



Department
for Transport

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
Simon Lightwood MP

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Councillor Dr Robert Clegg
Cabinet Member for Environmental Services
Climate Action and Nature Recovery
Vale of White Horse District Council
Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon
Oxon, OX14 3JE

19 June 2026

Dear Councillor Clegg,

Thank you for your letter of 9 June to the Secretary of State, about litter collection on major 'A' roads, such as the A34. I am replying as the Minister for Roads.

Litter on our roads is an eyesore and environmentally damaging. Influencing public behaviour and discouraging littering from occurring in the first instance is important in delivering lasting improvements, which is why National Highways collaborates with other Departments, local authorities, and anti-littering organisations to combine prevention with direct action to ensure that our roads are clean and safe places to travel on.

The responsibility for clearing highway litter and sweeping carriageways is governed by the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA). National Highways is responsible for clearing litter on motorways and some 'A' roads, whilst the relevant local authority manages litter collection on the rest of the roads in England. As you have pointed out, there are some stretches of 'A' roads, such as the A34, where National Highways are responsible for maintaining the road, but the relevant local authority retains the responsibility for clearing litter.

In such cases, the Department encourages National Highways to work closely with local authorities to support safe and efficient litter picking across the Strategic Road Network. National Highways operate by carrying out routine assessments of their network and sharing its findings with relevant councils. Where areas fall below the required standard set out in the Litter and Refuse Code National Highways reminds the relevant authority of its duties under EPA. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse is available online at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-on-litter-and-refuse.

When National Highways has planned traffic management, such as lane closures for maintenance, it invites local authorities to use the same road space for litter picking. This reduces disruption to road users, avoids additional traffic management, and ensures litter is cleared before grass cutting begins. National Highways also encourages local authorities to share their planned litter picking schedules so that joint working can be arranged.

I am sorry to hear about the difficulties experienced by the Vale of White Horse Council, I recognise that collecting litter can be time consuming, costly and sometimes difficult to coordinate. At present, the Department does not intend to transfer litter cleansing responsibility of 'A' roads to National Highways. Instead, the Department encourages joint working between both National Highways and Local Authorities to tackle the issue of litter.

National Highways is continuing to work with local authorities to roll out anti-littering measures targeted at preventing road users from dropping litter in the first instance. These measures include, installing car and lorry height bins, installing solar powered compactor bins and exploring the use of AI enabled cameras to identify and capture littering offences and issue fines to drivers on the road network. More information about National Highways' overall approach to litter is set out in its litter strategy:

https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/dftnlz04/cre24_0020-national-highways-litter-strategy-our-approach.pdf.

Please express my gratitude to your constituents for raising their concerns around litter on the A34, I hope that this is helpful in responding to them.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Simon Lightwood', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

SIMON LIGHTWOOD MP

MINISTER FOR ROADS AND BUSES