

Our ref: 761,926

Your ref:

Operations Directorate Services Team
Manager
9th Floor
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham B1 1RN

10 May 2018

Dear

Freedom of Information request: litter information and data

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request received on 12 April 2018, asking for information on our litter clearing duties. I am dealing with it under the terms of the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004. This is because the information requested concerns measures and activities affecting or likely to affect elements of the environment or affect factors such as noise, pollution discharges and other releases into the environment.

In your request you asked for the following information:

1. *What is Highway's UK defined responsibility in terms of clearing litter and dangerous debris from major roads?*
2. *Why do the roads I mention have litter and debris lying around from 2014?*
3. *What is your annual budget for litter/debris clearance in each of the last three financial years?*
4. *How much of these budgetary allocations was spent in each financial year and where?*
5. *What priority do you give to litter/debris clearance, and what measures are you taking to combat the disposal of litter etc by irresponsible drivers and passengers?*

Taking each of your points in turn:

1. *What is Highway's UK defined responsibility in terms of clearing litter and dangerous debris from major roads?*

Under the *Environmental Protection Act 1990*, we are responsible for collecting litter on England's motorways and a small number of trunk roads, with local authorities being responsible for collecting litter on the majority of all-purpose trunk roads.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) produced a *Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (2006)* which aims to encourage the appropriate duty bodies to maintain their land within acceptable cleanliness standards. The emphasis is on the consistent and appropriate management of an area to keep it clean, rather than on how often it is cleaned.

Our overall approach to litter on our network is set in our litter strategy, which is available to view on our website. The strategy was developed to outline goals and

initiatives to support the vision of a network predominantly free from litter, without compromising safety and delivered affordably. In the litter strategy, we identify how important it is to work collaboratively with our partners and share best practice.

2. Why do the roads I mention have litter and debris lying around from 2014?

Central Bedfordshire Council is responsible for collecting litter on the A1 and the A421. These roads are also assessed by our service providers on a monthly basis. When the litter grade falls below the required standard, as set out in Defra's Code of Practice, then we will contact the relevant local authority, advising them of the situation.

We met with Central Bedfordshire Council in February 2018 to discuss litter and the possibility of collaborative working. This is to ensure that their litter picking and collection responsibilities can be better co-ordinated with our routine highway maintenance works, allowing them to share our traffic management. This helps to minimise disruption to the travelling public, reduce costs and ensure safety standards of operatives are met.

If a local authority cannot co-ordinate their litter picking duties with our programmed works, then we will collect litter within that specific area of works and traffic management. For example, at a recent closure on the A1 between the two Biggleswade roundabouts, where the responsibility for litter picking this section of the network sits with the local authority, we collected 77 bags of litter. During these works we also undertook sweeping and cleaning duties, sign cleaning, gully and central reservation clearing.

If we do not have any programmed works in the area, then the local authorities must make their own arrangements to collect litter.

3. What is your annual budget for litter/debris clearance in each of the last three financial years?

4. How much of these budgetary allocations was spent in each financial year and where?

Our maintenance contracts are structured so that our service providers are paid a 'lump sum' for a wide range of general maintenance duties such as general repairs, cleaning duties (including litter picking) and repairing potholes. These activities are performed on both a routine and ad-hoc basis to meet contractual requirements. We do not disaggregate the budget and spend on the individual types of activities and so exact costs for litter picking cannot be provided.

The planned budget for lump sum activities, for the past three financial years, was:

- 2015/16 - £117.9m
- 2016/17 - £116.2m
- 2017/18 - £119.9m

The actual spend for lump sum activities, for the past three financial years, is:

- 2015/16 - £118.4m
- 2016/17 - £113.8m
- 2017/18 - £118.3m

5. *What priority do you give to litter/debris clearance, and what measures are you taking to combat the disposal of litter etc by irresponsible drivers and passengers?*

We litter pick somewhere on our motorway network every single day. Based on the *Code of Practice*, we constantly grade our network. If it degrades, we will return it to the required standard within the set timescales. We always aim to do this quicker than the legal requirement wherever possible. We are clearing litter on some parts of our network within 3 to 5 working days.

We are also supporting Defra's *Litter Strategy for England* through managing the top 25 hotspots across our network. These are parts of our network which are the most problematic in terms of repeat littering. A national approach is being taken to help monitor the extent of the problem and how they can be resolved in terms of litter picking and interventions i.e. surveillance, signage, funnel bins and poster campaigns.

We work with various bodies and anti-litter organisations, including Keep Britain Tidy, aiming to tackle littering at source and make littering socially unacceptable. Influencing a change in littering behaviour will take time and with our partners, we are researching various ways of achieving this. In March we supported Keep Britain Tidy's "Great British Spring Clean", during which over 8,000 bags of litter were collected from those roads on our network for which we have litter picking responsibilities.

If you are unhappy with the way we have handled your request you may ask for an internal review. Our internal review process is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/highways-england/about/complaints-procedure>

If you require a print copy, please phone the Information Line on 0300 123 5000; or e-mail info@highwaysengland.co.uk. You should contact me if you wish to complain.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote reference number 761,926 in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

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