areas
- Support the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, and public bodies to take consistent action to raise the profile of low level environmental crime
- Prioritise existing resources to enable and empower local communities to take action
- Support an integrated programme of education that addresses behaviour change for all ages and all sectors

**We ask the public, private and third sectors to take a more strategic, integrated and coordinated approach to environmental quality.**

- Local authorities and partners should continue to work through community planning partnerships to ensure that environmental quality has high priority and is a main strand of local outcomes improvement plans
- All sectors should work together to drive up and maintain environmental quality standards
- Where possible, the public and third sectors should pool resources particularly in relation to infrastructure and equipment
- The private sector should increase national and local activity on environmental quality giving this priority, for example, within their Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies and environmental plans
- All sectors should support, and resource where possible, communities to take positive action

**We ask individuals and communities to take action on environmental quality.**

- Individuals who consistently offend need to take responsibility and change their behaviour, or pay the penalty
- Local communities should take pride in, and ownership of, their surroundings
- Existing community action networks should be expanded and utilised to share and develop good practice from local projects
- Local communities should continue to actively participate in CPPs using the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to effect positive change
- Communities should access resources and support to allow them to play a meaningful role in driving up and maintaining environmental quality standards



# 7. Conclusion

There is overwhelming evidence that confirms that Scotland's environmental quality is in decline and the current approach is unlikely to reverse the trend.

All the indicators show that a short-term approach focused on dealing with single indicators, in tandem with pressure on public spending, will inevitably lead to a further deterioration, continuing the decline. This will, in the end, have a serious and consequential impact on the communities and people of Scotland, on their health and wellbeing and our prosperity.

The evidence shows that the issue of environmental quality remains a high priority for individuals and communities across Scotland. The concerns of local people need to be taken seriously. This is why it is important for Keep Scotland Beautiful to push for change and positive action. We believe there is a clear gap between the aspirations of Scotland's people and the policies required to meet these.

There is a real risk that, if the current rate of decline is not slowed and stopped, the deterioration will quicken as financial pressure increases on key local environmental services over the next few years. And this will lead to greater costs in the longer term as we will inevitably seek to 'repair' the damage caused.

Of course, the ultimate goal of all stakeholders is to change the behaviours of individuals that impact so significantly on Scotland's environmental quality. And, we are recommending that we require significant commitment to educate across all sectors of society as one of the measures that will create improvement.

It is a fact that greater inequality will exist across Scotland if we do not take action. Those communities that suffer most from declining environmental quality are likely to be the most marginalised in the country; thus increasing the inequality gap.

Keep Scotland Beautiful will continue to support the work of our partners within the Local Environmental Quality Network and Scotland's communities as they take positive action within their local areas.

Now is the time to prioritise environmental quality; to take action to stop further decline.

