



TIDY
Northern
Ireland

TIDY Northern Ireland
Our Take On...
Cigarette Litter

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This discussion paper sets out TIDY Northern Ireland's position regarding cigarette litter. The environmental problems of cigarette litter are highlighted, the associated costs are examined and potential solutions to the problem are explored together with TIDY Northern Ireland's recommendations on what needs to be done in Northern Ireland to rectify this issue.

Executive Summary

This is not an anti-smoking paper, but rather an anti-cigarette litter discussion paper. Cigarette litter is a major issue in Northern Ireland with 76% of streets being covered in discarded cigarette butts. To deal with this issue adequately it is important that a number of measures are implemented to coincide with Northern Ireland's Smoking Ban, which is scheduled to be implemented in April 2007. This paper draws the conclusion that actions to be taken should centre on the following themes:

+ Producer Responsibility;

- + Tobacco manufacturers should be encouraged to take responsibility for the proper disposal of their product by providing portable solutions at point of sale.

+ Public Behaviour Modification Campaigns;

- + A Province wide campaign (on correct disposal method as well as consequences for incorrect disposal) needs to be implemented in the run up to the smoking ban.

+ Street Infrastructure;

- + The number of cigarette butt bins on the street needs to be increased and businesses, pubs, clubs and other buildings open to the public should be encouraged to provide disposal solutions at their entrance.

+ Street Cleansing

- + Specific monitoring of cigarette litter before and after the ban needs to be implemented. Council awareness of the impact cigarette litter has on cleanliness surveying needs to be heightened to encourage them to provide the appropriate equipment for adequate removal.

+ Enforcement

- + Use of CCTV (portable) to catch people guilty of incorrect disposal of cigarette litter should be used more frequently.

Introduction

There is evidence that tobacco plants first started growing in the Americas as far back as 6000BC. Eventually the plant was cultivated by Native Americans and smoked in pipes for medicinal and ceremonial purposes. While Christopher Columbus brought a few tobacco leaves and seeds with him back to Europe in 1492, it wasn't until the mid-16th century, when adventurers and diplomats like France's Jean Nicot (for whom nicotine is named) began to popularise its use.

The first successful commercial crop was cultivated in Virginia in 1612 and within seven years it was the colony's largest export. Over the next two centuries, the growth of tobacco as a cash crop fuelled the demand in North America for slave labour.



The negative health effects of tobacco were not initially known, in fact physicians often prescribed it as an effective medicine. However, in the 20th century links between smoking and ill health started to emerge. In 1952 Reader's Digest published "Cancer by Carton" an article detailing the dangers of smoking, and for the first time in

over two decades the sale cigarettes declined. This discovery is responsible for the health warnings now found on cigarette packets and has been used as a pressing argument that governments in Ireland, many US states and the United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland) have used to get legislation passed banning smoking in all public places.

What is Cigarette Litter?

Cigarette litter is the most common type of litter found on Northern Ireland streets. Cigarettes are primarily composed of four components; filters, tobacco, additives and wrappers. Cigarettes are essentially shredded tobacco leaves, chemicals and additives, packed into a paper tube. The purpose of the additives is to ensure the cigarette remains lit, to modify the flavour and to ensure an increased delivery of nicotine. Cigarettes contain over 4,000 different chemicals that are toxic and carcinogenic, which is why since 1952 filters have been added. The filter tip is made from tightly packed thin fibres of plastic (cellulose acetate) and is used to absorb vapours and to accumulate particulate smoke components.



Cigarette litter occurs as a result of inappropriate disposal of cigarette waste by smokers. The nature of a smoker is that once a cigarette has been smoked, it must be disposed of in the most convenient way. Most often this is on the ground where it will be dropped then crushed under foot to extinguish it.

In 2005 during TIDY Northern Ireland's Borough Cleanliness Survey, cigarette related litter was found to be present on 76% of all survey sites. In other cleanliness surveys TIDY Northern Ireland undertakes, cigarette litter is always the most frequently observed form of littering.

Removing Cigarette Litter

A common myth surrounding cigarettes is that they are biodegradable. This is not the case as the filter is made from plastic fibres that can persist in the environment for as long as other forms of plastic. If dropped cigarettes are not removed from the environment they are likely to be around for upwards of 2 years. An estimated 4.5 trillion cigarette butts enter the environment every year.

The Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 makes it the responsibility of local councils to remove litter (including cigarette butts) from public land in their districts. This is undertaken within each council's regular cleansing schedule to varying degrees of success. There are problems removing carelessly discarded cigarette butts as their small size means they get trapped in pavement crack or between slabs where mechanical machinery can not get access to lift them. They are often overlooked by on foot solo sweepers who while supplied with a brush and shovel (the necessary implements to lift them) either don't notice them or don't have time to complete their round if they also try to sweep all the cigarette butts out of the cracks. Cigarette butts are also a problem to remove when they are dropped on non paved surfaces, such as in parks or on grass verges. Mechanical sweepers can't be used, nor is it cost effective to lift them manually by hand.

