



The Big Green Society

Empowering communities to create
cleaner, greener neighbourhoods

Dominic Rustecki



www.localis.org.uk



City of Westminster

About Localis

Who we are

Localis is an independent think-tank, dedicated to issues related to local government and localism. Since our formation we have produced influential research on a variety of issues including the reform of public services, local government finance, planning, and community empowerment. Our work has directly influenced government policy and the wider policy debate.

Our philosophy

We believe that power should be exercised as close as possible to the people it serves. We are therefore dedicated to promoting a localist agenda and challenging the existing centralisation of power and responsibility. We seek to develop new ways of delivering local services that deliver better results at lower cost, and involve local communities to a greater degree.

What we do

Localis aims to provide a link between local government and key figures in business, academia, the third sector, parliament and the media. We aim to influence the debate on localism, providing innovative and fresh thinking on all areas that local government is concerned with. We have a broad events programme, including roundtable discussions, publication launches and an extensive party conference programme.

We also offer membership to both councils and corporate partners. Our members play a central role in contributing to our work, both by feeding directly into our research projects, and by attending and speaking at our public and private events. We also provide a bespoke consultancy and support service for local authorities and businesses alike.

To find out more about Localis please visit www.localis.org.uk

About Westminster

Westminster City Council serves the heart of London. Accounting for 2% of the UK's GDP, it includes the capital's principal areas of government, shopping, entertainment and tourism and the headquarters of innumerable commercial and professional organisations together with extensive residential areas of all types.

Westminster is committed to making the most of the opportunities afforded by the Government's Big Society and localism agendas to increase democratic participation, reward responsibility and give every citizen, employee and employer in Westminster a greater say in the future of the city.

These are embedded in Westminster's Civic Community Charter which sets out guiding principles for helping the local voluntary sector to thrive, involving a wider array of people and groups in decision-making processes and delivering real improvements to the lives of Westminster residents.

Westminster's aim is to be the most empowering, localist local authority in the country.

About the Author

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Foreword

**Cllr Ed Argar, Cabinet Member for City Management
Westminster City Council**

For many years councils, and their contractors, have by and large cleared up after people, tackling consequences, but not always causes. While I believe there can and should be no question of councils backing away from their core responsibilities, of which keeping streets clean is one, in financially straightened times it is right that we look for fresh thinking about how we can all help play our part by adopting a more environmentally responsible and financially sustainable approach.

Alongside making it easy for people to do the right thing councils need to continue thinking about how, as well as using such traditional tools as enforcement against those who litter or illegally dump rubbish, they and society can help change attitudes to waste and littering (and the volumes of waste we throw away) in more subtle ways. For example 'nudge' theory; how we can help alter social norms around litter and what is acceptable; and how we can all play a part in building a more collaborative and responsible approach between councils, businesses, communities and individuals: in short a 'Big Green Society'.

In addition to assessing the applicability of 'nudge' theory to litter in our neighbourhoods, this pamphlet highlights some creative measures being taken in Westminster, by councils across the UK and around the world in driving home the cleaner, greener message.

In producing this pamphlet and research, Localis have highlighted a hugely important issue for local councils, and indeed for all of us in our day to day lives, and has offered some thought-provoking and innovative recommendations that will repay consideration and debate.

In essence, this pamphlet applies the Big Society ethos to local government for local communities to begin delivering on the 'Big Green Society' in our streets, parks and waterways.

The message of environmental responsibility is not just a worthy end in itself it also makes financial sense.

Introduction

Waste collection may not be the most glamorous of political issues, but it is one of the most visible and important front-line services local authorities provide. The council's role is by no means as simple as sweeping streets or collecting rubbish, but includes the challenges of recycling, and waste disposal, as well as broader maintenance of the streetscape and local green spaces. So for a long time society has generated rubbish and local government has dealt with it. But now councils are faced with a maelstrom of factors that means they need to think about how they can change attitudes to waste and littering, and thus alter the behaviours and perceived social responsibilities of us all – business, communities and individuals.

In particular, the current challenging financial climate for local authorities means councils need to consider new and innovative ways to involve and engage residents and community groups eager to play a role in the maintenance of the streetscape and green spaces. Indeed, councils should look not only at community involvement, but also at working with the business sector and other public sector bodies. The opportunities for cooperation between local authorities and those individuals, groups and businesses willing to contribute to the well-being of their area is not one to be missed and it is up to councils to not only galvanise what willingness already exists, but also to encourage interest and engagement from the wider community. The role of the council should be recast from 'enforcer' to 'enabler' – creating space for what might be called the 'Big Green Society' to flourish, without forcing it upon an unwilling public. As this report shows, there is clearly fertile ground to explore, and with a sensible use of 'carrot' alongside 'stick', much may be accomplished for surprisingly little cost.

This report will offer practical suggestions for reforming the way in which the maintenance of the local environment is carried out by local government. Drawing on lessons from local authorities in the UK, as well as from Europe and further afield, it will explore how best to tailor an environmentally responsible message, ways in which the delivery of streetscape maintenance could be reformed, and the positive benefits such measures would bring. Such benefits do not arrive solely in the

form of a greener planet, a virtuous long-term goal though that may be, but also have a measurably positive effect on the day-to-day lives of local residents, for instance through fostering greater community cohesion, and enhancing overall resident satisfaction, not to mention saving money.

