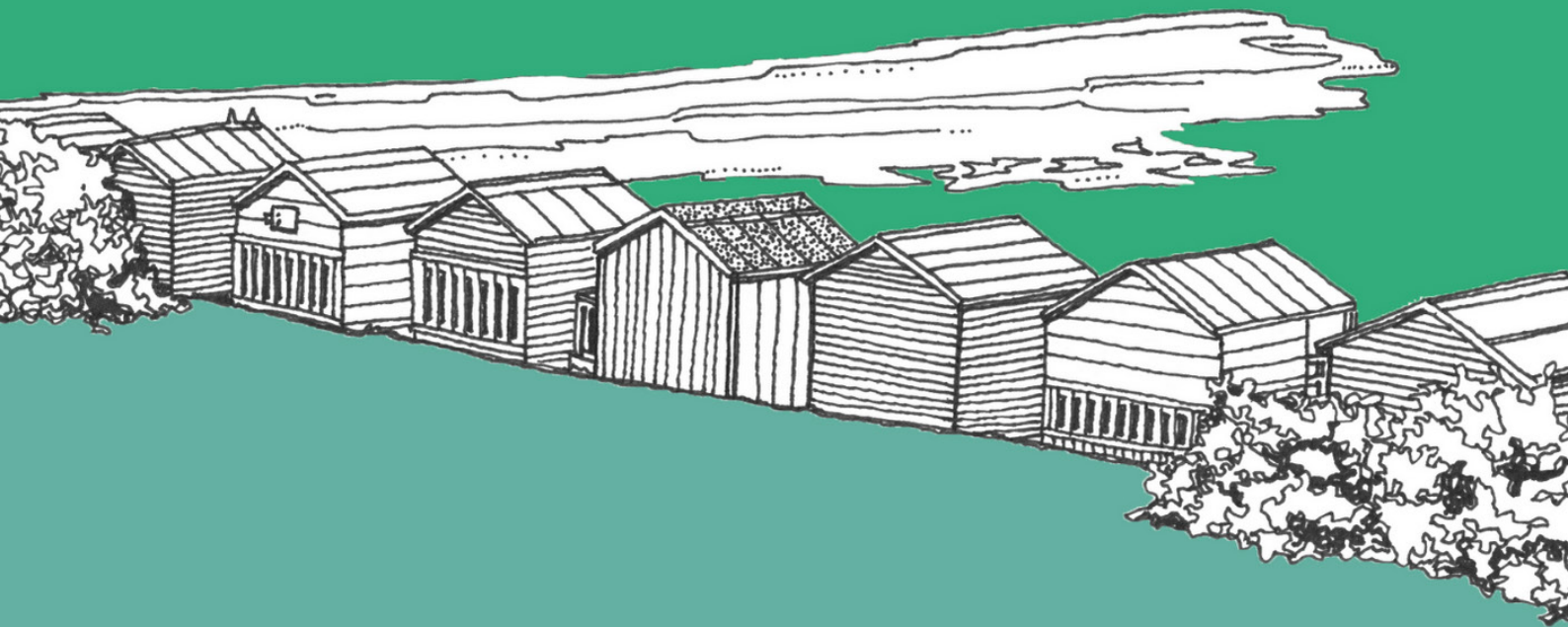


# WHITSTABLE LITTER PLAN

LABOUR'S PLAN TO CLEAN UP OUR  
STREETS AND BEACHES



# Foreword

In the height of Summer 2020 over 4,000 local residents signed a Labour-backed petition that described Whitstable as “[drowning in rubbish](#)”. Every morning, local residents took to social media to post images of smashed glass and bins picked over by seagulls; our natural environment, and reputation with visitors, was tested to its’ limits.

[Following a successful lobbying campaign by local councillors](#), Canterbury City Council put in a [Coastal Management Plan](#) and additional resources to ease the immediate need. In 2021, these additional resources were introduced earlier in the season to good effect but, the inflexibility of the contractor became very clear.

In 2022, the council agreed to ‘bin SERCO’ and took back responsibility for maintaining our parks and sweeping our streets. For the first time in over ten years ,the council now have their hands firmly on the wheel and can no longer blame others for failing to keep our environment clean.

