

# A holistic approach to LEQ – taking actions forward together

Keep Wales Tidy is developing a new approach to tackling persistent problems associated with poor local environment quality to prevent and reduce the adverse social, economic and environmental impacts that they have on our society. These problems cannot be tackled in isolation, they require a step change in collaboration and must focus on prevention. Furthermore, we are increasingly aware that LEQ issues cannot be tackled in a 'one size fits all' campaign. Although there is still a role for national anti-litter or anti-dog fouling campaigns and coordinated actions, (such as Spring Clean Cymru) to highlight the scale and impact of the problem and to engage communities, prevention requires different interventions and messaging for different issues. This extends to general environment improvements (based on locality and demographics) to different types of litter (based on area, litter behaviour and sources).

To achieve this, we need to target the sources of the problem and address behaviour change as well as looking at other policy instruments and actions that we can take forward with all agencies who have an interest in this area. These actions need to be developed in partnership and will require new partnerships to be formed which recognise the multifaceted nature and impacts of local environment quality on areas outside of its traditional role in 'environment' to other realms such as health and wellbeing, transport and housing.

The Wellbeing and Future Generations Act offers a unique opportunity to look at local environment quality through a collaborative and long-term lens and to come together to cement new commitments and partnerships, which are much needed in times of restricted budget cuts and an uncertain legislative future in Wales.

Ultimately, we aim to bring people together to create new solutions to persistent problems which are consistently prioritised by residents across Wales.

In the next 12-18 months, Keep Wales Tidy are:

- Updating all specific policy papers and addressing some newer areas such as air quality and noise pollution.
- Identifying and trying to source gaps in Welsh data to develop a more concrete evidence base which can be used as a starting point for actions to take forward
- Developing a series of papers which make the link between LEQ and other agendas (e.g. health and poverty)
- Engaging with relevant stakeholders across Wales
- Aiming to host an LEQ Summit (March 2018?)



## A programme of Action

Although each of our policy papers will have specific recommendations for actions to tackle the respective issue, we are broadly looking at the following headings as the tools to bring about change and engage with stakeholders. Some issues may require actions under all of these headings whilst others may require one or more in order to 'reframe' the issue in a different light or to join up with other agendas. The crucial factor is to create a programme of strategic action, not an action for a strategy. With our significant breadth of expertise and over 40-year track record of working with communities, we are in a strong position to advise on what works and what is needed for real change to happen.

### Community engagement

Increasing the role of the community in looking after and improving their own areas is one of the most powerful and sustainable ways to achieve results. However, we know that some communities are less likely to engage than others. Particularly for local environment issues, this can become a 'Catch 22' scenario where a poor environment can cement feelings of isolation and disengagement. As well as the third sector and public representatives in those areas, there is a role here particularly for local businesses and town councillors to take forward steps towards re-engagement, starting with discussions – and follow-up actions- around local environment concerns.

### Business engagement

Business has a key role to play in local environment quality and many large organisations already recognise the adverse impacts of being associated with litter and are already taking action. Efforts to tackle litter around their stores would be enhanced by collaborating with each other, particularly in areas where there are a congregation, such as out of town retail parks.

Small business efforts can also have a powerful impact and benefit from improved public perception by being seen as doing something locally. This does not have to be financially necessarily but small actions such as cleaning up outside their stores or offices in each area would have be a significant contribution to many town centres. Engaging smaller businesses however is not always easy, so we need to identify better routes of engagement and to create a new message and a narrative that will resonate with smaller businesses who are often pushed for time and resources.

### Policy and legislation

Most actions to tackle local environment quality require a more localised, or regional response based on partnership and collaborative effort. However, there are some issues which will require policy and/or legislative change. Some of these will be specific (e.g. an amendment which shifts the burden of proof to the driver for littering, on a par with other driving offences) whilst others may require the facilitation of discussions around, for example, new economic instruments to support cleansing or litter prevention.

There is an increasing requirement to look specifically at the role of enforcement for litter and dog fouling and to develop national guidelines which would apply to private companies and public sector staff.

### Evidence and research

Gathering Wales-specific data is a priority for Keep Wales Tidy and our LEAMS surveys form the basis of our evidence gathering across local authorities in Wales. Other areas have required us to gather new information from scratch, such as littering from vehicles. Where research has not been carried out, Keep Wales Tidy have trialled an experiment in messaging or 'nudge' techniques to try to identify what

works – and what doesn't. There is still a lot to be explored in the area of social marketing to tackle persistent LEQ issues and success is dependent on a range of factors.

Our policy papers are based on peer-reviewed evidence (where it exists), LEAMS data, stakeholder discussions and effectively monitored trials. We also seek to use examples and case studies from elsewhere in the world where an intervention has proved successful. Our European and International partners in ELPA and FEE respectively ensure that we are always in touch with new developments and learning from across the world.