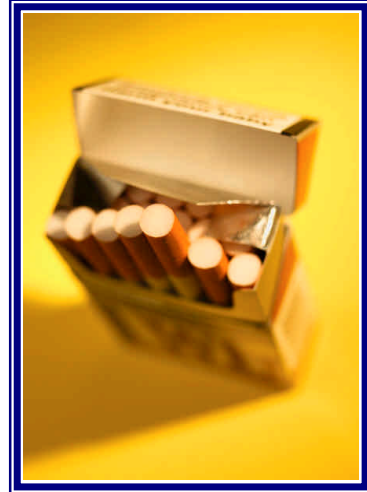
In many cases cigarette butts remain on the ground until they are eventually washed into storm drains and inevitably find their way into river courses and out to sea- which in it self causes problems to the marine environment.

The True Cost of Cigarette Litter

Cigarette butts are not just ugly and timely to remove - they also present a threat to wildlife. Plastic filters have been found in the stomachs of fish, birds, whales and other marine creatures that mistake them for food. The chemicals held in the discarded filters of cigarettes easily leach out into water and are toxic to water fleas having a knock on effect on the freshwater ecosystem.

Careless disposal of lit cigarette butts has been responsible for many unfortunate deaths. Bradford City Football fire (1985) where 40 people died and the King's Cross Underground fire (1987) were both caused by a dropped lit cigarette. More recently (1999) a lorry driver in France threw a butt from the cab window which ignited a fire inside the Mount Blanc tunnel killing 39 people.

Often overlooked is the danger of ingestion by children of cigarette butts that have been discarded. Symptoms from ingesting cigarettes include vomiting, nausea, lethargy, gagging, and a pale or flushed appearance. The part of the cigarette most likely to be ingested is the filter, which contains a collection of the most harmful chemicals and particles.



The cost of cigarette litter is great - whether this is related to the manpower needed to remove it or the cost incurred when a cigarette butt starts a fire, or a child need hospital treatment because they have eaten one. There is also the cost of lost revenue to consider from tourism, when we get a reputation as a 'dirty' country.

Options to Reduce Cigarette Litter in Northern Ireland

Like most forms of littering, TIDY Northern Ireland believes that a holistic approach to the problem will have the greatest and most positive impact. To achieve the maximum reduction in the amount of cigarette litter in our environment, TIDY Northern Ireland recommends a number of approaches are simultaneously implemented. Recommended actions fall under the following sub-headings:

- + Producer Responsibility;
- + Public Behaviour Modification Campaigns;
- + Street Infrastructure;
- + Street Cleansing; and
- + Enforcement.

+ **Producer Responsibility**

TIDY Northern Ireland believe that tobacco companies must take responsibility for the affect that their product has on local environmental quality by promoting a strong anti-littering message and supporting a sustained, long-term campaign to solve the problem. TIDY Northern Ireland feels that tobacco companies should provide solutions to cigarette litter freely at point of sale. With the impending ban on smoking in all public places in Northern Ireland coming into force in April 2007 tobacco companies should be encouraged to take a financial and logistical mandated responsibility for proper disposal of their products and packaging.

Recommendation: Encourage tobacco manufactures in Northern Ireland to take responsibility for proper disposal of their products by providing alternative, portable, solutions.

The economic instrument (taxation) approach is based on the 'polluter pays principle'. In this case a small portion of the external cost of littering is factored into the price to the public and any revenue generated could be used to fund public campaigns or improve infrastructure for smokers. This approach to cigarette litter recognises that the industry should share the responsibility for the pollution caused by their products. The negative side of taxation could include the public seeing the tax as a 'go ahead' to litter. It would be important that the marketing of any monies raised from this type of tax showed the monies were not going towards cleansing.

Recommendation: Consider the possibility of lobbying government for an additional litter tax on cigarettes if other first choice options have no impact. TIDY Northern Ireland will continue to monitor the occurrence of cigarette litter in our environment, particularly after the smoking ban is introduced.

+ Public Behaviour Modification Campaigns

Campaigns to permanently change peoples behaviour are only successful if they are sustained over a long period of time. Evidence suggests that smokers feel discriminated against and guilty about smoking. For this reason to be successful any campaign must raise awareness about the inappropriateness of dropping smoking related litter rather than making smokers feel bad about smoking per se.



TIDY Northern Ireland ran a moderately successful anti cigarette litter campaign at the start of 2006 in three council areas. To maximise the impact the campaign had instead of solely being a visual campaign we recruited newsagents (as well as ASDA) to distribute stubbis (portable ashtrays) to all customers purchasing cigarettes. The aim of the campaign was to provide smokers with a viable, safe, alternative to dropping their cigarette on the ground to get rid of it. TIDY Northern Ireland believes a similar large-scale campaign across Northern Ireland would have a more sustained long-term impact on the amount of cigarette litter polluting the environment. This ties in with our thought that tobacco manufactures should provide portable ashtrays at point of sale.