This pamphlet first argues that councils need to look at changing attitudes if longer-term participation by local residents and businesses is to be realised. Whilst the 'values' of a community may take generations to alter, a cultural shift through 'nudge' techniques may allow residents to help themselves rather than rely solely on their local authorities – the first step on the path to changing behaviours for the long term. Secondly, it argues that, looking beyond the community, councils can form beneficial relationships with businesses and public sector bodies to tackle waste, recycling issues and the maintenance of the streetscape.

Our research has led to a set of practical recommendations for local government that will improve the way councils engage with local residents, and empower communities to take more responsibility for the waste they produce – thereby assisting in the preservation of both urban and rural spaces. Councils should tailor their environmental message to suit their locality, considering perception, place and environment. Communication is vital if community engagement is to be fully realised. Financial incentives are by no means the only option to consider, particularly given current constraints, and innovative and dynamic relationships can be mutually beneficial for local authorities and businesses alike.

- 1 DEFRA, <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/>
- 2 Keep Britain Tidy, <http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/KeyIssues/Waste/Default.aspx>
- 3 Information provided directly by Westminster City Council, The cost of waste collection and disposal reduces to £13.4m net expenditure once income of £11.6m paid by businesses to collect and dispose of their waste is factored in.

Context: delivering in an age of austerity

Waste collection and disposal is currently one of the costliest frontline services local authorities deliver; the UK produces more than 80 million tonnes of rubbish every year¹ at a cost to councils of over £1.3 billion.² Westminster City Council alone spends around £25m annually on waste and recycling collection and disposal and, in 2010/11, collected and disposed of 181,640 tonnes of waste.³

In the current financial climate, local authorities will be forced look at how much their residents and businesses are throwing away, and consider how money can be saved through changing behaviours around waste and recycling without compromising the

council's commitments and duties to delivering high quality services. Even the smallest changes to the actions of businesses and residents can make a significant difference, and not just financially. Altering attitudes to waste carry a number of other benefits for communities, including changing how residents view their responsibilities to their neighbourhood, increased community cohesion and advantages for delivering on the long term sustainability agenda more broadly.



1. Empowerment alongside enforcement

1.1 The Big Society

Rebalancing the relationship between the state and the citizen is at the heart of the Coalition Government's Big Society agenda, and it is the application of the Big Society vision and ethos to local waste and green issues that is the key to successful local authority-driven community engagement. The challenge councils face is how to involve communities and local groups whilst juggling reduced budgets and ensuring the quality of service delivery and resident satisfaction remains high – the council's core responsibilities. Whilst financial incentives may not always be a possibility, and some coercive measures remain a hard sell politically, councils should be prepared to think afresh about how they go about involving and engaging with the community.

Lambeth Community Freshview Scheme

The London Borough of Lambeth's Community Freshview Scheme – named 'best community scheme' at the Keep Britain Tidy Awards – involves community representatives providing suggestions on how to improve their local area. The council describes the scheme, started in 2008, as a way for 'residents [to] join forces with the council to makeover their local areas'⁴ and is a leading example of Lambeth's move towards becoming a cooperative council. The council itself provides officers to advise on the tools that might best achieve the suggested improvements and holds meetings to gather volunteers. The success of the scheme has been marked. In 2011 alone, 1,050 meters of hedge has been cut back, hundreds of shrubs planted, and over 88 tonnes of general waste have been removed.

The key message from this case study is that the Big Society ethos works. If councils take positive steps to engage with the community then the results can be beneficial for residents and local authorities alike. Community Freshview is a low cost way – £150–£200 per session⁵ – of empowering local volunteers to maintain and to reinvigorate their local environment, in addition to galvanising a spirit of volunteerism within the community.

Local authorities should look to change their mind-sets from that purely of service provider to one of 'enabler'. There are volunteers and community groups that – with a little coaxing, and perhaps organising, on the part of the council – are eager and prepared to do their bit for their local area. Local authorities should provide the opportunities for such residents to get involved or risk missing out on a pool of potentially dedicated volunteers. There are, of course, a wide range of hard-working community groups and voluntary organisations out there already, but local authorities should realise that currently uninvolved residents can also be a part of the solution.

- **RECOMMENDATION: Local authorities should look to broaden their role from that of service provider to 'enabler' – providing the opportunities for those residents that want to contribute to do so, whilst continuing to deliver on the councils' core responsibilities.**

4 London Borough of Lambeth, <http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/Services/TransportStreets/>

5 Local Government Regulation (formerly LACORS) <http://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/ContentDetails.aspx?id=22086> StreetCare Cleaning/Community Freshview.html

1.2 Empowering the citizen

If councils can enable residents to help themselves through community empowerment methods, and foster pride amongst residents for their local area, then they will more readily take responsibility for the maintenance of their neighbourhood. Local authorities should look towards empowering citizens in an attempt to both maintain and increase levels of community participation; making residents feel they are making a difference.

Essex Waste Busters

Wasted food costs an average family of four more than £1,800 each year. One third of what we throw away could be composted.⁶ To address the financial and environmental impact of waste, Essex's Waste Busters programme – run by independent charity Waste Watch on behalf of Essex County Council – recruits volunteers to act as advocates for waste reduction within their communities. A forty-strong army of Waste Busters support the 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign at grass-roots level, spreading the message about reducing food waste and composting within their local area. Volunteers host workshops on cooking with leftovers; promote home composting at local shows and fairs; demonstrate how to use seasonal produce; talk to community groups about meal planning and portion sizes, and host drop-in surgeries about composting.

