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Fighting Fly-Tipping

How the Herts Waste Partnership is beating the blight
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#SCRAPFLYTIPPING

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Campaign

As incidents of fly-tipping rose across Hertfordshire, it was decided that action needed to be taken. The Hertfordshire Fly-Tipping Group was formed and, as **Duncan Jones, Jennie Probert & Ruth Young** explain, it's making a difference and embracing every avenue to get its message across

By late 2015 there was increasing concern at the seemingly unstoppable rise in the amount of fly-tipping being reported across Hertfordshire. From an average of 856 incidents reported each month in 2012/13, subsequent years saw significant increases. By March 2017 the monthly average had risen to 1,268. Based on submissions to Defra's WasteDataFlow database in 2016/17, the cost to Hertfordshire residents was put at £1.1m. £820,000 was spent on collection and disposal with the balance spent on local authority enforcement actions.

Although not part of its remit at the time, the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP) was asked to get involved...

The Fly-Tipping Group Forms

FOLLOWING INITIAL discussions between a number of key stakeholders in early 2016, the Hertfordshire Fly-tipping Group (FTG) was formed to tackle the problem. Duncan Jones – partnership development manager for the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership – took over as the group's chairman. This created an important link to the HWP as Hertfordshire's lead organisation responsible for the strategic co-ordination of waste services across Hertfordshire.

The FTG is a multi-agency task force, which in addition to Hertfordshire's 11 local authorities includes the Office

of Police & Crime Commissioner, the Hertfordshire Constabulary, Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue, the Environment Agency and the National Farmers Union. The FTG brings together numerous disciplines from preventative behavioural change work through to intelligence gathering and frontline enforcement. The Group has also worked with Keep Britain Tidy (KBT) including commissioning its "Inside the Head of Fly Tipsters" report which researched why people fly-tip in Hertfordshire.

As chairman, Duncan, supported by the group's diverse membership, moved quickly to put the group's first formal work programme in place which included a number of work streams to address what he describes as the basics. As such the programme included the conceptualisation, design and implementation of a county wide fly-tipping campaign; to the development of a training academy in association with KBT for frontline enforcement officers designed to equalise upwards the standard of investigations for pursuing more serious cases through the courts.

The programme also included work to improve the monthly reporting of fly-tipping data based on an agreed definition of fly-tipping; and a county-wide response to the Unauthorised Deposit of Waste (Fixed Penalty) Regulations 2016. Duncan notes that these early developments were important in demonstrating to the group the added value ➔

that could be achieved through working in partnership. He explained this also allowed the group to demonstrate that it could work in co-ordinated and joined up fashion and as such was a group that was worth investing in.

One of the most important developments at the time arose from parallel discussions that had been ongoing with representatives from the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Hertfordshire Constabulary. As a result, in the summer of 2016 David Lloyd, Hertfordshire's Police & Crime Commissioner, himself a former Borough and County Councillor, announced dedicated funding to support the work of the group.

In response, and anticipating high demand for the funding, the FTG put a bidding criteria together with FTG members able to bid for funding up to a maximum of 75 percent of any project cost. Following evaluation monies were then awarded to the highest scoring bids with the balance of the funding coming from the bidders themselves.

This approach, which was repeated in 2017/18, has since September 2016, seen almost £200,000 of additional funding targeted at fly-tipping. This has supported everything from the installation of covert cameras, to enforcement training, to support for the comprehensive multi-channel communications and behavioural change campaign recently rolled out by the group. The impact of the FTG's work is reflected in a significant drop in the number of incidents reported during 2017/18, which saw a reduction of 2,730 incidents (17.9 percent) compared to 2016/17.

More recently, the work of the FTG has been recognised at the national level. In February, the Group was recognised at the 2018 Keep Britain Tidy awards, where, led by East Hertfordshire DC, the FTG picked up the award for best partnership. In May at the Association of Directors of Environment, Planning and Transport Annual Awards the FTG received the Presidential Award for Best Project for Improving the Environment and Public Health.

