

A report into fly tipping in the East of England

Purpose

To present the results of research assessing the scale, nature and frequency of fly tipping across the East of England undertaken by the Hertfordshire Rural Forum through the National Farmers Union and the Country Land & Business Association with support from the East of England Development Agency.

Summary

The research explored the characteristics of fly tipping incidences across the east of England. The evidence is supported by emerging figures from the national database Flycapture that has since been created and identifies a number of areas where improvements could be made. It concludes by suggesting a number of recommendations for action at various levels to tackle the problem.

Background

The Herts Rural Forum identified rural crime and particularly fly tipping as one of the key issues affecting Hertfordshire's rural communities and in particular landowners and land managers. The Forum has worked to raise the profile of fly tipping amongst key agencies and attempt to address the issue of a lack of evidence.

In April 2004 the Herts Rural Forum co-hosted a regional fly tipping conference with the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) and the Environment Agency. The timing of the event coincided with the consultation period for the government's fly tipping strategy and the launch of the Flycapture database in April 2004. The outputs from this event formed the basis of a response to the consultation.

The Herts Rural Forum continues to explore issues associated with rural crime and through its rural crime action group commissioned the study part funded by GO-East and EEDA, and assisted by the regional offices of the NFU and the CLA. The purpose of the study is to quantify and describe the scale, nature, location and frequency of fly-tipping across land-holdings in the East of England. The findings of the study are reported below.

A questionnaire ([Appendix 1](#)) was mailed to 10,000 members belonging to either the National Farmers Union (NFU) or the Country Land & Business Association (CLA) across the East of England. 1600 responses were received (16% return rate) and the results reveal the significance of the problem. A way forward is suggested alongside a number of suggested actions.

Instances of fly-tipping

- 88% of those responding had experience fly-tipping on their land (Q1).
- Over half of those replying have experienced fly-tipping on at least a monthly basis, and approximately one quarter report new instances on a weekly basis.
- 3% reported that they encounter daily instances of fly-tipping (Q2).

Nature of fly-tipping

- The most common types of material reported were (in order) (Q3):
 - Domestic rubbish
 - Green waste
 - Construction/demolition waste
 - White goods
 - Vehicles

This is consistent with the intelligence now coming out of Flycapture which for the districts of Hertfordshire indicate Household waste, green waste and construction waste as the top three.

- The scale of fly-tipping varied between dustbin sized loads (32%) to truck sized loads (28%) (Q4).

These figures indicate a more even spread between the size of incidents compared with data coming out of Flycapture for Herts which suggests a strong trend in favour of single item or car boot size loads.
- Very few responses identified any particular pattern to the timing and frequency of fly-tipping. Those that did identified a diverse number of reasons from which there was very little commonality with the exception of fly-tipping occurring at weekends and at night (Q5).

Location of fly-tipping

- Two-thirds of respondents identified fly-tipping as a countryside problem rather than one belonging to the urban fringe (Q7).
- The most popular sites for fly-tipping were field gateways with country lanes and farm tracks identified second and third.
- Fewer responses indicated fly-tipping occurring in open fields or farmyards (Q6).
- Intelligence from Flycapture indicates that the majority of fly tipping occurs on council land or public highway. This may reflect the role of the districts who report it and under represent the element reported in this study occurring on private land.

Responsibility for fly-tipping

- Householders and small businesses were blamed as the main culprits by those responding. Criminals were blamed for the dumping of cars and travellers were identified as a fourth group (Q8).

Reporting fly-tipping

- Only 24% reported instances of fly tipping on their land (Q9).
- Landowners who choose not to report fly tipping cited “nothing happens when I do” as the main reason (58%). Many did not know who to report fly tipping to, whilst others said that they do not have the time to report them all or the amounts are too small to bother reporting (Q12).
- Of those reporting fly tipping the majority referred to the district / borough or city council (i.e.) the waste collection authorities. One fifth passed reports onto the police and others reported problems to the County Council (8%) or the Environment Agency (8%) (Q10).
- Of those reporting problems, approximately half described the response as “supportive”. One quarter as “responsive” and a quarter received an “indifferent” service (Q11).
- The service provided by districts was well received with over 80% reporting them to be supportive or responsive. Parish Councils were seen to be the most receptive organisation whilst having few powers to do anything.

Clearing up fly-tipping

- The majority of landowners clear fly-tipping themselves or move it for the district councils to remove. A quarter said that the district councils clear up fly-tipped materials (Q13).

Preventing fly-tipping

- The overwhelming majority of responses have adopted basic physical measures to prevent fly-tipping ranging from gates to earth banks. Other methods include formal notices or signs. A minority have had a visit from a crime prevention officer or used surveillance cameras (Q15).
- The majority of landowners absorbed the costs of these works themselves (Q16).
- One quarter of those claimed that the measures had had no impact at all and over half said that the problem had simply been displaced.