The scheme recognises that delivering a real reduction in waste volume requires more than state action. It requires individuals, families and communities take responsibility for the volume of waste they generate and for the impact this has on the environment. With this in mind, the scheme's sustainable, volunteer-led model allows for maximum community impact – by March 2012, Essex's Waste Busters will have delivered their message directly at more than 230 events and to some 13,800 residents. Estimates suggest that this scheme has the potential to save local taxpayers almost £200,000 per year through reduced waste disposal costs and landfill tax liabilities.⁷

One method is to officially recognise the work that community groups carry out. The London Borough of Bromley and Sheffield City Council, for example, have demonstrated the success of this approach through their Street Friends and Friends of Parks groups and Snow

⁶ Essex County Council

⁷ Essex County Council

Wardens scheme respectively. In both instances councils have led, run, and guided initiatives that have enabled volunteers to participate in the maintenance of the streetscape and green spaces whilst enhancing the notion that the community is working with the council as part of the solution. These are the easy first-steps to implementing the Big Green Society.



Indeed, this aspect of council engagement with local volunteers has opened up discussion across the local government sector of the possibility of local 'waste officers' that could be a cost-effective solution for council led and community driven action on local green and waste issues. There are examples of similar practices by local authorities already, notably Westminster City Council's 'Wardens', that have proved successful in providing an alternative channel through which residents can communicate with their council about waste issues and the condition of their neighbourhood. The Westminster Wardens work with residents groups and local businesses to provide short and medium term solutions to localised waste problems. The lesson here is that mechanisms for cooperation and communication between the council and community should also be pursued by local authorities if they are to be successful in community engagement. Identifying and reporting local problems is just as important a part of participation as sweeping, planting and painting.

Indeed, there could also be a further role for the wardens or officers responsible for the local environment. The development of

wider skill-sets through a broader range of responsibilities beyond those associated with environmental management could prove both effective and cost-efficient for local authorities. Local street operatives' roles could extend to waste collection, parking and even education – in the form of school visits, and talks to community groups about the impact of littering or recycling. Local authorities should not rule out the possibility of extending the portfolio of street operatives or wardens to target a wider range of local environmental issues more effectively.

Westminster Wardens

Westminster City Council employs 20 local Wardens and three senior Wardens with powers to enforce against abandoned waste, fly tipping, dog fouling, littering, illegal street-trading and highway obstructions. Each warden is based in a specific area and deals with local priorities and issues driven by the ward member, residents associations and the local business community. The wardens are supported by a team of Response Wardens, and implement short to medium term solutions for localised problems. The Wardens provide a conduit through which residents and businesses can communicate with the council and work with a local official to improve their area and tackle problems swiftly and efficiently. Whilst this example does not demonstrate direct community participation, it highlights the importance of affecting changes in attitudes to working with the council by providing mediums through which to do so. The case study also shows the usefulness of enforcement balanced with support. The experience at Westminster City Council suggests that such an initiative is cost effective – the wardens are responsible for driving 30% (£3.4 million in 2010/11) of the council's commercial waste income.⁸ This is due to increasing the revenue of waste carriers and decreasing the cost to the council of disposing of dumped unpaid waste. Such a saving covers the salaries of the wardens and their accompanying response team each year.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** Councils should look to empower local residents and businesses who are eager to contribute to the maintenance and improvement of their local environment, not just through making official the work that they do but also providing the opportunity for residents to become local representatives or 'go-betweens', enabling wider community involvement and engagement.

8 Westminster City Council

1.3 Leading by example

If local authorities are truly to become 'enablers' in providing and promoting opportunities for those residents wanting to contribute, they should endeavour to lead by example.

In June 2010, staff at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, America, had their desk litter bins replaced with six-inch-tall cartons. Proposed by Rosi Kerr, the college's Sustainability Director, the idea was to reduce the volume of rubbish made by the college, using basic psychological principles.

Kerr's thinking was that by reducing the size of the office litter bins it would reduce the amount of rubbish produced that could have been recycled. Each office space is allocated one large no-sort recycling bin but the rest must fit into the small carton. Once full, it is then the owner's responsibility to carry it to the disposal area. The results have been remarkable – Dartmouth employees have reduced the amount of waste they send to landfill by 200 tonnes and recycling is up by over 30%.

Despite seen as an inconvenience at first by staff, Ms Kerr has been successful in changing their habits and attitudes towards their trash. "Almost everything is recyclable and if you have to stay connected with what you're sending to landfill, you'll take advantage of that,"⁹ she said.

As the Government's review of Waste Policy released in June this year stated: "*We need to move beyond our current throwaway society to a "zero waste economy" in which material resources are re-used, recycled or recovered wherever possible, and only disposed of as the option of very last resort.*"¹⁰

The Dartmouth experience is just one such initiative that local authorities could replicate throughout the UK to reduce their own waste by changing the behaviour of their own staff.

