

Councils to seize and crush fly-tipping vehicles to clean up Britain

To: ALL APSE main contacts (England). For information only Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

1. Executive Summary

The Government recently announced a new crackdown on cowboy waste operators to tackle soaring fly-tipping and clean up Britain's streets, lanes and rural areas. The crackdown will help Councils to seize and crush fly-tipping vehicles to clean up Britain.

They have said councils will continue to work with the police to identify, seize and crush vehicles of waste criminals. Drones and mobile CCTV cameras will be deployed to identify cars and vans belonging to fly-tippers so they can be destroyed.

This review launched by ministers, will help, it is stated, to slash red tape blocking councils from seizing and crushing vehicles.

2. Key points

Fly-tipping, in which people illegally dump rubbish or debris, often by roadsides, rather than taking it to a proper waste site, is commonly listed by voters as a local concern. Government statistics for England recorded 1.15m incidents in 2023-24, up 6% from a year before.

Councils currently must bear the significant cost of seizing and storing vehicles but under the new plans, being considered by Ministers, fly-tippers will cover this cost, saving councils and taxpayers money.

In addition, waste cowboys will now face up to five years in prison for operating illegally, including those caught transporting and dealing with waste illegally.

These measures, are designed to support the Government's Plan for Change and will help *'deliver its key mission of Safer Streets for the public, restoring communities' faith in efforts to combat anti-social behaviour.'*

The Environment Agency will carry out identity and criminal record checks on operators in the sector which will make it harder for criminals to operate.

The EA will also be handed more resources as they will now be able to fund the cost of policing the industry through permits, which will boost their powers and this is designed to also reduce the costs of enforcement overall. The reforms will also give the EA more powers to revoke permits, issue enforcement notices and hefty fines.

These reforms represent a significant escalation in government efforts to deter and dismantle fly-tipping activities—dismantling the "toolkit" of offenders, increasing penalties, and shifting enforcement costs to perpetrators.

The key objectives of the of the announcements include:

- **Expanded Powers:** Councils, in collaboration with the police, will now have streamlined authority to identify, seize, and destroy vehicles used in fly-tipping incidents—leveraging drones and mobile CCTV cameras to locate offenders.
- **Seize & Crush Vehicles:** Empowering councils, alongside police, to identify, seize, and destroy cars and vans used in dump offences—using drones, mobile CCTV, and rapid action—removing the primary tool of illegal waste dumpers.
- **Red tape reform:** Eliminating bureaucratic barriers that have limited the use of powers for councils in the past. A rapid review of existing procedures is underway to simplify processes and eliminate bureaucratic obstacles, enabling quicker enforcement action
- **Cost Recovery Shift:** Councils can now transfer seizure and storage costs to the offenders themselves. The financial burden of vehicle seizure, storage, and disposal—which previously fell on councils and taxpayers—will now be borne by the offenders themselves.
- **Enhanced Resources:** Local authorities will, it is argued, benefit from a significant multi-year funding boost, including a 6.8% cash increase in council budgets (around £69 billion in England), supporting enforcement and cleaner streets
- **Harsher Penalties & Legal Action:** New legislation enables up to **5 years' imprisonment** for individuals caught transporting or disposing of waste illegally.
- **Environment Agency Enforcement:** The Environment Agency (EA) will enforce stricter licensing, identity checks, and criminal-record reviews on waste operators, with powers to revoke permits, issue enforcement notices, and levy fines. The Agency gains funding via permit income to police the industry properly.
- **Licensing:** Waste operators must now be licensed, with stricter permits, identity and criminal record checks—the Environment Agency gains authority to revoke licences, impose hefty fines, and enforce compliance.

New Challenges and Next steps

While councils already have the powers to seize and crush vehicles used in fly-tipping, Defra said administrative hurdles mean this is rarely done. While councils welcome the announcement, there are certain Implementation challenges that will need to be overcome.

Applying powers to seize and crush vehicles requires precise legal procedures to avoid judicial pushback or wrongful seizure claims. Local authorities may need legal training, procedural checklists, and rapid-response legal advice to act decisively without overstepping the parameters of the new powers.

While the government encourages recovering costs from offenders, councils will face many upfront costs. Such costs will include the cost of seizing vehicles, towing vehicles, creating secure storage facility and finally crushing the vehicles. Many of these costs will occur before identification and prosecution recovers any funds. Councils may need to consider pooling resources and exploring regional enforcement units, such as shared vehicle storage facilities. Accessing central government support could however help to reduce such burdens.

New technologies will clearly assist this reinvigorated approach to fly tipping with reliance on drones and mobile CCTV. There will also be a role in robust sharing of intelligence - to bring together information gathered from both tech and human sources of information. National guidance and funding for surveillance tech, digital storage, and privacy-compliant practices will be essential.

APSE Comment

APSE welcomes the announcement; waste crime and fly tipping has been a blight on the community for so long with the clean-up costs falling to already financially stretched councils. The hope is now with fly tippers covering this cost, councils can save money, and the threat of imprisonment will act as a deterrent helping to improve the streetscene and local environment. However, much will depend upon availability of upfront resources to make best use of the new powers and approaches. APSE will be covering this topic in upcoming streetscene network meetings. To register for the network, use this [link](#).

Abi Ademiluyi

Principal Advisor

Email: AAdemiluyi@apse.org.uk

Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular networks, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The networks are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Networks are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE network meetings and would like to be added to our list of our contacts for your service area, please email enquiries@apse.org.uk

Our national networks include: -

- FM and Building cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Local Government Reorganisation Network
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Social Value, Procurement and Commercialisation Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Ground Maintenance
- Recovery and Renewal
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

Visit www.apse.org.uk for more detail



Association for Public
Service Excellence 3rd floor,
Trafford House, Chester
Road, Manchester M32 0RS.
telephone: 0161 772 1810
fax: 0161 772 1811 web:
www.apse.org.uk