

From: **A27 Campaign**
Date: Tue, Jul 28, 2020 at 4:29 PM
Subject: A27 Litter - time to govern
To: Department for Transport

Dear Baroness Vere and Mr Appiah

Thank you for your letter of 17 July which our team finds somewhat disappointing (copy attached for ease of reference). We are also in receipt of Baroness Vere's reply to Caroline Ansell MP on this subject dated 15 July.

It is clear that you are referring to the position in Lewes DC but we have to report that the environmentally damaging act of strimming the vegetation before the litter is picked happens along wide stretches of the A27, most recently in the Chichester area as witnessed a fortnight ago. Whilst we hope that Highways England and the respective local authorities can align the works to avoid shredded litter despoiling our environment, we are mindful of all the reasons why this currently does not happen, including the date for planned works changing and stretched local authority resources needing to be diverted in the event of illness to such services as refuse collection. To be clear, we are not talking here about occasional lapses in process – our members along the route of the A27 report that it is actually very rare for litter to ever be removed sufficiently before vegetation cutting. It is for these and many other reasons that reports over the years have recommended that litter removal duties on our national trunk roads be transferred to Highways England thereby ensuring that a fully co-ordinated approach can be adopted.

We are pleased that officials are investigating the implications of a transfer of responsibility to Highways England and we are pleased that expectations are to be managed. From our point of view it may be helpful if we list our expectations:

1. Firstly may we repeat the pledges given by Boris Johnson in his acceptance speech to “make this country the cleanest, greenest on earth with the most far-reaching environmental programme” and “it is now our solemn duty to deliver on each and every one of the commitments”. We firmly expect this approach to be adopted in relation to our littered roadsides, especially as the UK currently has one of the worst litter issues in the western world, to the extent that councils along the south coast receive letters of complaint about the A27 litter from foreign tourists driving along it through the South Downs National Park.
2. We also expect the Government to govern i.e. “conduct the policy, actions and affairs of a country with authority”. We do not expect the decision on which body should be responsible for litter removal to be for Highways England to decide. We have no idea where your suggested approach on this aspect originated but we believe it to be wrong. There is nothing in the legislation to say that the relevant Highways Authority has to request the Secretary of State to make an order under EPA S86(11).
3. We are also advised that primary legislation would not be required to effect a transfer of responsibility to Highways England so would not expect you to follow such a complicated route. Large scale transfers have been made in the past without the need for it – see https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2009/2677/pdfs/ukxi_20092677_en.pdf
4. In our meeting with Wayne Moore, Service Delivery Manager for Area 4 Highways England, he expressed the view that a transfer of responsibility for litter clearance to Highways England would be operationally preferable from his perspective. In our meetings and correspondence with the 7 local authorities along the A27 we have been advised that they are in favour of a transfer, are currently receiving no funding for cleansing trunk roads, have no powers to close the road and have a dependence on coordination with other bodies

which clearly very often does not work. Given these views in favour of a transfer we expect that the first 3 points in your requirements can be met speedily leading to just the approval of the Secretary of State, who no doubt will be mindful of Boris Johnson's pledges as outlined above. We would therefore expect a very quick conclusion could be reached if all parties work diligently on the subject.

5. As you are aware we are a very committed group seeking to bring about efficiencies in the system in order to improve our countryside and the environment. We are reasonable in our approach and are advised by some of the most informed in the land. We do not expect to receive letters from anonymous writers in the Correspondence Team of the DfT with no email address. We have made this point before and Mr Appiah was provided as our point of contact. For this reason this response will be directed to him and to Baroness Vere in the first instance, although clearly we will copy to others in Parliament and to local authorities to keep them in the picture.

In summary, we hope to hear positive news in the very near future which will lead to a significant improvement in the state of our roadsides and our environment.

Kind regards

Janet Prendiville and Neil Kerridge
Co-Chairs A27 Clean Up Campaign