- **RECOMMENDATION: The role of the local authority is central to meeting the Government's 'zero waste' economy commitment and as such they should lead by example starting with their own staff.**

1.4 Changing behaviours: 'nudge' strategies

In the UK there is a clear and present need for a cultural change with regard to waste. A recent experiment conducted by Keep Britain Tidy with Royal Parks demonstrated how the public did not deal with their own litter when cleaning and waste collection services were withdrawn.¹¹ When park bins were empty the public disposed of their

9 Foster, J. 'With Tiny Cans, a New Trash Equation', The New York – A Blog About Energy and the Environment (July 2011) [<http://green.blogs.nytimes>]

10 Government Review of Waste Policy in England in 2011, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, p 10 [<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13540-waste-policy-review110614.pdf>]

11 Keep Britain Tidy, Hyde Park Experiment <http://www.KeepBritaintidy.org/News/Default.aspx?newsID=1038.com/2011/07/12/with-tiny-cans-a-new-trash-equation/>

litter responsibly, but once the bins were full and/or overflowing the attitude changed. Hyde Park was left in a heavily littered state after just one weekend without rubbish collection services. This experiment demonstrated that the public's attitude to waste is, in many cases, heavily predisposed towards the notion that 'someone else' – in most cases a local authority – will deal with the fallout and 'mop-up' after even those who break the rules. The Big Society model then, is not enough. What is needed is a cultural shift, an attitude change on a local – and hopefully, eventually, on a national – level. And whilst 'value' changes across communities may take generations to be fully recognisable, behavioural and attitude change is an important first step on the path to that change.

There are a number of examples from countries across the world that have demonstrated the scale that community schemes can operate on including the success of the Keep Australia Beautiful Network and their 'Clean Up Australia' days. Whilst the Big Society and nudge strategies are by no means inextricably linked, in the UK councils need to at least begin to try to re-define social norms about what is and what is not acceptable behaviour if community volunteerism and participation is going to be significant.

Keep Australia Beautiful Network

The schemes run by the Keep Australia Beautiful Network ¹² demonstrate the scale on which nudge strategies can take place.

The Network runs the 'Tidy Towns' awards – coveted by towns across Australia – which fosters community pride in their local urban environments, whilst the 'Litterers Anonymous' campaign, endorsed and fronted by Australian celebrities, encourages people to not just use bins, but use the right bin (where recycling bins are available).

Perhaps most notable is the success of the 'Clean up Australia Day'. This annual event, launched in 1989, has now become the nation's largest community-based environmental scheme. Since its inception, Australians have devoted more than 24 million hours towards their local environments and collected over 200,000 tonnes of rubbish. The day usually attracts upward of 30,000 volunteers across the country. ¹³

The scale of this example is not the focus here. Councils should consider that schemes such as this can be used to encourage large-scale local participation and thus could prove a useful method of beginning the process of changing attitudes and cultures around, for example, litter.

¹² www.kab.org.au

¹³ Clean Up Australia Day, Available at < <http://www.cleanup.org.au/au/CleanUpEvents/clean-up-australia-day-2010.html>>

Local authorities can begin the process of cultural change through what have been dubbed 'nudge' strategies. The essence of Wilson and Kelling's 'broken window' theory¹⁴ – which argues that the internalisation of social norms by communities stems from observing behaviours of others – is applicable here. If councils can begin to change the attitudes of residents towards litter for example then cultural shifts will likely occur across the wider community fostering civic pride and a positive, responsible approach more widely. In addition, the powers of community 'disapproval' in setting acceptable social norms will become an increasing factor.

A simple nudge strategy may involve incentivising and rewarding community engagement and participation, thus positively reinforcing behavioural changes. Local government should not overlook the importance of rewarding volunteers and helpful residents, starting with a simple 'thank you' letter, text message or email. However, perhaps even more appealing to some residents that get involved is the prospect of work experience, a qualification or transferable skills that can be useful for them in the future. Tower Hamlets Council has demonstrated the importance of gaining experience for residents and community groups in relation to transferable skills. Members of the Tower Hamlets Muslim Women's Collective were trained by council officers to conduct environmental surveys, freeing up more time for officers and giving the women transferable skills for use in future employment. Local authorities should not underestimate the importance and benefits of these methods of incentivisation when it comes to engaging residents and encouraging wider attitude changes towards participation.

Fostering attitudinal changes amongst local residents could perhaps be achieved through other means: posters, advertisement and litter bin size and location have all been experimented with. But whatever the method, councils should focus on making residents feel that they can both play a part in maintaining and improving the area they live in, thus influencing their perceived social responsibilities and behaviours. If local government can tackle this difficult problem and move communities away from the culture of "the council will deal with it" then the benefit for both residents and local authorities will be marked.

¹⁴ Wilson, J. & Kelling, G. Broken Windows, The Atlantic Monthly (March 1982)

Sutton's Smarter Streets

The London Borough of Sutton's 'Smarter Streets Behavioural Trials Project' aims to stimulate a 'move away from a society where the minority think it is ok to drop litter and the majority tolerate it because they think someone else will pick it up i.e. the council, towards one where people take pride in their local environment and therefore don't drop litter, let their dog foul the pavement or tolerate others doing this.'¹⁵

The council has rescheduled and reduced regular sweeping and cleaning of certain areas, supplementing this approach with a number of channels through which to communicate with local residents and businesses about the maintenance of the streetscape. Monitoring of the areas is increased along with higher levels of engagement with the local community including involving Networked Neighbourhood teams and encouraging local residents to volunteer and generate recommendations. Whilst the scheme has only been trialled this year and its results are not yet available, the initial feedback is positive and the process is expected to make the council significant savings.