Monitoring any interventions is also key to success, providing robust evaluation of policy and revisiting changes is a critical part of taking action to ensure maximum and continued efficacy.

## Collaboration & Integration

Collaboration is key to any successful intervention which tries to bring about positive social change. We need all stakeholders on board to effect change across Wales. Keep Wales Tidy already works with a range of stakeholders across Wales and beyond to support and develop solutions and overcome shared barriers, from local authorities, to Welsh Government, community groups, businesses and other not for profit organisations.

However, there is a need to extend our relationships further, to demonstrate the links between our work and the work of those in the health sector, housing, economy and elsewhere where we know a strong correlation, and shared priorities, exist.

## Prevention

Prevention of environmental deterioration and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles is not quick action but one that, over the long term, we must all be striving to achieve.

Prevention, is better than reactive cleansing which costs time and money. Although not a short-term fix, this can be achieved through engagement, education and other interventions to promote positive behavioural change. A combination of all of these, and including enforcement in some areas, will create the environment needed for cultural and societal change. The more partners we can engage which targets prevention, the more successful we will be!

This is also relevant to the area of waste, recycling and consumer choice and lifestyle. We need to look at our over-use of plastics, the potential for circular economy initiatives which promote repair and reuse, how we travel, where we work and what we buy.

Prevention would also look at how we carry out current enforcement for both littering and fly-tipping.

## Messaging & Education

There is a great deal of research on the subject of messaging, almost all of which draw to the conclusion that simply saying 'No' or 'Don't', have little effect. The role of generic anti-litter messaging is to raise the profile of the issue and to keep it on top of the agenda, whilst some campaigns may have a positive effect, it is unlikely to stay in people's minds for any longer than the campaign is run or to amend habitual behaviour of offenders. As mentioned before, different problems require different solutions and interventions and the term 'litter' and all that it encompasses needs to be seen as a series of different behaviours, sources, types and motivations.

Keep Wales Tidy are updating all of our specific policy action papers which looks at the main sources of litter in more detail. The actions to address each issues relate to different agencies, different messaging and tailored solutions which target the area, the demographic and the specific source of the problem. Ideally, each locality would undertake their own assessment based on the problems and agencies in that area and develop a local strategy with shared actions and goals.

We know from a number of studies that an effective method of changing irresponsible behaviour is to allude to the fact that it is not a 'social norm'. For example, '90% of people dispose of their litter responsibly' although there are some situations where this may be different.

### Innovation & Measuring success

Wales, with a population of just 3 million, is ideally placed to benefit from targeted innovation and new market and research opportunities. Collaboration with higher education and business can be the testbed for trialling innovative solutions to air pollution, social marketing and material design, production and waste disposal. It is essential that Welsh specific data is available for all our LEQ issues in order to tailor our solutions and monitoring to our local challenges and needs. Higher education institutions, working across disciplines, will be vital to a sustainable Wales. Effective networks of academics, practitioners and policy makers will also be critical to keeping up to date with challenges, trends and interventions. Our environments are not static and are in a permanent state of flux, vulnerable to both external and internal shifts, new knowledge on these issues will affect the effectiveness of policy interventions and development.

Additionally, innovation will also be required for future funding of cleansing and LEQ management. Producer responsibility and economic instruments (whether through national legislation or local agreements) which can support our efforts and reduce the current situation of the financial burden for cleansing, disposal and interventions solely with local authorities (and the tax payer). A shift away from the current unsustainable model will be critical to the change we want to see in Wales.

### Green & Blue Infrastructure

Our public parks and beaches, places where the natural environment is allowed to flourish - offer havens to humans and wildlife alike. Yet it is only in recent years that the importance of green infrastructure is being recognised in policy for its multiple social, economic and environmental benefits. Quality green spaces can reduce pollution, linked to asthma and heart disease, reduce symptoms of depression and mental illness, alleviate flood risk, provide wildlife habitats and increase biodiversity, productivity and innovation and provide spaces for community cohesion.

It is critical for our environment, society and economy that we maintain these spaces and create more of them, particularly in our urban areas where they have a significant role to play in improving air and noise quality and improving health and wellbeing.

As 80% of marine litter comes from the land, it is critical that our rivers, the pathways to our oceans, are considered as part of the wider global ecosystem that make up our seas and coastline.

It is critical then, that the guardians of these spaces, local authorities, councils, community groups, have the tool and resources available to them in order to manage these places effectively. Restricted budgets are putting these places at risk of neglect and new solutions are needed to ensure these areas are not lost and that they are managed effectively.