

# Maintenance and Enforcement

## Policy Briefing 3

Maintenance and enforcement are the basic housekeeping requirements of our streets and public spaces. Just as we do not feel welcome in dirty and untidy homes, so we should not expect people to use streets that are dirty, cluttered and degrading.

The publication *Encouraging Walking* (DETR, March 2000) suggests that 20% of all footways in England and Wales showed general deterioration. This creates a real barrier to walking, especially for older people, for whom the fear of a footway fall is a major disincentive to making journeys on foot.

The financial and social costs of poor maintenance are huge: pavement falls bring ten times as many people into accident and emergency departments as are injured in road traffic accidents (DTI 1990, Home and Leisure Accident Research, TSO).

Clean and well-managed streets foster local pride, a sense of ownership and local responsibility, reduce fear of street crime, and are an essential prerequisite to an increase in levels of walking.

Maintenance issues include:

- street sweeping,
- footway repairs and street lighting maintenance,
- removal of abandoned cars and fly tipped waste,
- cleaning up graffiti and fly posting.

Vibrant public spaces are also dependent on the enforcement of:

- bans on footway parking and cycling,
- legislation relating to illegal footway obstruction (advertising boards, shopfront displays),
- noise nuisance regulations and
- parking regulations.

## Our policy

Our streets and public spaces are the one service we all use. We believe the maintenance of these places in a fit condition for all users should be a top priority for local authorities.

We want to see a more customer-focused approach to this task, which recognizes that local people don't care which council department or other body is responsible for maintaining any one element of our streets and public spaces - we simply want the problem sorted out.

## Government policy

The Government's Best Value guidelines require local authorities to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of all their activities for the benefit of the local and wider community. Living Streets believes Best Value places a clear obligation on local authorities to make the maintenance of streets and public spaces a top priority.

It is an offence to paint, inscribe, fix a picture, letter or sign or other mark on the surface of the highway or on a tree, structure or work on the highway. It is an offence to deposit anything on the highway to the interruption of any user of the highway. It is also an offence to allow any filth, dirt or other offensive matter to run or flow onto the highway in consequence of which a user is injured or endangered.

The Council has a duty to remove motor vehicles unlawfully abandoned on any land and can recover the charges. It is an offence to deliberately abandon any matter on any part of the highway.

### For further information

Contact Living Streets information and advice hotline (020 7820 1010)

Two useful publications:

- Providing for Journeys on Foot (Institution of Highway and Transportation, 2000)
- Encouraging Walking (DETR, March 2000)

Website: [www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk)

It is an offence to cause or contribute to the defacement by litter of any public open space or public highway.

The Government has stated that best value reviews will ask searching questions about what the council and its contractors offer to local people.

## What you can do



Report maintenance and enforcement issues to your council promptly. If you fail to get satisfaction, ask for a copy of your council's policy documents on the issue, and contact your councillor and/or MP.



Ask your council to commission a Community Street Audit from Living Streets, to assess the pedestrian environment from the end-users perspective.



Become a member of Living Streets, and contact your local Living Streets branch.

## Fact Stats

1. Every year, 25m tonnes of rubbish are thrown on to Britain's streets and verges. This is 5m tonnes more than five years ago (*The Guardian*)
2. Disadvantaged groups in some of the most heavily polluted parts of the country are more concerned about the cleanliness of their neighbourhoods than noise or air pollution (University of Surrey research by Kate Burningham and Diane Thrush, 2002)
3. Pavement falls bring ten times as many people into accident and emergency departments as are injured in road traffic 'accidents'. (DETR, 2000. Our inverted commas around 'accidents' - we'd say crashes)