- **RECOMMENDATION: Local government can bring about cultural and behavioural shifts in residents with regard to care of local environments through 'nudge' strategies. Positive reinforcement of community participation and making residents feel part of the solution are key.**

1.5 Communication and the importance of the messenger

We have seen how the right messages can nudge residents into behavioural changes and attitude shifts in terms of the way care of the local environment is viewed. But for messages to be heeded, they need to be received. Therefore local authorities need also to think about how best to convey their environmentally responsible message to local communities and consider through which mediums the most residents are likely to be reached, as well as who is delivering that message – is the messenger 'trusted'. And, because communication is a two-way process, they should consider, as the Westminster Wardens example demonstrates, how residents can contact the council, not just how the council can contact the residents.

We believe that social media and the internet can play an instrumental role here. If councils are to encourage behavioural

¹⁵ London Borough of Sutton, Smarter Streets: changing behaviour in challenging times, additional information for councillors (Nov 2010) p.2

change amongst their residents then contacting the council and reporting waste issues could and should be made simpler. Facebook, Twitter and other social networking websites are all tools which councils are utilising more and more, and engaging residents and local communities on issues such as littering and recycling should be a key part of that. The easier it is for residents to engage – especially ‘remotely’ (via mobile phones, for instance) – the more they will do so. The result is that councils are alerted to problems sooner, and whilst the speed of the council’s response is key, if problems can be dealt with quickly, residents will notice how they can have impact, and a swift impact at that, on improving their neighbourhood. Returning to the ‘broken window’ theory, if residents feel they can help to mend ‘windows’, fewer will get broken in the first place.

Westminster’s Quick Response Codes

Westminster City Council has recently announced a new recycling initiative that aims to help effect behavioural and attitudinal change to street recycling.

The proposal is for the application of Quick Response (QR) codes (a specific matrix barcode that is readable by dedicated barcode readers) onto the tops of recycling litterbins. The QR code, when scanned with a camera phone equipped with a reader application, will direct the user to a dedicated website to enable the user to enter their details for entry into a prize draw and access to other incentives, such as discounts for local businesses. This use of QR codes is often referred to as ‘mobile tagging’. The application of the QR codes will be for bins in the busiest thoroughfares and will be supported by an advertising campaign on poster sites in the vicinity, as well as promoting the scheme in newsletters and on the website.

Westminster will be the first council to use such technology in the recycling sector, the project is designed to utilise existing infrastructure to engage with passers-by. The initiative will be funded by DEFRA.

The riots of August 2011 in London – and throughout the UK – confirmed the importance of social media networks and the role they can play in co-ordinating community action in cleaning up a local area. The @riotcleanup Twitter account was established on 9th August and within a few days had attracted well over 85,000 followers. A

number of accompanying websites and Facebook groups were also established as the use of the internet and such networks became the central medium by which residents expressed their sense of community and acted upon it. It allowed those who felt powerless watching the footage on television to become empowered, helping local residents and businesses get back on their feet. Within just 24 hours of the riots, hundreds of local residents were on the streets of London, and other affected parts of the UK, to work alongside council services to clean up their area. Images of people sweeping up the mess have, by consequence, become almost as ingrained as those of the rioting itself.



Love Lewisham

In 2005 the London Borough of Lewisham launched the 'Love Lewisham' environmental tool which enables residents to report waste problems online or from their mobile phones (there is even an iPhone 'app'). This innovative use of technology has allowed residents to get involved with the maintenance of their local environment more easily and has fostered greater community input into targeted cleaning and the improvement of the local environment. The website allows residents to monitor and track the progress of the problems they report through a live map. Not only does this increase council transparency – as it allows residents to judge the council's performance in 'real time' – but it has had a significant positive effect on

the streetscape across the area. Graffiti levels, for example, have fallen dramatically: by 73% between 2006 and 2010¹⁶ due to the increasingly fast response time by the council reacting to reported graffiti. The Love Lewisham case clearly highlights the impact that greater community engagement has had on the culture of the community in respect of its attitude towards tolerating graffiti. The council has been able to influence behaviour of its residents by enabling them to target the problem through simple and effective channels for community participation. The success of 'Love Lewisham' is reflected in the way the campaign has been extended by the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. 'Love Clean London' was launched in March 2011 and allows Londoners to report litter and other local environmental problems by phone, text or online to their local authority.

As well as how messages are conveyed, who conveys those messages can also be important. And for messages about improving local environmental quality, it is residents, rather than council officers, who are more likely to be effective at engaging with and 'inspiring' other residents to both participate and change their behaviours. There are number of international examples that demonstrate this point. Sundsvall in Sweden, for example, experimented with a scheme that turned 20 previously unemployed local residents into 'Environmental Guardians' responsible for the local streetscape and green spaces and for raising awareness at various workplaces about green issues such as recycling. The lesson here is that empowering citizens to directly communicate a green message to others may prove more successful in internalising social norms and behavioural change amongst communities.

Another channel that could be explored by local authorities is parish councils, which could potentially play an intermediary role between resident and council. Increased local democracy would engage and include residents and inspire attitude and behavioural change.