For far too long this council has considered the best way to combat littering [is to punish or fine the behaviour](#). We believe that this approach simple strikes fear into many who want to do the right thing only to find bins full. It also [fails to resolve the problem that the worst offenders operate at dusk](#), when enforcement officers aren’t on duty.

Local people are rightly demanding an improvement and this document aims to provide a route map for it.

It has been produced to submit to the Litter Working Group who are working with the Canterbury Environment Company (Caneco) on resolving previous performance issues and identifying where additional resources and budget are needed. It aims to present practical suggestions on how we proceed and best practice gathered from elsewhere.

Thank you to local residents Matthew, Les and Helen for their comments that have fed into this report.

This paper is available for public comment and discussion. We welcome practical ideas about how we can improve our local environment via email to:

Cllr Chris Cornell  
[chris.cornell@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:chris.cornell@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk)

Cllr Val Kenny  
[E@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:E@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk)

PHOTO: Whitstable Beach 2020



# Beach collection

A reduction in beach littering following the introduction of the Coastal Management Plan shows that additional refuse capacity is key to improving our beach environment.

In 2021, seven additional 1100l bins (five at Keams Yard, in Tankerton St Annes Tennis Courts) were deployed from May to September to help with tourist litter.

Residents broadly welcomed their introduction but were concerned that they were poorly advertised and in places easy-for-collection rather than where need was most. If they are to be deployed again we would recommend that they are better distributed on access routes to and from the beach (Marine Gap, Horsebridge Road, Island Wall, Beach Walk, Marine Crescent) and better signposted from the beach (St Annes Tennis Courts, Keams Yard).

Where smaller bins are relied upon it is essential that staff are deployed to empty them more regularly. Staff will often take up to two hours to complete a route from West Beach to Long Rock and the crew restroom where they end their shift (Westmeads Rec). In this way, bins in high traffic areas (the Horsebridge & Neptune) can go often uncollected from 5pm on a shift pattern which ends at 7pm.

We need both additional capacity in high traffic areas and a means of redirecting resource. We would recommend the council:

## 1. Agreed to a pilot of solar compacting bins, often called big belly bins.

Bins of this type can take up to five times the capacity of a usual bin and provide real time data to help redirect operatives. These should be deployed between the Horsebridge & Old Neptune as their 'chuted' design would prevent rubbish being disrupted by vermin.

If service access to unload these views is problematic, they should be piloted in Whitstable High Street, the Harbour and Tankerton Promenade allowing for staff to spend more time on the front. Pilots of these bins have been offered free to the council.

The compactor bins of this type are used successfully in Folkestone, Dover and Swale and their large surface area used to display local information and littering/recycling advice.

## 2. Relocate existing bins.

Bins near the Horsebridge should be set on concrete pads away from the sea wall (which provides a perching point for seagulls). High traffic areas (Whitstable Seafront) or those that suffer from high winds (Faversham Road Car Park) should be where we have our new model litter bins with domed roofs and cigarette trays.

Bin stores where staff can store plastic bags for later collection need to be out of the reach of seagulls and out of sight of visitors. New bin stores are needed on the corner of Island Wall/ Nelson Road, Keams Yard Car Park (the current one is too small), outside the Plough, Swalecliffe and the Priest & Sow Toilets (Marine Crescent).

## 3. Support Public Litter Picking.

The council already provide support and insurance for community groups wanting to regularly pick litter in their area. However, they don't have a centralised diary of events which would help promote them.

In 2020 Labour councillors funded River Revival to set up a number of community litter picking stations along the coast. The stations collated on average 8-12 bags of rubbish a day, filling a one tonne bag per week in May 2020.

Whilst it should be our first priority to ensure there is sufficient capacity within the system, there will always be people who use the beach very late in the evening who would take their rubbish away themselves if given a means or who might pick the beach very early in the morning (before our street crews start at 7am).

PHOTO: Big Belly Bin in Southampton



We call upon the council to trial 'TidyPac' litter stations between The Neptune and East Quay which provide free small compostable bags for the community. Larger stations with pickers could be located by locations where they can be moved in and out during the day by council staff (i.e. Whitstable Harbour, West Beach Tennis Courts).

