

Smoking: Litter

- While smoking rates are falling, cigarette litter remains a key problem.
- Smokers materials make up approximately 35% of all street litter.
- This litter is an environmental hazard and cleaning it up costs local authorities.
- Councils can take positive steps to reduce litter and improve public health.

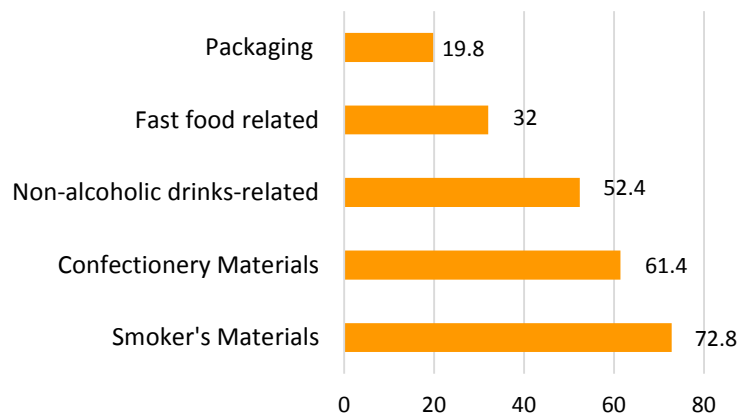
Cigarette butts are the single most littered item in England

Smokers in England consume about [75m cigarettes a day](#) and roughly [65.5m of these are filtered](#).

The majority of cigarette filters are non-biodegradable and must be collected and disposed of in landfill sites – this results in around [11 tonnes of daily waste](#) and [4071 tonnes of waste per year](#).

Cigarette litter is the number one littered item in the country, [present on over 70% of sites across England](#).

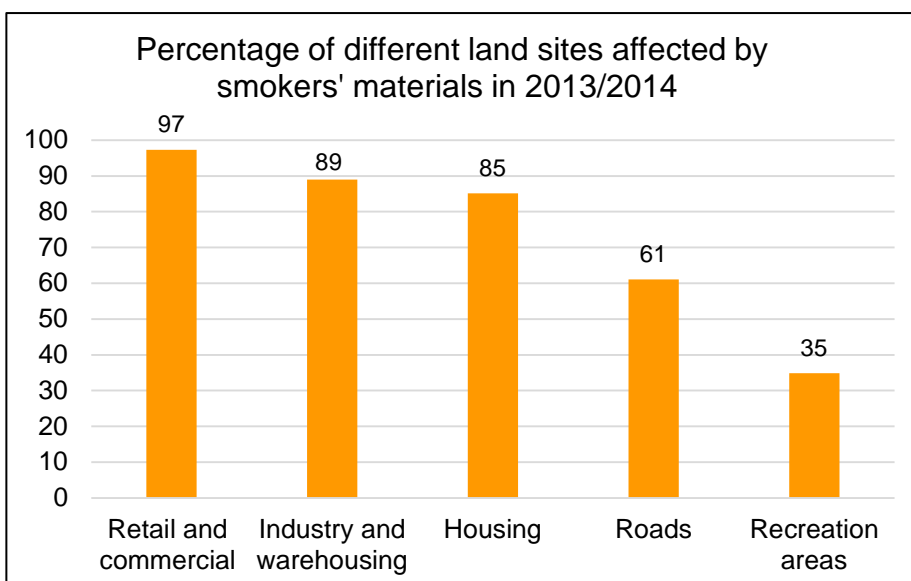
Prevalence of types of litter 2014/15



Source: [Keep Britain Tidy, 2015](#)

Smokers' materials are considerably more widespread than all the other litter types and this is one of the reasons to support tobacco free areas such as playgrounds. The government's first [Litter Strategy for England](#), highlights the best way to reduce smoking related litter is to support smokers quitting.

Smokers' litter harms the environment and our local communities



Source: [Keep Britain Tidy, 2015](#)

Cigarette butts cause serious environmental problems and contain thousands of toxic chemicals, including arsenic.

Smoking litter also harms wildlife, contaminates water supplies and can cause fires.

Smokers materials make up approximately [35% of all street litter](#). Smoking litter is also found near over 80% of housing in England and cigarette butts are also the most common form of litter found in beach clean ups.

Research suggests that [many smokers don't consider cigarette butts to be litter](#). Campaigns to prevent smoking-related litter need an educational component as well as enforcement. Additionally, fewer smokers means fewer people to drop smoking litter so helping people quit also has a role in play.

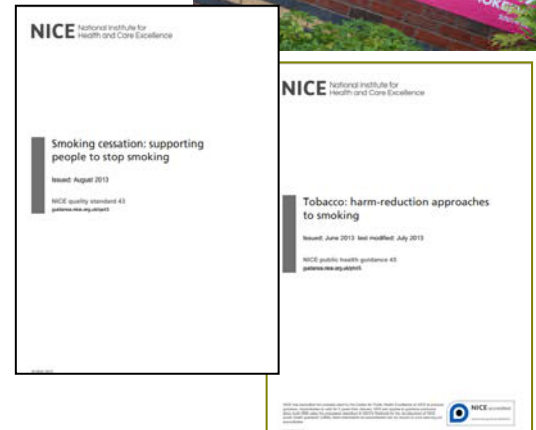
Tackling smoking-related litter can support wider objectives

Reducing smoking-related litter can support other Council objectives, including improving local public health.

There are opportunities to combine health messages with anti-litter campaigns and find innovative ways to reach out to smokers and encourage them to quit.

Some councils are implementing schemes where smokers fined for littering are [directed to local stop smoking services](#) and [can have their fine reduced](#) if they then make a quit attempt with the support of a local service.

Campaigns could also consider including harm reduction messages based on the [NICE tobacco harm reduction guidance](#) encouraging smokers to reduce their consumption where they can't quit.



Campaign, educate, enforce

Dropping cigarette ends and not disposing of them properly is a criminal offence. However, before fining smokers it is important to communicate to them that this will be taking place and offer them an acceptable alternative to their littering behaviour such as a Smoking Zone.

Enforcement of the law, support for smokers to quit and initiatives such as Smoking Zones can all combat smoking-related litter. Smoking Zones, such as the one pictured on the right, have [reduced cigarette litter by up to a staggering 89%](#).



Poster from Keep Britain Tidy campaign.

Protecting health policy from the tobacco industry

The UK is a party to the World Health Organisation's [Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#) which obliges local government to protect health policy from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry. This includes activity and partnerships to boost their corporate social responsibility (CRS) and means that local councils should not work in partnership with tobacco companies to clean up smoking-related litter.

To find out more about the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control please see the ASH/iPiP [toolkit on Implementing Article 5.3](#).

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