- **RECOMMENDATION: Local authorities should be innovative about enabling a two way communication process between resident and council. This will enable residents to engage through reporting problems and allow councils to better communicate their green message. Councils should also consider the importance of residents themselves as messengers.**

16 'Winning the war against graffiti', <http://lovelewisham.wordpress.com> (June 2011)

1.6 Tailoring the message: finding a bespoke solution

It is also important that local authorities tailor their green messages to their particular locality – there is never a ‘one size fits all’ solution. Recent research carried out by Keep Britain Tidy into ‘perceptions of place’¹⁷ highlighted the link between people’s aspirations and their willingness to change their attitudes towards their environment. This signals a need for the tailoring of messages between more and less deprived areas, emphasising the point that socio-economic status plays a crucial role in the way communities communicate with each other and the local authority. In short, different areas will require different solutions and therefore different messages. Councils should also consider the speed at which different areas demonstrate behavioural change and the conflict that this may throw up in relation to the short-term nature of political cycles in the UK. In other words, campaigns focused on increasing environmental responsibility would benefit from cross-party (and therefore long-term) support, if that can be achieved.

There are practical issues when it comes to finding the correct way to communicate and engage. Incentivising and promoting recycling behaviours, something the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has managed effectively with the ‘RecycleBank’ scheme, is more complicated in urban environments where apartment blocks share bins and recycling facilities. The logic seems to be that where there are a few good recyclers those without such inclination will be rewarded, or else that a few uncooperative residents will ruin things for everyone. On the other hand, building on the general ethos of the Big Society, councils could consider whether community-wide incentives are possible: money to spend on improving a local area as a shared reward, based on the area’s recycling achievements or other measurable green credentials. A key challenge for local government is finding a method of encouraging community wide change in areas which otherwise might prove difficult.

- **RECOMMENDATION: Communication of a green vision and nudging communities into behavioural changes is possible but requires a targeted, locally specific and socio-economically relevant focus. Rewarding the community as a whole for its combined efforts is an option that could create a virtuous cycle which benefits local authority and resident alike. Local authorities should attempt to gain an understanding of residents’ motivations and which incentives they will best respond to.**

¹⁷ Keep Britain Tidy, Whose reality is it anyway? Understanding the impact of deprivation on perceptions of place (2011)

2. Beyond the Community

2.1 Businesses and the role of the private sector

The government's Big Society agenda is often assumed to focus on the community and voluntary sectors, with the result that wider relationships and initiatives are sometimes overlooked. But the private sector creates waste too – around 86% of which can be recycled.¹⁸ Local authorities should consider the role that businesses can and do play in the maintenance of the local environment and how they can better work with the private sector to strive for cleaner, safer, greener environments.

A frequently cited case study of businesses involvement in streetscape maintenance is in New York City where local businesses are legally required to maintain the pavement outside their premises (and a small amount of the road too). This is monitored by the local authorities and fines distributed for those businesses that do not keep to the required standard of maintenance. Whilst this system and others like it may appear successful overseas, the underlying notion of making businesses contribute to the maintenance of the streetscape through legal obligation is a difficult political line to toe in the UK – business would argue that they already pay business rates that should cover costs for services including waste disposal and street cleaning services. But the idea of businesses coming together to contribute additional funds to enhance their local area, via the Business Improvement District (BID) structure is growing in popularity.

¹⁸ Information supplied directly by Paddington BID

McDonald's litter team



Paddington BID Recycling Scheme

Paddington BID was the first Business Improvement District in the UK to offer a collective recycling service for businesses. The BID, which commenced in April 2005, includes 350 businesses across 34 streets surrounding Paddington Station. The BID area is a mix of offices, hotels, shops, pubs, student accommodation, restaurants, estate agents, health and beauty.

Introduced initially in January 2007, the service now provides a co-mingled commercial recycling scheme for all businesses within the BID area. The BID levy funds the scheme in its entirety. The BID's contractors, First Mile, distribute free Paddington BID-branded sacks and tape on request and collect from the kerbside or service road outside business premises three times weekly, agreed by and with the backing of Westminster City Council. Businesses can order sacks and tape online, and also request special collections in this way. A 24-hour customer helpline means that no business finds the hours of operation a barrier to recycling.

Around 200 Paddington businesses recycle on a regular basis, 50% of businesses in Paddington. The scheme includes the free collection of waste electrical equipment, furniture, toner cartridges and fluorescent tubes, all of which businesses would have to otherwise dispose of privately at their own cost. A pilot glass recycling scheme is also in operation, with 20 restaurants and pubs participating. A dedicated Paddington 'freecycle' scheme is also in development.

Monthly recycling reports are produced by the contractor for Paddington BID, and businesses receive personalised annual recycling certificates to show the weight of what they recycle each year. The BID team has dedicated online access to an account management system, enabling them to understand who is recycling, and the quantities recycled per business. Each month 12,000 sacks are collected from 164 locations in Paddington, weighing almost 60,000 kg. The top recycler averages 50 sacks per collection.¹⁹

Whilst avoiding undue coercion, councils have much to gain from working with the business community. Businesses realise that social responsibility is increasingly important as part of their wider brand image. The recent focus on businesses' 'environmental credentials' for example indicates the importance businesses place on the way they are perceived. Roper and Parker's 2009 paper demonstrated

¹⁹ Information supplied directly by Paddington BID

20 Roper, S. & Parker, C. Doing Well by Doing Good: A quantitative investigation of the litter effect, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Special Edition on Sustainability (December 2009)

21 Keep Britain Tidy, 2011, 'Branded Litter Study 2010/211,' Available at http://www.keeppbritaintidy.org/ImgLibrary/Keep%20Britain%20Tidy%20Branded%20Litter%20Study%202011-%20FINAL_2880.pdf.

