

ORGANISING A LITTER PICK

Guidance for Blackdown Hills Parish Councils

Why Litter Pick?

A substantial amount of litter is deposited on highways and verges in the Blackdown Hills.

Picking it up can:

- improve the environment – stopping plastic and other materials/liquids seeping into the ground, and run-off into watercourses
- improve safety – particularly for children and animals: all sorts of dangerous and unpleasant things are littered
- discourage future litterers - there is evidence to show that litter left lying around attracts people to add to it; remove it and you may reduce future littering

Is there a demand to litter pick in your Parish?

Only you can answer that!

Demand can be ascertained in various ways – including by word of mouth, by complaints received, and in response to local consultation (at least one Parish started litter picking following responses to its Parish Plan questionnaire).

You've decided to organise a Litter Pick – things to think about (and action as necessary) before you start

Insurance. Opinion is divided on this, but if organising a formal Pick insurance should be considered. If a Parish Council organises a Pick and something goes wrong (eg a picker is hit by a vehicle, an injury is sustained by a picker falling into a ditch or slipping) the Council could receive a substantial claim. Picks organised by a Parish Council can usually be covered by the Council's insurance, possibly at no extra cost – subject to producing Guidance and a Risk Assessment and sharing these with the insurer. Speak to your Insurer!.

Environment Agency. If you plan to move litter around after you have collected it (eg take it to a waste/recycling centre), you must register with the Environment Agency as a lower tier waste carrier/broker/dealer under The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011. [The Waste \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk) For simple community group activity – including a Parish Council organising a Parish Litter Pick - there is no charge

Waste/Recycling Centre Permit. If you are planning to take lots of waste/recycling to a centre a permit is useful. It should negate any concerns by the centre staff about volume, and you are unlikely to have to pay for restricted items (such as car batteries, tyres, gas bottles).

In Somerset the permit is free and can be obtained from Somerset Waste Partnership – [Somerset Waste Partnership – Transforming your waste](#)

Fuller details for Devon can be obtained here <https://www.devon.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/fly-tipping/community-litter-pick-pack/> and here <https://www.devon.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/fly-tipping/community-litter-pick-pack/what-to-do-about-the-rubbish-district-by-district/>

How to Pick. You need to decide how to pick: as a single larger group, or sub-dividing into smaller teams – the latter allowing more highway to be covered. Pickers should always work in pairs or larger teams: never allow a picker to work alone.

Where to Pick? You need to consider where to Pick. We recommend that you never pick on an A-road: the County Council and National Highways caution strongly against this, and your insurer is likely to refuse cover. Some Picks may be limited to village centres or minor rural lanes: if you are planning to pick on a busier road you should consider buying and placing ‘Litter Pick – Slow’ signs on approach roads.

Equipment and clothing. As a minimum, plan for each picker to have a high-viz vest, a grabber, a hoop to hold the sacks open, and some sacks. In addition, pickers should be asked to wear sensible footwear, and bring waterproof gloves.

It is suggested that the picking group, or each smaller team (if sub-dividing your group) should additionally carry a small first aid kit, some dog-waste bags, and a sharps box (for small items only – if larger or more dangerous note location and ask the Pick organiser to advise the County/District Council). At least one member of the group or each sub-team should carry a mobile phone.

Extra-long grippers – typically eight feet – are also extremely useful. A nuisance to carry, but they do save pickers having to scramble down into ditches or reach too far into hedges – reducing the risk of accident or injury.

Equipment Loans, Grants, Sponsorship. These things all cost money! If you are planning your first Pick, your District or County Council is a good place to start. They may well be able to offer you the loan of grabbers and high-viz vests and give you some sacks. Beyond that, McDonalds are known to have loaned grabbers and vests – and Screwfix, Costa Coffee, and Nationwide Building Society are known to have provided grants or equipment in the past. As far as we know, none of these are permanent schemes, but it is worth asking. It may also be worth asking a local business.

Disposing of Collected Litter. You may want to check if the local District or County Council will pick up the litter you collect, and – if so – from where (does it all have to be stacked in one place or will the District/County Council’s contractors tour round to pick up). If this is not possible, you need to arrange how you are going to dispose (possibly after sorting for recyclables) of the litter.

Risk Assessment. In this day and age it’s worth having one, and if you plan to have insurance the Insurer is likely to insist on it.

Guidance. Telling people things on the day of the Pick is unlikely to fully register, and it’s worth drafting and circulating written guidance in advance. Insurers may also require this.

Organising your first, and subsequent, Picks

Decide when and where you are going to pick.

Once you have done so, advertise and call for volunteers

Be sure to tell your Local Highways Authority (in the Blackdown Hills that's Devon County Council or Somerset Council); and the Police (usually your local Beat Manager or PCSO).

Arrange to have a certificated First Aider 'on duty' (insurers are likely to require this).

Arrange a place to meet on the day – a base. Most useful is a village hall, but the base could equally be a roadside site.

On the day

Check that whoever was putting out the road safety signs (if you plan to use them) has done so.

Arrange to have all clothing equipment ready for collection at the base.

And be sure to let the pickers in each group or sub-team know who is the First Aider, and their contact details.

It does no harm to remind pickers of key points in the Guidance – perhaps the most important is to reinforce the need on busier roads to always pick facing oncoming traffic so that they can see vehicles coming.

Advise pickers that if they find any fly-tipping to note its location and take photographs of it but leave it where it is. This will assist the District/County Council (who will pick it up once it is reported) with any future possible prosecution.

And, similarly, advise pickers not to touch, but to note the location of any dead animals or birds. Once notified, the District/County Council will collect these.

Keep a note of everyone attending as they leave the base to pick. If you are picking in smaller groups, know where each group is picking. It is suggested that you have a 'signing-out' sheet.

Set a deadline for picking and ask everyone to make sure they are finished by that time.

Back at base keep a note of everyone returning. It is suggested you have a 'signing-back-in' sheet.

Offering post-Pick refreshments (perhaps a hot drink and a bacon/veggie roll is a good idea). A time to chat with friends and neighbours, perhaps swapping picking stories and experiences! This can be a real community event.

Be sure to remember to collect all road safety signs (if used), and clean and stack all equipment and clothing away for next time.

Afterwards

Fly-Tipping, & Dead Animals/Birds. Remember to report any found to the District Council or County Council.

Recyclables. Collecting all that litter from the roads and lanes of your Parish is very rewarding, but you may wish to go one step further and sort out all recyclables (metal, glass, plastic bottle and food containers, drinks cans, paper and cardboard, foil etc).

If you do, you will need to collect all your litter into one place and sort through everything (that really does mean wearing old clothes and long gauntlet gloves as you plunge your hands into each sack of litter!). But the effort can be really rewarding – you may well find that between one-third and one-half of all you collect can be recycled.

End of Pick Report. Consider producing one of these after each Pick, to keep all volunteers fully updated and hopefully encourage more people to participate next time. Be sure to let others – County and District Councils and their Ward Councillors, the Police, local newspapers, and certainly anyone who has sponsored or donated to your Pick - know what and how you have done.

Volunteer Rewards. You may wish to consider rewarding regular volunteers – perhaps with a small trophy (one local litter picking group uses wheel hub caps collected on the Picks, and painted) or box of chocolates, after 10, 20, 30 etc Picks. If planned carefully, these can be given out at the post-Pick refreshments.

This Guidance is provided for Parish Councils organising formal organised Picks, but should also prove useful to those organising smaller, more informal, Picks.

Before organising a Litter Pick Parish Councils should ensure that all necessary statutory and regulatory requirements have been met.