**5. Replace dog bins with larger capacity bins on the edges of routes.** Not every bin needs to be collected as regularly as others, however replacing dog bins with actual bins on prominent dog walking might prevent many of them overflowing. Additional capacity is needed on West Beach, Joy Lane (near Meteor Avenue), Saddleton Road)

PHOTO: TidyPac stations installed in Margate



# Improving education

Last year Labour councillors opposed the use of Kingdom, a private enforcement contractor, [to issue tickets for littering](#). We believed that the performance-related nature of this contract encouraged operatives to issue tickets rather than inform and educate.

Whilst tourists no doubt add to the problem of litter on our beaches they are by no means the only offenders. Local people, proud of their beach, can play a vital role in helping take their litter home and challenging street littering.

Whilst the council does employ an education officer in Foreshore services to improve awareness of the threat to our marine environment, we believe that there is so much more this council could do.

We would recommend, the council:

## 1. Introduce the 'Adopt a Beach Initiative'

Adopt a Beach Initiatives allow business, clubs, school groups and neighbourhood associations can take ownership of a part of the beach and take additional responsibility in keeping it clean.

## 2. Provide free littering picking equipment and educational resources for schools visiting our area.

Last year over 1,400 young people visited the Whitstable RNLI and our coast. Visit Reculver has long had beach safari resources available for young people visiting the park (Anna Outdoors) but these haven't been rolled out elsewhere.

Thanet council provides a free online educational toolkit with activities and resources tailored to either KS1 or KS2 with accompanying audio files which explore some of the unique stories of our coastline and can give key messages about the danger of littering to animals and the environment.

## 3. Involve local pupils in litter signage.

Since 2008 Swale District Council has been involved in a ['Litter Angels' programme](#) with primary school pupils which involves an annual poster competition. Student chosen as having drawn the best anti-littering posters could annually have designs printed and displayed on the sides of bins and on lamp posts on key routes into town (Cromwell Road, Tankerton Road).

## 4. Introduce plastic waste installations at major transport hubs (the Gorrell Tank Car Park, Whitstable Train Station)

The installations could to highlight the amount of single use plastics thrown onto our beach each year. Local businesses could sponsor the installations or works along this theme commissioned for the Biennale.

In 2021 Rise Up Margate, a community initiative reducing littering on Margate beach launched installations at [Margate train station](#). Elsewhere local authorities from [North Tyneside](#), [Colchester](#) and Cornwall have used Marine Debris to create representations of wildlife affected by beach littering.

## 4. Erect signage on littering along the Thanet Way.

The proximity to speeding traffic and concerns around insurance make litter picking along the Thanet Way difficult for community groups.

This year CANECO has scheduled six monthly cleans of this and the A2, often to coincide with road works. We would suggest that in particular hotspots and following this work temporary display boards are added to the verges illustrating how much rubbish has been picked up.

PHOTO: Art installation in Colchester, Essex



## 5. Employ more creative signage.

Temporary signage across the coast is just that and as such presents the council with an opportunity to trial different types of messaging which is not in line with its traditional branding.

In the last year both [Zero Waste Scotland](#), [Keep Britain Clean](#) and [Plymouth Council](#) have shown how limited usage of more risqué slogans can generate conversation and substantially reduce littering. Other creative solutions include:

- [Ballot bins](#) where people are encouraged to answer questions by depositing cigarettes or chewing gum (Edinburgh, Brighton, City of London). In Sutton, these bins have led to a 60% reduction in cigarette littering and as such [Bristol](#) has piloted them for use on other waste items.
- Charity bins where the council have made a small donation for every full bin collected (Birmingham) as a means to encourage people to carry their own litter away from hotspots. The [Bin it for Good](#) scheme say a 42% reduction in littering when piloted in Essex with bins under the scheme seeing a 9% increase in total waste collected.
- Humorous temporary art work sprayed onto promenades to draw attention to bins.

PHOTO: Bin it Good, Birmingham



PHOTO: Ballot bin in Norfolk



PHOTO: Creative signage in York



# Better street cleaning

Most Whitstable residents know and respect those who work picking litter off our streets but they would agree that additional resources announced in the 2022/2023 budget, equivalent to one extra operative across the 17 mile coast line, is simply not enough.

In order to make the most of the operatives we do have it is thus essential that:

- bins are sited in the right places
- regular routes force operatives to walk high traffic areas where street littering may be a particular problem
- the location of bins is regularly reviewed using local intelligence.