22 Keep Britain Tidy, 2011, 'Branded Litter Study 2010/211,' Available at http://www.keeppbritaintidy.org/ImgLibrary/Keep%20Britain%20Tidy%20Branded%20Litter%20Study%202011-%20FINAL_2880.pdf.

23 <http://corporate.greggs.co.uk/environment>

24 http://www.bedford.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_news/archived_news/march_2010/big_tidy_up_2010.aspx

how damaging branded litter is to a brand or a company's image – particularly within the food sector.²⁰ Indeed, large food retailers in particular, such as McDonald's, have already demonstrated their approach and commitment to tackling waste and litter through work with Keep Britain Tidy's 'Love Where You Live' campaign and, more independently, with their own 'litter teams'. It would seem therefore that businesses are open to participation in the maintenance of the local environment (Roper and Parker demonstrate that there is a direct financial incentive for them to do so) and it is up to local government to try and harness this opportunity.

Greggs

Greggs, a leading bakery retailer, exemplifies the role some businesses voluntarily take in the improvement of the local environment – supporting methods of reducing litter and encouraging its customers to act responsibly when it comes to their waste. In 2010/11 'Branded Litter Survey' Greggs was the third most littered brand in the UK, at around 6%²¹; an improvement on 2009/10 in which Greggs was second on 8%.²² In order to address this issue, the company has been working with Keep Britain Tidy, including involvement with the 'Love Where You Live' campaign and more widely with councils and local communities wherever specific litter problems have been identified.

Working with over 50 local authorities and employing a number of different initiatives including anti-litter signage, 'bags for life' (reducing plastic bag usage by their customers by 17% in 2008 alone²³), daily shop frontage clearances, and joining 'Big Tidy Ups' such as the 'Lets Tidy Bedford Together' campaign²⁴ in 2010 (involving staff, their families and local volunteers), Greggs demonstrates that social responsibility and an environmental conscience are important to the private sector. It is this type of corporate responsibility that councils should look to harness in their relationships with local business.

- **RECOMMENDATION: Local authorities should seek to develop mutually beneficial relationships with the private sector, including working with businesses already dedicated to improving the local environment.**

2.2 Developing green relationships: how councils can work with the business community

There are a number of innovative methods local authorities could consider to engage the business community in the improvement of local areas. Incentivisation for community engagement, for example, could be achieved through collaborating with businesses to provide vouchers or discounts for residents and community groups that have demonstrated exceptional green credentials or participated in local environmental projects. Alternatively councils can look to advertise schemes and promote green messages and behaviours through local businesses; McDonalds will be advertising Keep Britain Tidy's 'Love Where You Live' campaign in their restaurants, for example. The key here is to build upon the clear incentive the private sector has to engage with any Big Green Society – and, in so doing, reduce the burden on the public sector of implementing it. That such initiatives are more carrot than stick is no bad thing.

Communication of the green message via local authority digital media (website, Twitter and Facebook pages) can be further enhanced if councils seek relationships with businesses and local press. These relationships can help councils disseminate information to residents more effectively, providing information on local projects and praising local success stories. The London Borough of Lambeth have, for instance, worked with independent and local newspapers as well as their in-house publication, *Lambeth Life*, to inform residents about how they can improve their local areas with help from the council.

Windsor and Maidenhead "Recyclebank"

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's 'RecycleBank' scheme rewards residents who recycle by allowing them to 'bank' certain points and discounts for use in local shops and restaurants according to how much they have recycled. Specialist bins given to households weigh the amount of recycling from each dwelling and RecycleBank points are allocated accordingly. The scheme will be rolled out borough-wide but, since the trials in 2009, the council notes:

- 61% of eligible households have activated their rewards accounts;
- More than twenty million RecycleBank Points have been earned for discounts and offers at over 100 shops, leisure centres,

businesses, attractions and cafés/restaurants – with many residents giving their Points to local charity and schools; and, most importantly

- Residents in the trial increased their recycling by 35%.²⁵

This case study demonstrates how councils can work with businesses to incentivise certain desirable behaviours. By positively reinforcing good recycling practice, residents are nudged into changing their culture towards waste – hopefully for the long term – while supporting local businesses at the same time.

The government's recent announcement of plans to allow councils to retain more of the business rates they raise locally could have repercussions for developing relationships between councils and businesses. For instance, financial incentives could be considered by local authorities, perhaps in the form of a business rates discount, for those businesses that demonstrate a willingness to participate or contribute to the maintenance of the streetscape, carry out effective recycling and, waste limitation initiatives or similar beneficial behaviour. The challenge for local authorities is to encourage business sector participation whilst maintaining the required high standard and frequency of local environmental improvement services.

