

Litter Warden Report 2011

Introduction

The following report looks at the work carried out by a dedicated group of volunteers signed-up to the Litter Warden Scheme in Norfolk during the last year. Most of the facts and figures are based on information kindly provided by the Litter Wardens through feedback forms.

Background

Parish litter wardens are individuals who work in a local area to reduce litter. They are nominated and supported by a parish or town council, or local community group. They undertake a regular litter pick of their village or town and act as a point of contact on litter and flytipping issues for the whole community. They may organise and advertise clean-up days in the area and encourage other members of the community to join in on a public litter pick.

The scheme was developed in partnership with CPRE National Office with the aim of recruiting and supporting local volunteers who wanted to take action against litter in their community. A small one-off honorarium payment of £100 is paid to each warden when they sign-up, and a full litter picking kit provided, which includes a CPRE-branded high-visibility vest, professional litterpicking stick, safety gloves and bags.

Funding

The scheme is currently funded by generous grants from the local Geoffrey Watling Charity, and Keep Britain Tidy. In addition, two local companies have sponsored individuals: two litter wardens in Wymondham have received grants from the May Gurney Environmental Services Fund which awards grants to community organisations local to its five reuse shops at the Caister, Coltishall, Fakenham, Ketteringham and King's Lynn recycling centres; and Virgin Money are funding one litter warden over three year. Breckland Council has given a grant of £750 to expand the scheme in the Breckland area.

The volunteers

Volunteers are currently working in the following 42 parishes:

Acle	Holt	Reedham
Attleborough	Honingham	Runhall
Aylmerton	Ingoldisthorpe	Salhouse
Bodham	Lingwood &	Stanhoe
Banham & New Buckenham	Burlingham	Swanton Morley
Brancaster	Little Snoring &	Taverham
Castle Acre	Kettlestone	Thurlton
Dersingham	Marsham	Thursford
Ditchingham	Methwold	Titchwell
Great Ellingham	Narborough	Watton
Great Snoring	Newton Flotman	Weasenhall All Saints
Gresham	North Lopham	Welborne
Hardingham	Oxborough	Wymondham
Holme- next-the-sea	Raynham	

They have provided us with some amazing figures which reflect their dedication and stamina over the last few months.

Facts & figures

The results of the questionnaire show that over a quarter of Litter Wardens pick daily or more frequently than once a week, often while walking their dogs. Around another quarter of the volunteers pick weekly, and a further quarter pick fortnightly. The rest pick monthly or as and when it seems necessary

Total hours spent by individual Litter Wardens came to well over 3,000

The highest number of hours reported by one individual was 596. This was achieved by Tony Gould at Lingwood & Burlingham who has kept a meticulous diary of his litter picking experiences. He reports 'litter picking keeps us fit and healthy and the exercise also helps to keep the weight down. The fresh air and watching the countryside and wildlife throughout the ever changing seasons is another bonus...we are trying to train the dog to search and retrieve litter but she is a fussy eater!'

Several other volunteers picked for over 200 hours. Not everyone can manage this huge number of hours, but much can be achieved in less - a couple of hours a month will make a big difference. In Thurlton Martin Bell managed to collect 26 sacks in his total of 39 hours.

The numbers of bags and sacks collected by individuals during the year varied widely across the group, ranging from about 20 bags of rubbish, right through to 50 full sized sacks.

Total number of bags and sacks collected by individual Litter Wardens came to 1,280

The size of the parish, variations in demographic profile and location all make a big difference to the type and amount of litter found, and the ability of the litter picker to keep rubbish levels low.

Katherine Wallace at Ingoldisthorpe is able to pick 'all the lanes and most footpaths of my very small parish'. Pickers in larger parishes often find they have to choose particular hot spots, such as recreation areas, or respond to particular events. For example, Sandi Caine-Williams found 'an enormous mud flap lying on the side of the road, must have come off a huge lorry. Taking it to the tip took up almost the whole of the back seat in our little panda. '

Roads appear to be magnets for rubbish. A number of volunteers suggest that much of the litter they find on road verges must be thrown from car windows as few people walk there. Ed Morley, aged 13, litter picks in the Wymondham area with his brother Will (15) and says 'The areas near the main road are the worst bit because there are lots more cars. If one car in twenty drops litter then there is bound to be more litter in areas with more traffic.'

Another hot spot for rubbish appears to be the places where children gather, such as playing fields and routes to and from school. A number of volunteers express their feeling that there is a need to connect with the younger population in order to change their litter-dropping habits - much of the litter found consists of crisps bags and sweet wrappers . How to do this will be one the issues to be explored in the forthcoming year.

Some pickers have noticed differences depending on the time of year and their proximity to popular tourist areas. Josephine Luddington at Brancaster says there is 'a great increase during holiday periods when visitors arrive in houses, and by day trips.'