Unfortunately neither CANECO nor the council seem to have a map detailing where bins are located or any information of their condition which is essential given the cost invested in them. [An online map provided after months of requests is wrong and has no means for people to amend.](#)

Historic inconsistencies mean that there are four bins outside Whitstable Library and near Whitstable Junior School but none on the Crab and Winkle Way or on any of the pedestrian routes from All Saints Road to the Whitstable School.

Issues of jurisdiction mean that there are no bins on either side of Whitstable Station despite littering here being a real problem.

Residents in our ward have actually taken to moving street bins on Stream Walk to higher traffic junctions where they can be more regularly seen and then emptied by street cleaners.

Any savings we can make in the time take by street cleaners to complete their work is important - allowing them extra time to pick in hard to reach places. The council could:

1. **Carry out a consultation with residents and councillors on where bins are and how they could be relocated.**

In Whitstable there are:

- Bins every fifty yards along the promenade but nothing between Long Rock and the beach huts by the skate park
- Six bins outside Swalecliffe Shops but nothing near the shops on Lucerne Drive or on the Seasalter Road
- No bins on the Crab and Winkle Way
- Large bins to provided by fast food restaurants on the Thanet Way but nothing at the petrol station or supermarkets. Public bins this far out would be impractical but a more proactive conversation with these supermarkets could see bins paid for and emptied by the business. Tesco staff elsewhere in the country carry out monthly litter picks..

2. **Ask residents for hotspot data.**

Certain areas are often frequently missed by street operatives travelling between bins and as such require dedicated cleaning once every month. Prominent examples include:

- Car Parks : the perimeter of Tankerton Road Coach Park, the Gorrell Tank, Keams Yard and Middle Wall need regular prioritising. In March 2021 a welcomed clean of Gorrell Tank saw operatives collect 25 bags.
- Alleyways off the high street which require hand sweeping
- Public rights of way onto the beach which are too small for street sweepers (Neptune Gap, Marine Gap and near The Favourite)
- Stream Walk where collections need to be timed to coincide with cutting back of hedgerows and more picking needs to be done behind the hedgeline

PHOTO: Whitstable bin full to bursting



- Parkland: Operatives often only collect rubbish collected in bins on our parkland and some parks don't have public bins (Albert Street, Sydney Road). The perimeter of Westmeads Rec, Plough Lane, Mariners View all need adding to a monthly list.

### 3. Improve its flytipping collection service.

Flytipping (whilst a residential waste collection service) has a direct impact on street collection in that it encourages people to litter in certain areas if not picked up.

At present people report fly tipping online or councillors report it directly to the Enforcement Team (similar to Graffiti) for simultaneous investigation and cleaning. The enforcement team task CANECO with collection but don't have a reason or the resource to check collections have been completed.

This means that the interactive map on the council website showing flytipping is not directly linked to the CANECO Bartec system and residents regularly complain that flytipping cases are being closed without the waste being removed.

We know of residents who have reported the same piece of rubbish five or six times.

Much of the problem here relates to the fact that the fly tipping system requires a street address to locate rubbish rather than relies on a geo-located app. Operatives will close a case if they can't find it and councillors (who can act as the council's eyes and ears here) aren't informed of reports.

Residents being able to more accurately report where flytipping is and upload photographs directly through a mobile app rather than web based form would be a huge step forward.

Other local authorities have deployed the '[Love Clean Streets](#)' or '[Fix My Street](#)' app to for residents to report a number of concerns. These system has been developed with Bartec and as such could ideally integrate and task our refuse vehicles to make collections and street operatives to periodically check collections have been made. Street cleaners who often drag items off the beach could use the app for reporting.

The council should also explore whether it can be used to directly feed into the Kent County Council system which reports loose or damaged pavements, potholes or street signs. A monthly report could be generated and distributed to councillors so that they can provide

visual confirmation of collection on request. QR codes to download the app should be located at prominent fly tipping hotspots (Island Wall, St Peters Road, South Street, Belton Close), Belmont Road, Stream Walk, Victoria Street Car Park, Lucerne Drive).

### 4. Hotspot crews

Ideally the council need additional street cleaning capacity so that occasional tasks (i.e. the clearing of car park perimeters, local alleyways etc.) can be carried out by a dedicated team or completed by local crews whose normal round is backfilled.

