



Environmental Vandalism Strategy

2022-24



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Introduction by Councillor Ross Vettrai, Convenor

Environmental vandalism is seen as embracing Illegal Dumping, Littering, Dog Fouling Fly Posting and Graffiti. It is a complex multi-faceted problem, which is embedded in today's society. It is occasioned by irresponsible people, who do not care about the environment and care even less about those with whom they share it and who deface the environment for their own selfish convenience or to maximise financial gain and, in the course of so doing, subject their fellow human beings to living with the effects of their environmental abuse and the expense of removing it.

This strategy has been prepared following consultation with Elected Members, the Council's partners, the Regulatory and Fiscal Services and the volunteer community. It is a strategy of zero tolerance and is a statement of how the Council has already re-organised and will continue re-organise and deploy its resources and utilise the powers that are available to it to combat the Vandalism.

Central to the strategy is: the swift removal of its effects, wherever it may occur; the implementation of effective policing methods, which will meaningfully utilise the available technology and will penalise the vandals whenever they are identified; maximising the effectiveness of the Council's staffing and vehicle resources; developing more informative data gathering and working with and informing the community of what it can do to assist the Council.

2. Current Approach to Tackling Environmental Vandalism in Fife

2.1 Environmental vandalism is one of the most common forms of abuse people inflict on the environment in Fife. Environmental vandalism has significant local consequences.

- Impacts on the environment and injury to pets and wildlife from discarded waste
- Impacts on the economy, tourism, and property prices
- Impacts on health and wellbeing
- Increased costs to local authorities, partners, and private landowners for clearing up incidents

2.2 The Council has made Thriving Places a priority in the Plan 4 Fife and considers it vital that efforts are made to prevent environmental vandalism and to utilise effective enforcement where necessary.

2.3 The Council's traditional approach to tackling environmental vandalism is mostly reactive, with street cleansing teams removing dog faeces and collecting litter daily, with fly tipping teams clearing illegally dumped waste as soon as possible after reports are received.

- The most visible work of maintaining areas free of environmental vandalism is the responsibility of the Street Cleaning service, through area-based teams.
- The Council endeavours to remove material that is illegally dumped as soon as possible, where it is on Council owned land. The Local Authority is not responsible for removing all illegal dumping, as this can depend on the type of waste and the status of land.
- Where waste is illegally dumped on private land it is the responsibility of the landowner to arrange its collection and disposal, although Council officers carry out an investigation of the material to try to obtain evidence of the person whose waste has been dumped.
- The Council provides household waste recycling centres where residents can safely and legally dispose of unwanted items.
- A Bulk Uplift collection service is also available for larger items of household waste such as furniture and white goods.
- A specialist cleansing team remove flyposting and graffiti from council properties, with a 24-hour emergency response for offensive material.
- There are several work streams ongoing which are designed to tackle environmental vandalism including some educational initiatives delivered as part of associated work, engagement with volunteer groups, its own service delivery and enforcement activity. These work streams are

currently undertaken by several service areas, but they are collated into one single strategic document.

3. Vision, Aims and Objectives

Vision - to significantly reduce environmental vandalism in Fife

3.1 Aims

- To help deliver the vision, the Council will aim to work with partner organisations and active community groups to provide stakeholders and residents with a high quality, professional and flexible service to tackle environmental vandalism through the activities as set out in the objectives below.
- To use integrated, preventative, and collaborative approaches that take account of the long-term and involve our communities. These approaches are essential if the Council is to be successful in tackling the multifaceted problem of environmental vandalism. In this respect, this strategy aims to bring about a change of approach for the Council from one of primarily collecting illegally dumped waste, littering and ultimately cleaning up after those who generate environmental vandalism throughout Fife, to a more integrated approach involving our communities and businesses, that places greater emphasis on preventative actions to tackle the source of environmental vandalism, and that will in the long term improve environmental quality and reduce costs.
- To change the behaviours of environmental vandals.
- To apply all legislative powers in the enforcement of a zero-tolerance policy.
- To promote the Health & Wellbeing of our Communities through the development of the Council's People & Place Leadership Approach.

3.2 Objectives

Over the next three years, the Council aims to tackle environmental vandalism through both Prevention and Enforcement. It is recognised that robust enforcement will act as a deterrent, however, more integrated partnership working and enabling positive behavioural change within Fife will be essential to preventing environmental vandalism longer term.

The following key four objectives have been identified; the tables below each heading describe how the Council will deliver improvements under each objective.

Objective 1: Partnership Working

- For the strategy to succeed, all council services, partner organisations, communities and stakeholders must work on a more integrated basis. Information must be shared, and activities coordinated and managed in a consistent way and provides opportunities for engagement with communities.
- The Council will work with businesses to encourage a responsible attitude to preventing environmental vandalism, and where necessary, imposing requirements on businesses to make sure their premises and surrounding areas are kept free of environmental vandalism.
- The Council will continue to support and encourage voluntary litter picking groups as a contribution to tackling environmental vandalism problems in Fife.

Objective 2: Promoting Awareness and Positive Behavioural Change

The Council will:

- focus on public education and awareness activities to help residents better understand the consequences of environmental vandalism.
- work with Community Councils and schools to encourage a greater focus on preventing environmental vandalism.
- develop a communication strategy to engage the community in preventing environmental vandalism.
- publicise the various ways in which members of the public can report environmental vandalism, which will include
 - by phone via a dedicated telephone number
 - online via current reporting form
 - in person at any Local Customer Service Centre
- encourage our communities to check the Waste Carrier Registration and disposal arrangements of any company they employ to remove waste.