Community events

A dozen of the nominated pickers have been able to organise successful community litter picking events, which combine a service to the community and a sociable occasion. Seasonal clean ups are the most popular - usually in the spring and autumn. Other volunteers organise annual events, or get a group together when there is a particular issue.

Twelve parishes held community events which added up to 644 hours of community litter picking.

Over 300 bags and sacks of rubbish were collected

In Bodham 18 volunteers, headed by parish council Chairman Harry Bruford and the Rev'd Peter Alexander, litter picked the whole area, and collected 12 bags of rubbish, plus a car number plate and half a wheelbarrow. They were rewarded with tea and coffee, bacon rolls and baked potatoes donated by the local pub. Coffee and bacon butties were also the food of choice at the Aylmerton community pick.

At least two of these community events picked up to 50 bags each, and another up to 80 sacks. At the event in Ditchingham, volunteers picked up enough rubbish to fill 7 skips.

Types of rubbish

Plastic bottles and drinks cans are the most commonly collected rubbish, followed by crisp bags and sweet wrappers. Cigarette-related litter was felt to be the least common, perhaps reflecting changing consumer habits.

Where possible volunteers recycle what they find. Sandi Caine-Williams says 'I wonder what the bin men must think when they empty our green bin of lots of beer cans!'

Other rubbish commonly seen included tissues and wipes, plastic bags, furniture, builders' waste and - particularly unpleasant - dog excrement in plastic bags.

Tony Gould gives a breakdown of the contents in an average sack of 175 items:

40 drinks cans	30 plastic bottles	10 glass bottles
20 items of fast food litter	20 chocolate bar/sweet wrappers	20 crisp packets
10 paper and plastic coffee cups	10 cigarette packets	6 carrier bags
1 hub cap or other car part	5 scratch cards	3 train tickets

Fly tipping continues to be a problem and over half of the volunteers had contacted their district councils either asking them to remove fly tipping waste or to empty overflowing rubbish bins. In all but one case district council response was reported to be speedy and efficient.

Results

Despite on-going challenges to keeping the countryside clear of rubbish, the campaign has had some very positive results.

Lesley Bird of North Lopham said 'The village on the whole looks so much better and I think it has made local people take more pride in where they live.'

Sandi Caine-Williams at Gresham says 'I am convinced that if lots of litter is laying around some people feel more inclined to drop theirs, whereas if the roads are fairly clear, a piece of litter is glaringly obvious and possibly makes some think twice about dropping rubbish.' She says villagers have reported to her that they feel that her theory of 'no rubbish encourages no rubbish' is paying off.

And Sue Baxter at Narborough reports in poetic form that consistent litter-picking does seem to affect the amount dropped:

But there is so much less now,
Folk seem to be doing their bit,
You chat to me and tell me so.
Thank you. Keep on. Don't quit!

From nine bags, to five, then three,
July just over one,
Our village looks much greener now.
By Christmas there'll be none.

Sue says, 'I cannot now pass by litter without my fingers twitching and having to retrieve it.' She has received a commendation in the parish magazine.

Mark Kenney, who has acted as Litter Warden Scheme co-ordinator during the year, comments: 'I persist with the litter collections...knowing that if everybody just looked after no more than a small area close to their home, our county would look so much better for it.'

Media interest

There has been a good deal of media interest in the scheme. Some of the Norfolk litter wardens featured with Bill Bryson, CPRE's President, on BBC's *Countryfile* in March 2011, undertaking a spontaneous litter pick in South Norfolk.

Norfolk County Council's Spring edition of *Your Norfolk* magazine, that goes to every household in the county, featured our litter wardens from Wymondham in a special article. Sue Baxter, Litter Warden for Narborough, was also interviewed by *Woman's Weekly*, on her experience of litter picking in her community.

Future campaign

Happily, 90% of the current volunteers have indicated that they are willing to continue as CPRE wardens. However, there is great scope for expanding the numbers of volunteers operating throughout the county.

The branch currently has enough funding available to sustain payment of honorariums, and to provide litter picking kits for at least another year (depending on numbers of new volunteers) and we will continue to publicise the campaign in the media and through the local council networks. We will also explore ways of connecting with children and teenagers. We occasionally gets involved with larger group litter picks - on beaches or at identified 'blackspots' - and will try to keep wardens informed if they would like to participate.

Parish councils or community groups interested in appointing a CPRE litter warden for their area can download an application form from the CPRE Norfolk website or contact the office direct:

info@cprenorfolk.org.uk

Or contact:

Caroline Davison

Planning & Campaigns Manager

CPRE Norfolk

01603 761660

carolined@cprenorfolk.org.uk