Recommendation: To tie in with the implementation of the smoking ban in public places (April 2007) and inevitable increase in smoking related litter TIDY Northern Ireland believes a province wide campaign using portable ashtrays is necessary.

The number of discarded cigarette butts in street cleanliness surveys highlights the need for re-education of smokers about the impact of cigarette butts. Research in England carried out by EnCams shows there is a lack of awareness that cigarette ends are actually litter. This message needs to be re-enforced together with the monetary consequences for littering cigarette ends.

Recommendation: Increase awareness of smokers of the £50 fine for littering cigarette butts.

+ Street Infrastructure

It is imperative that the necessary infrastructure for smokers is in place before the smoking ban is introduced in Northern Ireland. It is important to start changing people's current behaviour by providing facilities outside all public buildings,

including pubs, clubs, restaurants, offices and shops. This infrastructure includes wall-mounted ashtrays, free-standing ashtrays, post mounted ashtrays, and ashtrays attached to existing litter bins. Consideration needs to be given to the design of these receptacles to ensure they are large enough to hold high volumes of cigarette butts; they are easy and clean to use with large holes; and they are adequately sign posted. The streetscape of each area needs to be considered along with cleaning methods in order to discourage littering and ensure that cleaning up cigarette litter is more efficient.

Recommendation: The number of cigarette receptacles needs to be increased so they are placed outside every premise that is covered by the smoking ban. TIDY Northern Ireland will encourage companies to invest in appropriate bins.

It is important to gather quantifiable information on the exact impact the smoking ban has on the amount of cigarette litter, along with information on the current infrastructure in place for smokers.

Recommendation: TIDY Northern Ireland start surveying outside premises to gather accurate data for before and after the smoking ban to quantify the impact the ban has on smoking related litter.

+ Street Cleansing

Cleaning cigarette litter is difficult, as butts are small and lightweight. TIDY Northern Ireland recommends that councils ensure they have the most appropriate equipment to lift them. Cigarette litter has an impact on survey cleanliness results and should be used as an incentive to councils to ensure they are removed.

Recommendation: Cigarette litter should be specifically named within litter legislation so both councils and smokers are aware of their legal obligations.

+ Enforcement

When every other method to reduce the incorrect disposal of cigarette butts, enforcement and monetary fines is the only remaining viable option. It should be made a statutory duty that all councils should use Fixed Penalty Notices to discourage smokers from dropping butts on the ground. At the minute, while councils can issue FPNs, not all of them do, often citing lack of manpower or unsuccessful prosecutions. TIDY Northern Ireland is aware that the majority of the public does not believe they would ever be caught for dropping cigarettes, which is why it is often done so blatantly. Increased enforcement would change this attitude. TIDY Northern Ireland would also like to see an increase use of CCTV for littering offences. This would be particularly relevant for littering at road junctions and from vehicles.

Recommendation: Increase use of CCTV surveillance to issue on the spot fines to motorists and the public. TIDY Northern Ireland will liaise with Magistrates to ensure the significance of littering cigarette butts is reflected in any court fines issued.

Summary of TIDY Northern Ireland Recommendations

Cigarette litter is a major issue in Northern Ireland and must be dealt with using adequate resources to eradicate the problem completely. Below are the full list of recommendations TIDY Northern Ireland feel need to be implemented across Northern Ireland:

Recommendation 1

Encourage tobacco manufactures in Northern Ireland to take responsibility for proper disposal of their products by providing alternative, portable, solutions.

Recommendation 2

Consider the possibility of lobbying government for an additional litter tax on cigarettes if other first choice options have no impact. TIDY Northern Ireland will continue to monitor the occurrence of cigarette litter in our environment, particularly after the smoking ban is introduced.

Recommendation 3:

To tie in with the implementation of the smoking ban in public places (to be implemented in 2007) and inevitable increase in smoking related litter TIDY Northern Ireland believes a province wide campaign using portable ashtrays is necessary.

Recommendation 4:

Increase awareness of smokers of the £50 fine for littering cigarette butts.

Recommendation 5:

The number of cigarette receptacles needs to be increased so they are placed outside every premise that is covered by the smoking ban. TIDY Northern Ireland will encourage companies to invest in appropriate bins.

Recommendation 6:

TIDY Northern Ireland start surveying outside premises to gather accurate data for before and after the smoking ban to quantify the impact the ban has on smoking related litter.

Recommendation 7:

Cigarette litter should be specifically named within litter legislation so both councils and smokers are aware of their legal obligations.

Recommendation 8:

Increase use of CCTV surveillance to issue on the spot fines to motorists and the public. TIDY Northern Ireland will liase with Magistrates to ensure the significance of littering cigarette butts is reflected in any court fines issued.