Conclusions

The results from this regional study paint a picture of fly tipping in the East of England:

- Fly tipping is characterised by householder behaviour (people like you and me), and from small to medium sized business operators dealing in garden waste and construction / building waste. There is only limited evidence of more organised activity
- It is a sizable problem for the individual landowner both in terms of scale and frequency and is largely under-reported
- Fly tipping has an insidious impact on the environment and quality of life stemming from its persistent but unpredictable nature
- There are significant costs to land managers that are largely absorbed
- There is pent up frustration amongst land managers, and a limited confidence in authorities, based on an experience that nothing ever happens
- A minority of landowners know exactly who to report fly-tipping to and only a third of those reporting problems (approx. 10% overall) receive 'supportive' or 'responsive' reactions from the organisations they report to

Suggested way forward

The following is suggested as the way forward following publication of this report.

- The Rural Crime Action Group of the Herts Rural Forum to implement one or two practical projects aimed at reducing fly tipping in the county.
- The Herts Rural Forum and the CLA / NFU to use the findings to raise the profile of rural crime at the East of England Rural Forum in order to get wider ownership of the issues and therefore action at a regional level.
- To identify partners and resources for implementing the proposed fly tipping awareness campaign describing local and regional publicity of the findings of the report to a range of audiences. (Appendix 2)
- To identify partners and resources to develop an action plan that describes local and regional actions in response to the evidence gained.

hertfordshire rural forum

Regional Fly tipping questionnaire: mapping the scale of the problem in the East of England

Following on from last year's regional fly-tipping conference held in association with Go – East, the Environment Agency and the Herts Rural Forum, we are undertaking a piece of research to better understand the scale and nature of fly-tipping throughout the East of England region.

Whilst the conference generated a joint response to the national consultation on a fly-tipping strategy it recognised the apparent lack of information available about fly-tipping in the region, a situation that the Fly-capture database (launched by the Environment Agency in April 2004) is hoping to address.

The attached questionnaire, which is endorsed by the CLA and NFU, will help us to build up a picture of incidences of fly-tipping across the region in the last five years. As landowners and managers you are uniquely placed to respond to this and we would urge you to respond as fully as possible.

The information will substantiate perceptions that the problem is growing, and likely to increase further when the Waste Management Regulations come into force. The evidence can then be used to support bids for increased resources to address the problem as well as to raise the profile of the issue amongst policy makers and the public.

Please take the time to complete the attached questionnaire and return it to the FREEPOST address on the back page. We very much look forward to your responses and hope they will provide us with the clearest picture to date of the nature and scale of the problem.

Trevor Mose

Herts Rural Forum Secretary
On behalf of the Rural Crime Action Group

Instances of fly-tipping

Q1. Have you had any fly-tipping on your land? Yes (Go to Q.2)

No (Go to Q.15)

Q2. On average how often do you encounter new instances of fly-tipping?

Daily Quarterly

Weekly Yearly

Monthly

Q3. What types of waste are typically found fly-tipped on your land?
(tick all that apply)

Green waste Domestic rubbish (black bags)

Appliances Builders waste (rubble etc)

Vehicles Other (Please describe below)

Q4. What is the volume of waste that is typically fly-tipped?

A dustbin load A truck load

A skip load More

Q5. Do you notice any pattern to the frequency and types of fly-tipping?
Please describe below.

Q6. Where does the fly-tipping typically occur?

In field gateways Along farm tracks or byways

In farmyards Along country lanes

In open fields

Q7. How would you describe the generality of where fly-tipping occurs?

Countryside Urban fringe

Q8. Who, in your opinion, are the main culprits?

Householders Criminals (car thieves etc)

Large businesses Small businesses (gardeners etc)

Organised criminal activity Other. Please describe below

Formal notices / signs Physical barriers
Surveillance cameras Visit from crime prevention officer

Q16. Have you had to pay for these measures?

Yes, completely No
Yes, with support from local authority

Q17. How successful have the measures been?

Not at all Displaced the problem elsewhere
Completely

About you

Q18. In which county is the land that you have been describing above?

Q19. Name the town that is nearest to your holding(s).

Q20. Please complete your name and address so that we can report back our findings once the research is complete.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Thank you for taking part in this piece of research. **Please send your completed response to the address below by 11 March 2005:**

Herts Rural Forum regional fly-tipping research
Environmental management group
Herts County Council, County Hall, Pegs Lane
FREEPOST ANG50052
Hertford SG13 8GS

hertfordshire rural forum

Fly tipping in the East of England – suggested awareness campaign

A regional information campaign to include any or all of the following elements:

- Informing people about the problem of fly tipping, including the negative environmental impacts, cost to taxpayers and landowners, prosecution.
- Educate people about the alternatives, to include information about household waste sites, industrial waste sites, where to get more information
- Making it as easy as possible for people to report incidents by publicising contact details and giving clear guidance on what to do if you come across fly tipping
- Implement a number of practical measures.