Objective 3: Operations, Service Re-design and Coordination

The Council will:

- continue to operate its area-based street cleaning service, including a Rapid Response arrangement.
- continually review the level of service considering the anticipated reduction in litter and illegal dumping which it is hoped this strategy will achieve.

- record all reported instances of environmental vandalism to facilitate accurate reporting of case numbers and monitor the Council's effectiveness in responding.
- administer one single data stream to provide time and location information which will prevent duplication, misleading analysis and inform resource deployment to hot-spot areas.
- encourage all staff to contribute towards the environmental policing initiative by reporting any act of vandalism they witness.
- support the staff of the Council's Arm's length organisation Fife Resource Solutions (FRS) who operate Fife's 11 public recycling centres to challenge the illegal deposit of waste at these sites and where appropriate provide further investigation by Council Enforcement Officers.
- review the commercial waste disposal arrangements of businesses in Fife to ensure that statutory 'Duty of Care' obligations are being met.
- examine the current use of infrastructure including type of bins, CCTV and IT software to fully realise the aims and objectives of the strategy.
- re-organise and redeploy staff to ensure they provide the most effective and efficient response to dealing with all aspects of environmental vandalism.
- deliver a coordinated and integrated response led by a new Environmental Vandalism Group, which will be chaired by the Head of Protective Services.

Objective 4: Enforcement Action

The Council will

- investigate anyone caught committing environmental vandalism.
- deploy all available policing technology and organise the deployment of enforcement staff in the most effective and efficient way possible.
- implement a zero-tolerance approach and issue Fixed Penalty Notices and report cases to the Procurator Fiscal Service where appropriate.
- work with communities to gather intelligence and data that will shape the most effective enforcement strategy in the policing of environmental vandalism.
- continue to lobby the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment in pursuit of amendments to the law that would enable a more effective policing strategy. Revisions being sought include making Fixed Penalties recoverable as civil debts and strengthening the investigatory powers of local authorities.

- continue to engage with the Procurator Fiscal Service to develop the most effective strategy for policing environmental vandalism.
- install rapid deployment CCTV systems in areas determined by the need for a camera at the location. This will be done using local information to determine if there is a hot spot or a problem with repeat offending and any installation will also be considered if it is a proportionate approach taking into consideration any other tactics, dual approach, or options to try to remedy the problem.

4 Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

- 4.1 The Council will undertake robust and ongoing evaluation to assess delivery of this strategy in accordance with the activities detailed in the action plan. The findings will be used to adjust and tailor the medium- and long-term plan, which means that some actions could be amended to improve outcomes.
- 4.2 The Council values feedback from its residents. It will maintain ongoing engagement and dialogue with residents and partners in delivering this strategy and will regularly encourage feedback.
- 4.3 Given the period of this strategy, there are likely to be external factors which could result in changes to the action plan. As an example, potential legislation could be forthcoming related to deposit return schemes.
- 4.4 Operational activity across each of the six areas of environmental vandalism covered by this strategy will be monitored monthly to identify any gaps in performance and to replicate any particularly relevant initiatives. The strategy ultimately aims to realise a significant reduction in environmental vandalism through:
 - a reduction (in years 2 and 3 of the strategy) in the number of requests for service received in respect of abandoned vehicles, dog fouling, fly posting, fly tipping, graffiti, and littering
 - improvements in resident perception as obtained through local engagement and satisfaction surveys
 - a reduction in formal complaints relating to environmental vandalism
 - the development of policies and actions with partners that seeks to address the underlying causes of environmental vandalism
 - the promotion of the awareness and understanding of environmental vandalism both through public education and working with schools to encourage greater focus on prevention
 - an increase in enforcement action.
- 4.5 Evaluation will be made to assess the level of effectiveness in reducing the frequency and associated impact of environmental vandalism on local communities across Fife.

- 4.6 Reports will be submitted at least on an annual basis to the Council's Environmental and Protective Services Sub-Committee.

5 Action Plan

An action plan will be designed to identify the work required throughout the life of the strategy. The action plan will continue to be reviewed and updated throughout the 3-year+ cycle of the current strategy.

6 Summary of Proposals

The following summary proposals is a simplified version of the aims of the strategy for ease of reference:

What the Council will do	What we hope to achieve
Develop a Council Communication Strategy	Increase awareness of environmental vandalism and drive positive behavioural change within communities
Seek information from the public about all 6 strands of environmental vandalism contained within this strategy	An increase in reporting by members of the public
Investigate reports timeously	Reduction in complaints regarding a lack of (or delay in) service
Prioritise patrols where intelligence dictates there are hotspots	Increase in number of offenders being caught
Review and renew signage where appropriate/necessary	Reduce levels of environmental vandalism
Review website information to make it easier for people to find the information they need, including how to report the issue	Improve communication and raise awareness of the council and the public role in tackling environmental vandalism
Review and publicise enforcement options, including the level of FPNs	Ensure FPNs remain a deterrent
Support, coordinate and participate in community events	Raise the profile of our role in terms of tackling environmental vandalism and encourage community participation
Utilise appropriate legislation to enable increased use of covert surveillance	Increase number of offenders caught in the act and to enable enforcement action.

What the Council will do	What we hope to achieve
Work with partners to identify those who are responsible	Increase in co-ordinated approach to tackling offenders
Carry out 'duty of care' inspections to local businesses where appropriate	Reduce amount of environmental vandalism caused (sometimes inadvertently) by businesses
Develop more informative data gathering	Increase our response to environmental vandalism by targeting resource more effectively
Work more closely with our colleagues in Scottish Government and local Procurator Fiscal's service in relation to amendments to current legislation or proposals for additional powers	Increase effectiveness of legislation