With this additional capacity it would be useful for councillors to have a dedicated inbox through which they could report problem areas for cleaning and receive a dedicated response within 48 hours (much like the service we have for reporting missed bins or tenancy issues).

### 5. Street sweeping:

Gutter cleaning has improved in the last few months, particularly after the purchase of smaller machinery which can service Sea Wall and Cushings Walks. However the problem of blocked drains still persists in areas of high residential parking where the current machinery can't get to the kerb (Nelson Road, Cornwallis Circle, Warwick Road).

We would ask the council to pilot the use of high pressure water jets to clean particular areas, tying it into a regular three times a year clean of the alleys off Whitstable High Street which have the same problem.

PHOTO: Love Newham smartphone app for litter reporting





# Residential waste collection

The close terraced streets of the conservation area cause a particular problem for CANECO's residential waste collection but also for the street litter teams. Almost a third of the 2,000 plus households on purple sack collections are located in Whitstable and complaints that these sacks break, are picked on by birds, block pavements or simply don't get delivered correctly are all too common. Ultimately if the bags break, street cleaners have to clean up after them.

Local councillors fought for the return of the sale of purple bags post COVID and this has been hugely appreciated by local residents. People who utilise these schemes are often in difficulty to locate properties above shops or down alleyways and as such we understand that consistent delivery of sacks to them will always be problematic for new members of staff who don't know the area.

We also understand that widespread availability of this scheme also acts as a disincentive for AirBnB owners who often use this in place of commercial waste collections.

[Ideally we thus believe that, where possible the council, should reduce the dependency on purple waste collection](#) and bring forward ways in which it could offer a commercial waste offer for small businesses including holiday lets.

Shops in Harbour Street use four or five different commercial waste providers who often collect on different days. Through necessity commercial rubbish is frequently piled up on the street most days or large commercial waste bins block public land (Cushing Walk, Albert Street, Oxford Street, Middle Wall). If CANECO could operate a financially viable service which allowed for either more regular collection (daily or fortnightly) we believe both problems could be reduced.

We welcome the council's decision to pilot hessian bags which will make it harder for seagulls to pick at purple bags but are concerned that, unless the bags are weighted (see Worthing Council), emptied bags won't be able to be fixed to properties and will be prone to flying away and being lost.

Unless the council can afford to replace these sacks free of charge, the widespread of reluctance of some residents, particularly second home owners, to pay for replacement sacks will cause a problem.

As such we call on the council to:

1. **Pilot the return of recycling bring banks in the conservation area.** Chuted bins could reduce the need to use purple bags and if located in off road residential car parks be predominantly focussed in the service of residents rather than tourists who might be more likely to contaminate them. We could include a service which recycles tetra packs at scale.
2. **Simultaneously increase enforcement of commercial bins on public land** and identify off road commercial opportunities for people to store bins at a fee. Suitable sites (with sufficient screening could be made available) in Shaftesbury Road, Keams' Yard, Albert Street and Gladstone Road Car Parks).
3. **Prioritise the development of a Commercial Waste offer** within the first two years of the CANECO contract working closely with local stakeholders and businesses to refine a bag collection offer. The service could provide businesses with a free, no obligation on site waste audit to further inform the contract
4. **Better publicise local recycling collection stations.** The council website does have links to commercial locations where you can donate hard to recycle items such as soft plastics and batteries but this is provided by Recycle Now and now publicised enough.

We believe the council should take responsibility for advertising these services and ensuring that opportunities for people to donate food/produce (OLIO, the Umbrella Cafe) are also more clearly signposted.

PHOTO: Large chuted recycling bins



A dedicated list of recycling facilities could also highlight repair cafés, the wetsuit project at the Horsebridge, crisp packet recycling at local schools and involve the council auditing whether it could use its own locations (neighbourhood centres, swimming pools and sheltered housing schemes) to act as collection points for hard to recycle items i.e. blister packs, water filters, crisp packets) through Terracycle.

PHOTO: Food recycling project in Avon





[WWW.WHITSTABLELABOUR.CO.UK](http://WWW.WHITSTABLELABOUR.CO.UK)  
[INFO@WHITSTABLELABOUR.CO.UK](mailto:INFO@WHITSTABLELABOUR.CO.UK)