Outcome and objectives

- To promote the results of the fly tipping survey, and
- To increase reporting and increase data on the FlyCapture database.
- To increase the effectiveness of the justice system at identifying and appropriately charging offenders who commit environmental crime such as fly tipping.
- To make it easier for people to dispose of waste more appropriately

All of which contribute ultimately to

- the reduction of fly-tipping.

Target audiences

- The public. Increase awareness of the impacts and encouraging people to report incidents. Consider targeting certain groups, like walkers, runners, dog walkers and horse riders, employees of key agencies.
- Agencies with responsibility for fly-tipping - Environment Agency, police authorities, district councils, magistrates courts, Crown Prosecution service. Working to ensure a better response to reports of fly tipping and in being more effective at bringing to justice those responsible as well as lobbying for a regulatory framework that encourages proper disposal of waste.
- Land owners/ Land managers. This would include responding to the people who took part in the survey and informing land owners/land managers about the importance of reporting incidents.
- Building firms/small businesses or trade organisations
- Travellers and the gypsy community

Key messages

- We now have evidence showing a significant problem in the region
- Fly tipping is an illegal activity and attracts fines up to £50,000 and up to 5 years imprisonment
- Fly tipping has a negative impact on the environment and quality of life
- It costs up to £150 million a year to clear it away (England and Wales)
- There are a number of ways to dispose of your rubbish
- If you come across fly-tipping – report it
- We should all take responsibility for our own waste - Fly tipping is generally carried out by members of the public, people like you and me

Specific recommendations or practical measures could include:

To enable more effective reporting..

Putting signs at fly tipping black spots, with a location identification number and details on how to report fly tipping, as well as details on fines.

Create a central hotline and web address (could explore using WasteAware)- to reduce confusion about how to report fly tipping. This could then feed through to the various agencies who are involved in fly tipping.

Create a text messaging service – particularly useful for dog walkers, runners, horse riders and land owners who may be first on the scene.

Produce a leaflet

To contain information about fly-tipping, the effect it has on the environment, the cost to taxpayers, deterrents like CCTV and surveillance, how to report incidents. Include do's and don'ts. Distribute this via normal channels plus consider targeting particular areas (10 mile radius of a black spot) or groups (small businesses, dog walkers, runners etc.)

Wallet sized information cards

To contain reporting details – handy for walkers, runners, riders etc.

Media

Launch a media campaign with striking photo and statistics about the problem. Promote hotline number and web address and ask for public support in reporting any incidents.

Newspaper advertising

Consider taking out adverts across the local press to raise the profile of the information hotline and web address

Public / community websites

Make a page on the website dedicated to fly tipping with useful links to necessary agencies etc. the extent of this would be dependent on whether a central web address/portal will be used. E.g. HertsDirect.org

HertsDirect

HertsDirect is delivered to every household in the country. Research shows that it is a very effective method of communicating with the public. An article could be placed in a convenient edition of the magazine.

Fly Capture / District data collection

Change reporting systems to include information of fly-tipping on private land, this is not currently reported in anyway except where considered big bad or nasty by the Environment Agency.

To raise awareness of the need to dispose of waste appropriately....

Explore joint working opportunities with:

Trade organisations – such as federation of Master Builders, to raise awareness of the problem and ask what sorts of problems their members face.

DIY stores and garden centres – to give people information about how to dispose of small scale industrial and garden waste

White goods retailers - such as Dixons, Comet Argos, to provide information about disposing of your old fridge/washing machine and DIY stores about rubble and small scale industrial waste.

Charity shops and house clearance - particularly those who offer a collection service for bulky items. Contact details could be publicised in the leaflet.

Elected representatives

Brief councillors on the issue of fly tipping and provide them with clear guidance on how to report fly tipping – people from the community may ask for advice and it is important that they are able to provide that information.

To deter fly tippers and reduce incidents...

Rubbish accumulates rubbish – quick removal will change the perception that nothing gets done about fly tipping. Prosecution will also have this effect and act as a deterrent to people.

Improve the visibility in black spots, for example by cutting back verges and hedges which may act as screens. Adding spot lights and CCTV.

Helping land owners with gates, barriers etc – although dispersal could be a problem.

Consider improving facilities for commercial waste – particularly small businesses. Increasing the number of sites, offering a different service.

Work with trade organisations (e.g. federation of master builders) to raise awareness of the problem. Perhaps an enforcement element could include a company losing its accreditation.

Place response to reported incidents under closer scrutiny – set standards? Improve information flow back to people.

Increase patrolling

Evaluation

The Fly Capture database now holds data for one year. The levels of reporting should be analysed before the campaign begins and then again at different stages through the campaign. If the database has information about particular black spots, it would be useful to record this before the campaign begins and again during the campaign – to see if instances have gone down. The Environment Agency should be asked to monitor levels of arrests/prosecutions.