

Driving down roadside litter levels in national spring clean

The government-owned company has once again joined Keep Britain Tidy's national litter-picking effort, which runs from today (25 March) to 10 April, in a push to clear rubbish from the roads.

Litter takes a devastating toll on the environment and costs around £1 billion every year to clean up. It also poses a serious safety risk as road verges and barriers form corridors where litter and debris build up at an alarming rate, creating a hazardous environment for road users, wildlife and the maintenance crews who clean it up.

Freda Rashdi, Head of Customer and Operational Requirements for National Highways, said:

We've taken up Keep Britain Tidy's 'Big Bag Challenge' and pledged to pick at least 8,000 bags of litter for this year's Great British Spring Clean. Over the course of the last six campaigns we've collected 60,000 bags, and we're proud to be joining this vital cause for its seventh year.

Our priority is to keep our roads safe and well maintained, and litter is a huge issue that we're tackling daily. We value Keep Britain Tidy's commitment to eliminating litter, as well as their partnership in our efforts to keep litter off our roads.

The simple fact is that if litter wasn't dropped in the first place it wouldn't need to be picked up. So, this is an opportunity to remind people that they too can make a difference simply by saving litter for the bin.

Ahead of today's launch, National Highways has been working closely with local authorities, who are responsible for collecting litter on most A-roads in England. In February, Stoke-on-Trent council joined forces with National Highways, utilising existing road closures to clear over 15 tonnes of litter and debris from the A50. This collaborative effort saved the council around £40,000 while minimising disruption for road users.

Cllr Carl Edwards, cabinet member for housing and the environment, said:

Thanks to our partners at National Highways for once again highlighting the problem of litter on our country's roads. Litter dropped along roads is dangerous to pick up and a hazard to car drivers and cyclists.

We have a strong sense of civic pride in our city, and the last

thing we want to be doing is fining people for dropping litter. But it is a strong deterrent, and we will do so if we need to. The message is simple, leave your litter in your car and pop it in your bin when you get home to keep our roads clean.

National Highways itself is responsible for collecting litter from England's motorways and a small number of A-roads.

A 'day of action' near Manchester at the start of April will see National Highways maintenance teams joined by Keep Britain Tidy for a targeted litter collection on the M56.

And around Sheffield, teams are doing a spring clean of culverts and roadside drainage systems, clearing items dumped by fly tippers to reduce flood risks for local communities.

In the South East, GoPro cameras are being used to monitor litter 'hot spots'. This technology helps maintenance teams highlight problem areas, and analyse how quickly they fill up again with rubbish after cleaning. The M25 is one of the routes currently being monitored.

Meanwhile National Highways colleagues will also be taking matters into their own hands – quite literally – by litter picking in their local communities.

Allison Ogden-Newton, CEO of Keep Britain Tidy, said:

We're delighted that National Highways are once again supporting the Great British Spring Clean by performing dedicated clean-ups of litter hotspots on the road network.

This is often risky work, and we reiterate our message to the public not to be tempted to litter-pick on fast-moving roads because it's extremely dangerous.

We encourage everybody to respect the fact that highway workers face grave danger when having to collect litter thoughtlessly thrown from vehicles, and to keep their rubbish in their vehicle until they can dispose of it correctly.

While this annual campaign runs for a matter of weeks, National Highways picks litter throughout the year and carries out regular inspections to make sure England's motorways and major A-roads are in good condition. The company wants to hear from you if you spot something wrong on the road. This could be anything from a broken sign or barrier, to litter, overgrown vegetation or potholes.

You can [report a maintenance issue to National Highways online](#) or by calling 0300 123 5000.

Get more information on the [Great British Spring Clean](#).

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever case identified in England, following travel to Central Asia](#)

Latest

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) can confirm that the monitoring periods, for contacts of the Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever case who required active monitoring, have now been completed.

No further cases have been identified. We would like to thank our partners in the NHS for their prompt action and all of the contacts for their cooperation.

Previous

Friday 25 March 2022

UKHSA can confirm that a case of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) has been confirmed in England. The woman had recently travelled to Central Asia.

