

## **A beautiful countryside to sustain us all: eradicating litter**

Our beautiful and irreplaceable countryside provides vital space for recreation and reflection, a rich diversity of landscapes and a home for nature. We must value and protect the countryside for the countless benefits it provides to our health, prosperity and wellbeing.

The next Government should:

- **Champion and deliver solutions to eradicate littering** in the countryside, including a national behaviour change campaign.

### **Why is eradicating litter important?**

The annual £1bn clean-up cost for litter in England doesn't come close to solving the problem, particularly in rural areas. Communities report huge dissatisfaction when their local areas are despoiled by litter and the problem tends to be more chronic in the countryside. Socially and economically there is an urgent need to prevent further litter being dropped.

### **What's the problem?**

The charging scheme for carrier bags in England, due to be implemented in the autumn, is designed to reduce waste and litter. But at the moment the scheme doesn't apply to all retailers or paper bags, so is unlikely to deliver the best benefits for our rural and urban environments.

Drinks container litter is a growing problem in the countryside, particularly along rural roads, and the containers themselves contain precious materials that should not be discarded so freely.

Cigarettes are the most commonly littered item and present specific hazards in the countryside, particularly to animals.

The existing law to prevent people throwing litter out of their vehicles doesn't work, as councils are required to prove who threw the litter and this is almost impossible to do.

### **How can we fix the problem?**

For England's carrier bag charging scheme to be the most effective and the least confusing, it should be a universal scheme, applying to all bags in all stores. CPRE is campaigning for this as part of the Break the Bag Habit coalition.

CPRE has already led the way in investigating recapture schemes for drinks containers in the UK. CPRE will continue to promote solutions that capture these valuable resources, support positive environmental behaviours and eliminate littering, as well as following progress in other countries.

Working with the tobacco industry, CPRE will promote portable ashtrays for smokers and seek to work with communities to provide more bins in highly-littered areas. It will also launch a grant-giving programme, in order to empower communities to take action that is effective and relevant to their local area. With categories specifically targeted at rural areas, marine locations and urban developments, litter can be tackled comprehensively by community specialists. Additional categories for research and design will support projects that provide critical information on where litter is coming from and innovative ways of encouraging people to dispose of their items responsibly. The aim of the programme is to support existing and new work that will reduce litter and cannot be supported by existing funding streams.

CPRE will continue to campaign for the laws relating to littering to be fit for purpose, such as those relating to littering from vehicles. Local councils must have the right framework in place to ensure they can deliver a consistent approach to enforcement across the country.

### **What CPRE is doing and how you can help**

In partnership with other organisations, CPRE will be developing a new, national behaviour change campaign that will create a society over the next generation where littering is regarded as socially unacceptable. At an event hosted by Oxford University we will determine a contemporary solution to this age-old problem by working with a specially-convened young people's panel and specialists from the UK and internationally, with a wide range of disciplines - environmental, social and health policy; behaviour change scientists; statutory bodies; citizen activists; and product and spatial designers.

The campaign will create strong messaging that will be consistently and innovatively promoted across all areas of public life. The messaging will be broad - promoting the general message that litter is no longer tolerated - as well as targeted at particular types of littering, such as cigarettes and drinks containers.

The aim will be to unite all those that take action against litter, including those that have a legal obligation to do so, and ensure every effort and pound is spent in delivering a consistent, dedicated and effective campaign.

The Government must contribute clear national leadership to this game-changing initiative and champion it as widely as possible, facilitating the delivery of its objectives wherever possible.

CPRE's branch network will continue to take action by working with local schools and businesses in counties across England. We will share and promote examples of what works, so that communities can learn from each other to improve their local areas.

We will continue providing individual volunteers and groups with free litter picking equipment and guidance on how best to take action.

Our LitterAction website - [www.LitterAction.org.uk](http://www.LitterAction.org.uk) - which we run in partnership with CleanupUK, will continue to support the 700+ groups who work to keep their part of the countryside clean.

All of these measures will create a cleaner, more beautiful and tranquil countryside to sustain us and benefit our health, prosperity and wellbeing.