In 2010/11 Westminster City Council sent just 13% of their total waste collected (181,640 tonnes) to landfill whilst saving approximately 50% of their landfill tax costs (around £700,000) recovered through commercial waste income. The re-let of the 2010 waste, recycling and street cleansing contract (2010–2017) also saw the council make procurement efficiency savings of £1.3m annually for the seven year duration.²⁶ This example demonstrates the increasing efficiency with which councils are streamlining their procurement contracts and making savings in areas of waste management and disposal.

With this in mind, local authorities should consider the benefits and opportunities presented by systems of payment by results. If councils can agree contracts that, for instance, reward providers for reducing the amount of waste landfilled, then those providers will look to incentivise residents in turn. Incentivisation of this kind is both popular (as an alternative to enforcement techniques) and effective. Indeed, since the Government's consultation on incentives to minimise household waste and increase recycling in 2007, a variety of alternative schemes have been put forward from private contractors

²⁵ Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/wm_recyclebank.htm

²⁶ Westminster City Council

that focus in incentivised recycling, producing ‘very positive results’.²⁷

But the effectiveness of payment by results schemes goes beyond the immediate impact on landfill and recycling by acting as another means of nudging communities into attitudinal change regarding their recycling. Incentivisation and positive reinforcement is met with a positive reaction from communities opposed to the negative feeling that surrounds enforcement through charging schemes and the public mistrust that greets the ‘spy in the bin’ or ‘pay as you throw’ – schemes.²⁸

Finally, it should be noted that the positive reception and success of payment by results schemes should not disguise the fact that they are not universally applicable in certain forms. For example, it would be harder for initiatives such as RecycleBank to operate effectively in denser urban areas because of the proportion of residents that live in apartment blocks and share recycling facilities (making it almost impossible to calculate an individual household’s recycling). Whilst other variations of payment by results may be more applicable – a community-wide or estate-wide reward for example – the importance of this point is that schemes should be tailored to local environments, to their local residents and to the capabilities of the local authority, and that innovative payment mechanisms should be looked at being developed.

- **RECOMMENDATION: Local government should consider different ways of working with the private sector and working with the business community to provide appropriate financial incentives for residents in order to encourage behavioural changes including, where appropriate, payment by results contracts.**

2.3 Other organisations and public sector bodies

For councils there are additional opportunities for relationship-building beyond the private sector. Anti-litter groups and public sector bodies all provide local authorities with a range of potential partnerships and mutually beneficial relationships. Partnerships of this kind, such as Sutton’s work with Keep Britain Tidy on the ‘Smarter Streets’ campaign, allow local authorities to experiment and trial different approaches to community engagement.

²⁷ <http://www.veoliaenvironmentalservices.co.uk/Documents/Publications/Main/Reports/Incentivising%20HWR.pdf>

²⁸ Ibid.

Durham and Darlington Primary Care Trust

Public sector bodies can also have a role to play, working with councils, in aspects of streetscape maintenance. Durham and Darlington PCT gave Durham County Council £1m over two years²⁹ to purchase grit to combat snow and ice on roads and pavements. This funding was used as a preventative measure against residents slipping and injuring themselves – a problem the PCT saw as being costly to the local health services. The money also helped to provide a long term solution as tractors and other heavy machinery were purchased to deal with harsh winter conditions in the years to come. This is an excellent example of how early intervention initiatives can and the use of joined-up government to achieve it has, for obvious long term financial reasons, become a key component of governmental policy. Joining up green policy with other strands of government spending should remain an important objective.

- **RECOMMENDATION: Councils should, where appropriate, seek to collaborate with other public sector bodies to improve local environments for mutual benefit. For instance, councils' increased influence over local health funding offers an opportunity for early intervention schemes relevant to the local environment.**

29 <http://services.parliament.uk/hansard/ Commons /ByDate/ 20100315 /petitions/ part001.html>

3. Conclusion

These are difficult times for local authorities. However this report demonstrates that it is far from impossible to improve both local environmental outcomes and engagement with local communities and businesses notwithstanding fiscal austerity. Local authorities should make an effort to approach communities in a way which will not only engage them in the process of neighbourhood maintenance but also make them feel as though they are part of the solution and, where possible, acknowledge and reward them for their positive achievements. We also advocate that local authorities should examine the possibility of developing mutually beneficial relationships with those private sector bodies that have the improvement of the local environment as their goal.

This report has outlined a number of strands of policy that local authorities should consider in seeking to encourage a Big Green Society ethos among their local communities, and so 'nudge' them into changing their behaviours and attitudes towards waste and recycling. We suggest that councils should build on the efforts of those residents who already keen to contribute to the improvement of their local areas, as well as seeking to change the behaviours and attitudes of those who are not already engaged in this agenda. A simple 'thank you' is a good starting point, but councils should consider appropriate incentives and tools of empowerment – such as effective two-way communication – in order to foster positive attitudes among communities that will, in turn, develop into new social norms.

Businesses and other public sector bodies are not 'off limits' either. Local authorities should view the increasing importance placed on social responsibility by the private sector as an opportunity to develop relationships beneficial to the streetscape, local green spaces and residents.

To achieve high quality, resourceful service delivery, to improve resident satisfaction and expand community engagement with local people and businesses, councils have to look beyond provision and enforcement alone. When it comes to tackling green issues, if local government can become efficient enablers and effective communicators, then the implementation of a Big Green Society could be a reality.



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