Fly-Tipping Campaign

AS NOTED earlier, as part of the FTG's first work programme, the group had committed to putting together a single county-wide campaign that could be collectively rolled-out by all FTG stakeholders. The idea was to create a range of campaign materials that could be used either in isolation by any single FTG stakeholder or any combination of stakeholders without the need for reinvention. This resulted in a whole suite of consistent accurate messaging.

To this end, a special communications sub-group was formed to represent the widest possible representation from the main FTG. Jennie Probert, environmental strategy manager from Three Rivers District Council, as well as vice-chair of both the HWP WasteAware Group and the FTG notes importantly that the sub-group included a number of officers who were also members of the HWP's WasteAware team and, as such, had significant expertise in putting together county-wide campaigns. This again underlines the value in both working in partnership as well as being part of the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership.

Following months of work and input from a range of stakeholders across the FTG, on 12 March 2018 the group launched its multi-channel fly-tipping campaign. The campaign includes a range of instruments; including specifically designed social media images, a householder leaflet, two short films, special banners for installation on farms and other private land, vehicle banners and a magazine pull-out that was included in the county-wide magazine in March 2018, thus ensuring all householders in Hertfordshire have been provided with the necessary information.

As well as educating the public on what constitutes fly-tipping the campaign also encourages Hertfordshire's residents and businesses to follow the campaign's SCRAP code, which provides a check list to follow when arranging one-off collections of waste.

Fly tipping across the HWP - 6 Year View

(last updated 3rd May 2018)

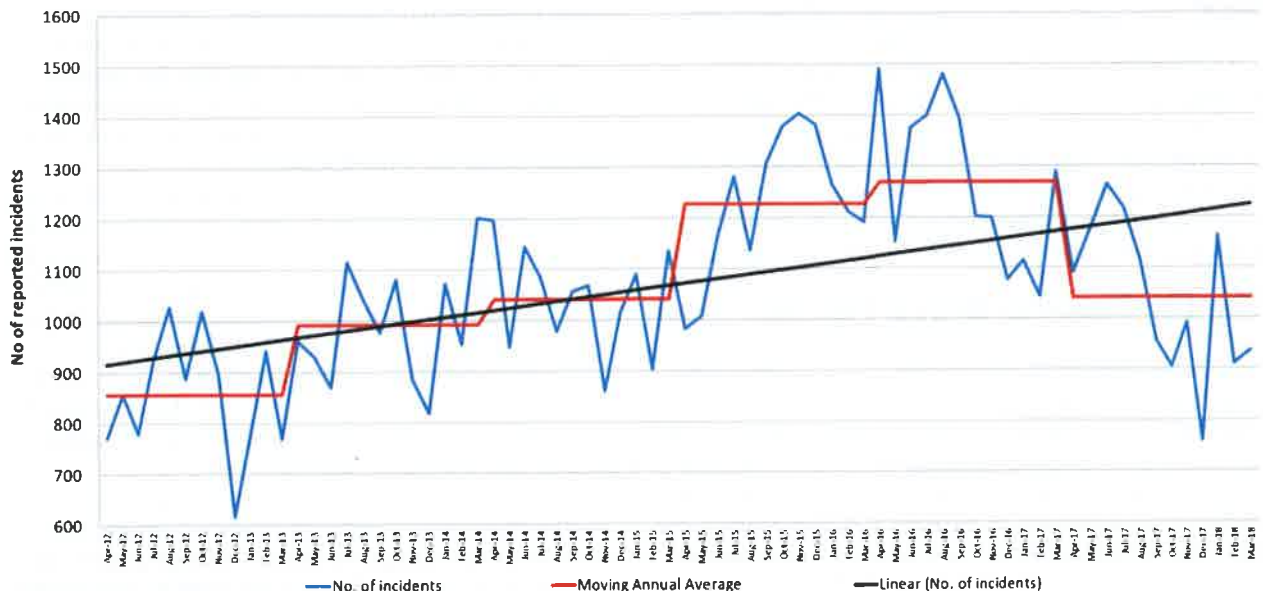


Figure 1: shows the general upwards trend in fly-tipping in Hertfordshire since April 2012, but this is now starting to reverse

- Suspect all waste carriers; do not let them take your waste until they have proven themselves to be legitimate.
- Check their waste carrier's registration details, then verify them by searching the Environment Agency website or by calling 03708 506 506.
- Refuse unsolicited offers to have any rubbish taken away.
- Ask what exactly is going to happen to your rubbish and seek evidence that it is going to be disposed of appropriately.
- Paperwork should be obtained. Make sure you get a proper invoice, waste transfer note or a receipt for your waste removal – this should give a description of the waste and provide the waste carrier's contact details.