CCHF is a viral disease usually transmitted by ticks and livestock animals in countries where the disease is endemic.

The patient was diagnosed at Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and is receiving specialist care at the Royal Free Hospital in London.

Dr Susan Hopkins, Chief Medical Advisor at UKHSA said:

It's important to be aware that CCHF is usually spread by tick bites in countries where the disease is endemic, it does not spread easily between people and the overall risk to the public is very low.

We are working with NHS EI to contact the individuals who have had close contact with the case prior to confirmation of their infection, to assess them as necessary and provide advice.

UKHSA and the NHS have well established and robust infection control procedures for dealing with cases of imported infectious disease and these will be strictly followed.

Dr Sir Michael Jacobs, consultant in infectious diseases at the Royal Free London, said:

The Royal Free Hospital is a specialist centre for treating patients with viral infections such as CCHF. Our high level isolation unit is run by an expert team of doctors, nurses, therapists and laboratory staff and is designed to ensure we can safely treat patients with these kind of infections.

Prior to this case, there have been 2 cases of CCHF imported to the UK, in 2012 and one in 2014. There was no evidence of onward transmission from either of these cases.

The principal carriers of CCHF are Hyalomma ticks, these are not established in the UK and the virus has never been detected here in a tick.

People living in or visiting endemic areas should use personal protective measures to avoid contact with ticks, including:

- avoiding areas where ticks are abundant at times when they are active
- using tick repellents
- checking clothing and skin carefully for ticks

“The way my brain is wired helps me do better”: neurodiversity at Dstl

If I’ve had a ‘peopley’ day I need to sit in a dark room in silence or hide under a blanket when I get home.

This is how Andrew, or AJ as he is known, manages being a principal software engineer in a world-class organisation with the challenges of having Asperger’s Syndrome and dyslexia.

He started working for Dstl 18 years ago and it was through his job that he was first diagnosed – although he already suspected that he had Autism Spectrum Disorder.

He talks about his experience as the organisation marks Neurodiversity

Celebration Week.

AJ said:

My story is an unusual one, perhaps since my diagnosis came later in life.

I've always known that I wasn't quite the same as other people, and at school I didn't really have many friends and I was bullied quite a lot.

I was that boy at school that spent every lunchtime in the library, reading or playing with the computers.

However, it was at school that he developed a passion for science and engineering, and he remembers a favourite book at aged five was on the history of iron and steel manufacturing.

He believes attitudes have changed since he was a child and that Neurodiversity Celebration Week is important as it helps explode prevailing myths and signposts available support.

I think there are lots of stereotypes around all kinds of neurodiversity. Some people think of dyslexic people as being unable to read, or those with autism and Asperger's as people that have no social skills at all who can't cope in the real world.

I don't think any of those are true. There's an adage that says, 'If you've met one neurodiverse person... you've met one neurodiverse person'. We are all different – in the same way everyone is different.

AJ's Asperger's also manifests itself in a hypersensitivity to sound, where an almost inaudible hum of electrical equipment can be painful, while travelling on the London Underground is unbearable.

In a work environment the general noise of an office can be very distracting and networking or making small talk is extremely stressful.

People are often surprised to learn AJ is neurodiverse as he has learnt to "mask the symptoms and fake being 'normal'." However, he says this coping technique is emotionally and mentally draining.

He went on to say Dstl provided a package of help which included a flexibility around his work station, a screen reader and coaching to help with specific things that he finds difficult.

I think Dstl is a good, supportive employer, I think there's lots of scope for making appropriate adjustments for people that have

needs.

It's not about curing it, it's not about taking it away it is about giving people the tools they need to be the best they can. I was surprised at the level of support that was available.

Everyone's journey is going to be different but the important thing for everyone to realise is that, as an organisation, Dstl really wants you to be yourself and be the individual you are and embrace that diversity.

He feels, with the support of the organisation, his condition makes him better at his job.

He said:

It gives me an ability to concentrate deeply on something technical for long periods, a skill at spotting patterns and following logical sequences.

I've always had 'the knack' when it comes to electronics and computers – and I have no doubt that my Asperger's plays a significant part in that.

