

New funding to remove chewing gum stains from our high streets

New Government action to crack down on litter on our high streets has been set out today (6 August), with more than 40 councils across the UK awarded grants of up to £70,000 to remove chewing gum stains.

Exeter, Birmingham, Sunderland, Swansea, Glasgow and Belfast are among the first winners of funding as part of the Government's new Chewing Gum Task Force, helping to reinvigorate our country's towns and cities by funding efforts to clean up streets.

Established by Defra and run by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, the Task Force aims to clean gum off pavements and put in measures to stop it being dropped in the first place.

Estimates suggest the annual clean-up cost of chewing gum for councils in the UK is around £7 million and according to Keep Britain Tidy, around 87% of England's streets are stained with gum.

The funding announced today is the first tranche of a package worth up to £10 million from major gum manufacturers including Mars Wrigley and Perfetti Van Melle to tackle chewing gum stains – the investment will be spread over five years.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Littering blights our towns and costs taxpayers money. Working with responsible gum manufacturers, we are now giving councils extra help to clean up our cities and towns.

This means we can double down on regenerating our high streets, boosting local economies and levelling up communities across the country.

Funding will cover:

- Grants of up to £20,000 for councils including Leicester, Hull, Croydon, Southend, Lewisham and Colchester to purchase cleaning equipment as well as receiving signage to warn people not to litter gum – previous pilots run by Mars Wrigley and not-for-profit Behaviour Change using this signage have reduced gum littering by up to 64%.
- Long-term monitoring of gum litter levels and the effects of intervention for four councils including Belfast, Birmingham, Glasgow and Newport.
- £70,000 for several council partnerships – including Bury and Bolton, Camden and Brent, and Nottingham and Derby.

Allison Ogden-Newton OBE, Chief Executive of Keep Britain Tidy, said:

This is an exciting new opportunity for councils to tackle the ongoing problem of gum pollution.

The grants will allow councils to clean up historic gum litter staining in our towns and cities, as well as taking action to prevent people littering in the first place.

Ana Baptista, Corporate Affairs Director, Mars Wrigley UK, said:

Mars Wrigley has invested in campaigns to tackle litter across the UK for many years. Through our partnership with Behaviour Change we have developed interventions proven to reduce gum littering which have already been used by over 100 Councils.

We are delighted to see these deployed as part of the Chewing Gum Task Force Grant Scheme and look forward to having many more Councils on board.

Hayley Osborne Communications and Sustainability Manager for Perfetti Van Melle, said:

As a manufacturer of gum products we are aware of the unfortunate impact our products can cause to cities and towns. By working together with industry peers, councils, and customers, we can also help be part of the solution, helping to clean-up our streets and educating consumers on the importance of safe gum disposal.

In addition, we are also working on our own campaigns to support our customers, with on-package signage and labelling to help work towards a circular, long-term solution.

This forms part of the Prime Minister's High Street [Strategy to support the evolution and regeneration of high streets](#) across the country, which includes [15 Town Deals](#) totalling £335 million to fund community regeneration projects, the transformation of derelict buildings, and communities being given the chance to own local pubs, theatres, sports grounds and corner shops.

Littering is a criminal offence, and the UK Government has already bolstered local authorities enforcement powers by increasing the on-the-spot penalties for littering to £150 in England. Councils can also take offenders to court, which can result in a fine of up to £2,500 if convicted.

Through the Environment Act, the Government will be able to ensure that enforcement powers are used with a high degree of professionalism, whether by council staff or private contractors, and place our improved enforcement

guidance on a firm statutory footing.

This forms part of wider government action to tackle litter and protect our environment. We plan to launch a [deposit return scheme for drinks containers](#), [extended producer responsibility for packaging](#) and [consistent recycling collections](#) which will transform the way we deal with our rubbish.