Duncan, emphasising the partnership dynamic, pointed out that a lot of the initial work of the comms group was to identify best practice when it came to campaign messaging around fly-tipping. As such he noted that the SCRAP messaging actually originated in Suffolk whose own waste partnership kindly gave permission for its use in the Hertfordshire campaign.

#SCRAPflytipping

AS WITH all modern campaigns the power of social media cannot be overlooked, with more people spending more time on social media platforms and consuming more content than ever. Ruth Young, contract monitoring officer (waste & recycling) for Watford Borough Council, and social media lead for the HWP noted that from the inception of the campaign the FTG knew that having a strong social media plan would play a key role in ensuring the campaign was successful in its reach, reinforcement of key campaign messages and driving traffic to the Hertfordshire fly-tipping website.

Ruth said with such a diverse range of partners involved there was no "one size fits all" solution. For instance, for some, small-scale fly-tipping such as black bags, or household items dumped around litter bins is the main problem. For others, the dumping of builders waste on farm land or down country lanes is the most pressing issue.

Ruth added that once such issues had been identified, and taking into account the Keep Britain Tidy research, the comms group set out to create a collection of social media content that covered a broad spectrum of fly-tipping messages. As such the social media element had to not only raise awareness around how to check to make sure waste carriers were properly licensed but, more fundamentally, had to help residents understand what a fly-tip is and, more importantly, how to dispose of waste legally. Having a wide range of messages also meant the FTG had enough original material to keep up campaign momentum by regularly refreshing with new content but which also built on previous messages. This approach gives the campaign longevity as the messages can be "recycled" by our partners in the months and years to come.

The FTG knew that having a collection of content would only be useful if these messages were going to reach the right people. Key to its strategy was maximising reach through not only the HWP's existing WasteAware social media platforms but also by utilising the "sharing" power of our partners Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages.



Paid "boosting" on Facebook and YouTube was also used to increase coverage at a relatively low cost. Partnership working, coupled with paid boosting and sharing would not only ensure the FTG connected with existing "followers" but also with new ones as well.

The ability to target new audiences was partly achieved through the generation of "user content". A number of "#SCRAPflytipping" signs were made and given out to representatives from the various stakeholder groups. In turn, enforcement and street cleansing colleagues, as well as local landowners, were encouraged to take pictures of different types of fly-tipping across Hertfordshire to publicise the scale of the problem.

Toolkit

FINALLY, AND innovatively, all campaign materials have been deliberately designed so that they can be used by any local authority and/or local authority partnership with only minimal changes necessary. To encourage wider adoption the Herts FTG is offering a campaign toolkit to those interested, with kits recently provided to a number of other local authorities across the UK. ■

Anyone interested in the toolkit can email Duncan.jones@hertfordshire.gov.uk, Jennie.probert@threerivers.gov.uk or Ruth.young@watford.gov.uk

Duncan Jones is a senior local government officer and a Chartered Waste Manager with 23 years' experience covering a range of disciplines. He is a former chair of the CIWM's Special Interest Group on Waste Prevention and has also sat on the Institution's Scientific and Technical Committee.

Jennie Probert is a Chartered Waste Manager with 14 years' experience. As the environmental strategy manager at Three Rivers District Council, she manages waste strategy, environmental enforcement and assists with the operational aspects of running the collection services offered by the Council.

Ruth is a waste and recycling contract monitoring officer, with 10 years' experience in the sector. She helps manage Watford's waste and recycling outsourced services contract and has worked on many behaviour change campaigns over the years.