

**From:** Derek Gilman  
**Sent:** 28 April 2016  
**To:** Andrew Jones\_MP [Under Sec of State for Transport]  
**Cc:** Clean Highways ; Gordon Henderson [MP for Sittingbourne & Sheppey]  
**Subject:** Roadside litter

Dear Mr Jones

Having contacted my local MP and County Councillor on the subject of roadside litter - and I must say they have been extremely helpful and responsive - I now feel this needs to be taken to a higher level and brought to your attention.

I am writing to you in deep frustration and anger about how our 'green and pleasant land' is slowly turning into a third world open landfill site. I have already written to Highways England, local county and borough councils and what makes this process most frustrating, is the continual buckpassing between the various bodies. There is an increasing local groundswell of opinion and anger that things are just not being done, e.g. increase in correspondence to our local MP, local press coverage of litter problem roads and a feature on ITV Meridian covering trunk roads in Sussex and Kent.

I will not waste your time in running through a litany of local (Kent) issues as I know this is a national problem. I also accept that the cause of this problem is not of the government/county/local councils making - but concerns people (a large majority) in this country who are only too happy to throw their litter about and take little care of their environment.

Having acknowledged this, there is a statutory duty for HE/local councils to clean - and maintain the cleanliness - of our roadside verges. In spite of responses from HE/local councils etc...standards are NOT being met and the situation is getting worse. In short, the main problem areas are:

- 1) HE and local councils abandoning road work debris comprising: old road works signage frames, supporting sandbags, old traffic cones etc. If this is left lying around, the tendency is for a lot of people to add to the litter - 'if the government doesn't care, why should we...?'
- 2) Waste from open trucks and rubbish disposal vehicles, resulting in swathes of plastic sheeting and packing material lining grass verges and central reservations
- 3) Road signs and directional boards are not being cleaned, resulting in signs covered by undergrowth, dirt and slime from surrounding shrubbery, rendering them almost illegible. What is the point of spending money on signage when it is not maintained - this is a sad reflection on HE and ultimately the Government. This has received comment in the press from overseas visitors

4) Lack of joined up thinking and responsibilities between HE, local and borough councils. There seem to be several bodies/subcontracted firms involved in road and vergeside cleaning, which leads to an overall haphazard approach

For countrywide examples, I would refer you to the Clean Highways website and the efforts being made by Peter Silverman. On a local level, as the 'gateway' to England and the first impression visitors from overseas gain, I would ask for your comments regarding those made on the aforementioned website in respect of the A2, M2, and M20 and A249. If I was a tourist, I would probably turn round and head back to the continental mainland, having encountered rubbish strewn lay-bys and verges, filthy signage, roundabouts encrusted in litter which has not been cleared for years and pot-holed patched up roads.

I do understand that there are budgetary constraints and cutbacks, but I do wonder whether too many cutbacks are deterring visitors from visiting the UK and resulting in a negative opinion of this country - and drop in income? To be constructive, might the following provide some solutions to the problems?:-

- Arrange for all HE/local authorities to remove all their abandoned road works clutter and signage
- Tighten up on open top waste truck retaining covers and impose penalties for disposal contractors who continually allow excess debris to fly off their trucks
- Impose a min 20p return levy on all plastic/glass bottles. Other countries do this - why can't we??
- Introduce a more regular pattern of verge-side cleaning (which in fact is a statutory requirement). Look at how other countries tackle this volume of waste...two men with litter pickers can only do so much...there must be more advanced technology than this.
- Introduce more name and shame reporting and widespread 'billboard' publicity alongside major roads - again look at how other countries do this
- Invest in more road signage cleaning equipment - it does exist!

You may think that these comments are overdone and superficial, but I believe that first impressions count and we may be losing £millions in falling tourism. But it also affects our local perception and pride in the environment and to paraphrase the 'broken window' syndrome..leave a stretch of road litter strewn and it will attract even more litter.

I know the wheels of government grind somewhat slowly , but many of these problems could be rectified reasonably quickly and with little extra expenditure.

I look forward to receiving your comments.

D F Gilman