# Appendix 1

| A decade of policy, regulation and campaigns | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Year** | **Policy, regulation legislation** | **Type** | **Notes** |
| **2005** | Dumb Dumpers national campaign | Campaign | Scottish Flytipping Forum launched its first multimedia flytipping campaign with Scottish Government funding. |
| | Keep Scotland Beautiful National Spring Clean | Campaign | Keep Scotland Beautiful campaign launched with Scottish Government funding to encourage communities to organise clean up events. Ran annually until 2012. |
| **2006** | The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (Scotland) 2006 | Regulation | COPLAR was reviewed to provide details of the responsibilities of Duty Bodies surrounding the maintenance of cleanliness in their areas. This code of practice outlines guidance on section 89(7) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. |
| | "However you disguise it it's still litter" | Campaign | Keep Scotland Beautiful cigarette litter campaign. |
| | Abandoned vehicle campaign | Campaign | Keep Scotland Beautiful delivers campaign, with Scottish Government funding, and in partnership with Car Take Back, to reduce the number of abandoned cars. |
| **2007** | "Food on the go" anti litter campaign | Campaign | Keep Scotland Beautiful delivers campaign, with Scottish Government funding, and in partnership with local authorities to highlight FPNs for littering. |
| **2008** | "Poop Scoop Week" | Campaign | Keep Scotland Beautiful and The Dogs Trust run week long anti dog fouling campaign. Ran until 2012. |
| | First National Stakeholder event on Litter | Policy initiative | Keep Scotland Beautiful delivered the national Litter Summit in partnership with the Scottish Government. |
| **2009** | "Food on the go" anti litter campaign | Campaign | Keep Scotland Beautiful delivers campaign with Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. |
| **2010** | Zero Waste Scotland becomes Scottish Government delivery partner for litter and flytipping | Policy initiative | Scottish Government appoints Zero Waste Scotland as delivery partner. |
| **2011** | "Recycling on the go" guidance produced by Zero Waste Scotland | Policy initiative | Zero Waste Scotland produce Recycling On The Go guidance to support infrastructure to increase recycling and reduce littering. |
| | Environmental Crime Task Force established | Policy initiative | Launched by Richard Lochhead MSP to tackle the growing problem of environmental crime - from illegal dumping to organised crime in Scotland. |
| **2012** | Keep Scotland Beautiful launches Clean Up Scotland campaign | Campaign | Part funded by Scottish Government. |
| | Scotland's Towns Partnership established | Policy initiative | Minister for Local Government and Planning brought stakeholders from all areas of interest to regenerate urban areas and established a new partnership. |
| **2013** | Litter and flytipping consultation | Policy initiative | The Scottish Government consulted on a strategy to tackle litter and flytipping in Scotland. |
| | Flingin's Mingin | Campaign | Litter week of action organised by Zero Waste Scotland on behalf of the Transport Litter Group. |

| A decade of policy, regulation and campaigns (continued) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Year** | **Policy, regulation, legislation** | **Type** | **Notes** |
| **2014** | Fixed Penalty Notice for litter raised from £50 to £80 | Regulation | Scottish Government raised the Fixed Penalty Notice from £50 to £80. |
| | Fixed Penalty Notice for flytipping raised from £50 to £200 | Regulation | Scottish Government raised the Fixed Penalty Notice for flytipping from £50 to £200. |
| | Towards a litter free Scotland | Policy initiative | Scotland's first litter strategy launched by Scottish Government. The strategy outlines five years of action. |
| | Dirty Little Secret | Campaign | Scottish Government launches multi media anti-littering campaign. |
| | Scottish Government launches Scotland's first Marine Litter Strategy | Policy initiative | Scotland's first marine litter strategy launched by Scottish Government. |
| | Single use carrier bag charge introduced | Regulation | A 5p charge on single use carrier bags introduced to help reduce litter. |
| **2015** | Keep Scotland Beautiful hold First National Stakeholder event on dog fouling | Policy initiative | Keep Scotland Beautiful hosted an event bringing together key stakeholders to discuss a way forward to collectively tackle dog fouling. |
| | Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 | Regulation | The Act provides an opportunity to expand and strengthen the role of local communities across Scotland in taking action. |
| | Deposit Return Scheme consultation | Policy initiative | The Scottish Government consulted on a proposed deposit return scheme. |
| | Making Things Last: A Consultation on Creating a More Circular Economy in Scotland | Consultation | Scottish Government consultation. |
| | European Commission publishes Circular Economy package | Regulation | European Commission publishes its new Circular Economy Package. |
| | We're watching you dog fouling campaign with NFU Scotland | Campaign | Campaign pilot with NFU Scotland to reduce dog fouling on farmland, using glow in the dark posters produced in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy. |
| | 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Policy initiative | The new Agenda calls on countries to begin efforts to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the next 15 years. |
| **2016** | Fixed Penalty Notice for dog fouling will rise from £40 to £80 | Regulation | Increase in fine level agreed in January by the Scottish Parliament to be implemented from April from £40 to £80. |
| | Have you got the bottle | Campaign | Coalition campaign to lobby for a Deposit Return System for Scotland. |

Keep Scotland Beautiful is the charity that campaigns, acts and educates on a range of local, national and global environmental issues to change behaviour and improve the quality of people's lives and the places they care for. We are committed to making Scotland clean, green and more sustainable.

Keep Scotland Beautiful

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