The way my brain is structured, the way my brain is wired, helps me do better. I still want to know exactly how everything works – but now it's an asset and Dstl pays me to do it.

If the little boy sat in the corner of the library was to meet me now? I would have loved to have known as a child that I would end up working in an environment like this on things that really matter and things that have really interesting problems to solve.

[Joint statement on Afghanistan, 25 March 2022](#)

News story

Joint statement condemning the Taliban's decision not to re-open secondary schools to Afghan girls.



Joint statement from the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Italy, Norway, the United States of America, and the High Representative of the European Union. We are united in our condemnation of the Taliban's decision not to re-open secondary schools to Afghan girls:

We are united in our condemnation of the Taliban's decision on March 23 to deny so many Afghan girls the opportunity to finally go back to school. The Taliban's action contradicted its public assurances to the Afghan people and to the international community.

The decision came after months of work by the international community to support teacher stipends based on an expectation that schools would be open for all, with the higher interest of Afghan students and teachers in mind. And sadly, it came as eager Afghan girls were walking to their schools for the first time in seven months.

We call on the Taliban urgently to reverse this decision, which will have consequences far beyond its harm to Afghan girls. Unreversed, it will profoundly harm Afghanistan's prospects for social cohesion and economic growth, its ambition to become a respected member in the community of nations, and the willingness of Afghans to return from overseas.

It will have an inevitable impact on the Taliban's prospects of gaining political support and legitimacy either at home or abroad. Every Afghan citizen, boy or girl, man or woman, has an equal right to an education at all levels, in all provinces of the country.

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Project launched to support EV chargepoint infrastructure rollout

The Geospatial Commission has today launched a discovery project to explore how location data can be better utilised to support planning and delivery of electric vehicle charge points by local authorities.

The UK is committed to transitioning to electric vehicles (EV) in support of ambitious net zero targets. Local authorities will play a crucial role enabling this transition.

This project will support the approach set out in the government's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy, published today by the Department for Transport, which focuses on enabling the rollout of a robust EV charging infrastructure network by 2030. Setting out a vision and approach for EV infrastructure roll-out and expectations of key stakeholders, the Strategy identifies that addressing barriers to data sharing will be important to enable decision making.

Dr Steve Unger, Commissioner at the Geospatial Commission, said:

Location data will play a key role in planning the UK's transition to electric vehicles and help make net zero a reality. Through this project, the Geospatial Commission will understand the challenges faced by local authorities who wish to exploit location data. By working together, we will be able to unlock the potential for data-driven innovation in transport.

The Geospatial Commission discovery project includes workshops with 10 local authorities to identify challenges and opportunities for better use of location data in the rollout of EV chargepoint infrastructure. This project will be undertaken by technical specialists Frazer-Nash Consultancy.

Matthew Perrin, Digital Services Innovation Lead, Frazer-Nash Consultancy, said:

Geospatial data is vital to planning, installing and running an effective charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. We are really looking forward to working with the Geospatial Commission and local authorities on this important study, providing our expertise in geospatial data and discovery to enable this important step on the UK's journey to net zero.

Councillor Helen Hayden, Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate from

Leeds City Council, said:

Over the last five years, Leeds has taken a range of actions, offering free electric van trials, discounted parking and requiring charge points in new developments, to accelerate our city's transition to less polluting vehicles.

With figures showing that the number of plug-in vehicles in Leeds has doubled over the last year, it is vitally important that we understand how best to expand and improve access to charging infrastructure for drivers on the go or without private parking. We are therefore excited to be part of this timely project.

The following local authorities are involved in the project:

1. Oxfordshire County Council
2. City of York Council
3. Norfolk County Council
4. Greater Manchester Combined Authority
5. West Sussex County Council
6. Cornwall Council
7. Kent County Council
8. Leeds City Council
9. Wiltshire Council
10. Cheshire East Council

Editor's Notes:

1. The Geospatial Commission published [Positioning the UK in the Fast Lane](#) in August 2021 which identified that supporting the effective use of location data and systems is vital for the UK to have the best charging infrastructure in the world and meet net zero targets whilst driving economic growth. This new project builds on the findings of this report.