# Monmouthshire and Torfaen councils seek tougher measures to combat roadside litter



Monmouthshire and Torfaen councils are addressing concerns over roadside litter, with discussions underway about potential legislative changes and new measures to curb the problem.

Monmouthshire council’s highways chief, Carl Touhig, highlighted the challenges faced by local authorities in tackling litter thrown from vehicles. Speaking to Monmouthshire councillors during a briefing on highways issues, Mr Touhig explained that Wales currently lacks the necessary legislation to prosecute drivers who dispose of litter from their cars. “In Wales we don’t have legislation that we can prosecute car drivers for throwing litter which makes it difficult to enforce,” he said. He contrasted this with the situation in England, where such laws exist and act as a deterrent due to the risk of being caught.

Efforts are ongoing to encourage the Welsh Government to empower councils with prosecution powers against those who litter from vehicles. Mr Touhig also expressed hope that forthcoming plans for a deposit return scheme for bottles would reduce roadside waste by incentivising people to return and recycle their containers.

The logistics and cost of cleaning trunk roads also present difficulties. These roads, managed by the Welsh Government and the South Wales Trunk Road Agency (SWTRA)—which Monmouthshire Council operates on the government's behalf—require traffic management arrangements during litter collection for safety reasons. “That costs a huge amount of money,” Mr Touhig remarked. He noted that the council must often seek permission to close sections of trunk roads to allow litter picking, a process he said is not straightforward.

Though the responsibility for litter collection on trunk roads falls to local councils, Mr Touhig has consistently lobbied for the Welsh Government to include it as part of its own maintenance duties. Additionally, changes in verge mowing schedules have indirectly contributed to the litter problem. Verge mowing, which previously took place three to four times a year, has been reduced to once annually to promote nature and biodiversity. Mr Touhig acknowledged the environmental benefits of this shift but noted its downside: “It’s excellent for nature and biodiversity but terrible for litter.”

This reduced mowing frequency means litter can accumulate and sometimes become hidden among grass, making it harder to clear without the cutting process breaking it up and potentially making the mess more visible. The council performs an annual litter collection, along with "safety cuts," and tries to remove litter before mowing whenever possible. Meanwhile, volunteer litter pickers support the council’s efforts. Mr Touhig expressed appreciation for the volunteers but highlighted that, while the council would prefer them to focus on urban areas to allow staff to manage rural lanes and country roads, many volunteers live in rural areas and want to clean the roads near their homes.

In neighbouring Torfaen, councillor Nick Horler, an independent representative for Blaenavon, has proposed erecting road signs alongside main roads to warn motorists that throwing litter from vehicles and fly-tipping are illegal acts. The signs aim to raise awareness among road users about the laws against such practices. Torfaen council leader Anthony Hunt indicated that the idea could be considered and said Councillor Horler would be kept informed on any developments.

The South Wales Argus is reporting that both councils are actively seeking solutions to reduce roadside litter, balancing enforcement challenges, environmental factors, and community involvement.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://nation.cymru/news/welsh-government-urged-to-bring-in-law-to-stop-motorists-littering/> - This article corroborates the claim that Welsh Government is being urged to introduce legislation to allow prosecution of motorists who throw litter from vehicles, and that Torfaen Council is considering putting up road signs to warn against littering from vehicles.
* <https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/Related-Documents/Street-Scene/Litter-and-Fly-Tipping/Torfaen-Litter-and-Fly-Tipping-Strategy-2021-2026.pdf> - This document supports details about Torfaen Council’s ongoing work streams on litter, including enforcement actions like fines for littering and fly-tipping, community volunteering support, and educational initiatives discussed in the article.
* <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/litter-fly-tipping-and-street-cleansing/> - This page from Monmouthshire County Council details their street cleaning, litter picking, volunteer support programs, and challenges with litter management, confirming the council’s efforts and strategies referenced in the article.
* <https://www.inyourarea.co.uk/news/torfaen-now-home-to-new-community-litter-picking-hub> - This article corroborates the mention of volunteer litter picking support in Torfaen, specifically highlighting the community litter-picking hub in Cwmbran that loans equipment to the public and groups.
* <https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/News/2024/December/13-Schools-join-forces-to-tackle-litter.aspx> - This news report supports the claim that Torfaen schools are actively involved in litter reduction efforts through campaigns and litter-picking projects, reflecting community involvement as noted in the article.