

Chewing Gum Task Force to clean up our high streets

Major chewing gum producers, brought together by government, have signed up to a new £10 million partnership to remove gum litter from our high streets, Environment Minister Rebecca Pow announced today.

The scheme, including Mars Wrigley, GlaxoSmithKline and Perfetti Van Melle and managed by independent charity Keep Britain Tidy, will see gum firms invest up to £10 million over the next five years to help reduce gum litter.

Chewing gum litter is a blight on our towns and cities and wastes millions of pounds of taxpayers' money every year; the annual clean-up cost is estimated at £7 million. Around 87% of England's streets are stained with gum, according to research by Keep Britain Tidy.

The investment, starting later this year, will be used to clean up historic gum litter staining and use behavioural interventions to encourage people to bin their gum. Previous pilots have reduced gum littering by up to 64%.

Littering is a criminal offence and the Government has already empowered local authorities by increasing on-the-spot penalties for offenders to £150, rising to up to £2,500 if convicted in court. The Government is seeking powers in the Environment Bill to ensure that enforcement powers are used with a high degree of professionalism, whether by council staff or private contractors, and to place our improved enforcement guidance on a firm statutory footing.

The Task Force is part of the Government's new [strategy to support the evolution and regeneration of high streets](#) across the country, which includes [15 Town Deals](#) totalling £335 million to fund community regeneration projects, the transformation of derelict buildings, and communities being given the chance to own local pubs, theatres, sports grounds and corner shops.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

The stains of discarded chewing gum are a blight on our communities, spoiling our streets and wasting millions of pounds of taxpayers' money.

This new scheme means chewing gum producers are not only helping to clean up towns and cities as they welcome people back to our high streets, but crucially taking action to prevent people littering in the first place.

We are committed to building back better and greener and this commitment to making town centres a more attractive and inviting place is a key part of our long-term strategy to breathe new life into our communities.

Jonny Briscoe, Managing Director, Perfetti Van Melle – PVM UK, commented:

As an organisation serious about corporate responsibility, Perfetti Van Melle is committed to help with the clean-up of Britain's streets and to educate consumers about the importance of responsible gum disposal.

Allison Ogden-Newton, Chief Executive of environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, said:

Keep Britain Tidy are delighted to be working with Defra and the chewing gum industry to clean up gum from our streets and critically stop it being dropped in the first place.'

The Chewing Gum Task Force forms part of wider government action to tackle litter and protect our environment. The Group will also have the opportunity to share best practice and research in gum cleansing and litter prevention such as cleaning up, education, and biodegradability.

The "Keep it, Bin it" anti-litter campaign, supported by Defra and funded by Mars Wrigley, encourages people to dispose of their litter responsibly, calling time on rubbish excuses for littering and telling people to keep hold of their rubbish until they find a bin.

The Government's landmark Environment Bill includes powers to introduce a [Deposit Return Scheme](#) for drinks containers, which will recycle billions more plastic bottles and stop them going to landfill. Our Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme will mean companies will be expected to cover the full cost of recycling and disposing of their packaging, and through the fees they pay they will be incentivised to use packaging that can be recycled and meet higher recycling targets. We have also outlined our intention to [explore regulatory options](#) to tackle the issue of discarded cigarette butts, which make up 66% of all littered items.

[Consistent Recycling Collections](#) will be introduced for every household and business in England, ensuring more plastic is recycled, while ministers will have new powers to make it easier to place charges on single-use plastic items that threaten our ecosystems. The government will also introduce a world-leading [plastic packaging tax](#) from April 2022, on plastic packaging which doesn't meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content, to encourage greater use of recycled plastic and protect our environment.

Statistic on cost of chewing gum clean-up taken from [Financial Cost of Packaging Litter – Phase 2 – Final Report, WRAP](#)

Statistic on impact of chewing gum on streets taken from Keep Britain Tidy research