

Time to Bin Your Assumptions

A Litter Innovation Fund Study



A total of £9,050 grant funding was received from Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) Litter Innovation Fund to deliver a research study to determine the impact of litter bin removal on various locations across Herefordshire.

We wanted to understand how public behaviour is affected by the removal of litter bins in 11 urban, rural and roadside locations and whether or not this has a positive impact on reducing litter incidents.

Aim

The aim was to challenge the perception that litter incidences will be reduced if more bins are available for the public to use.

Stakeholders

The project was initiated by Herefordshire Council in conjunction with the Herefordshire Stop the Drop Steering Group, comprised of representatives of litter groups from across the county. The engagement and support of Parish Councils was instrumental in the delivery of the project. In addition, members of the Hereford Community Clean Up group provided input and contributed to the project.

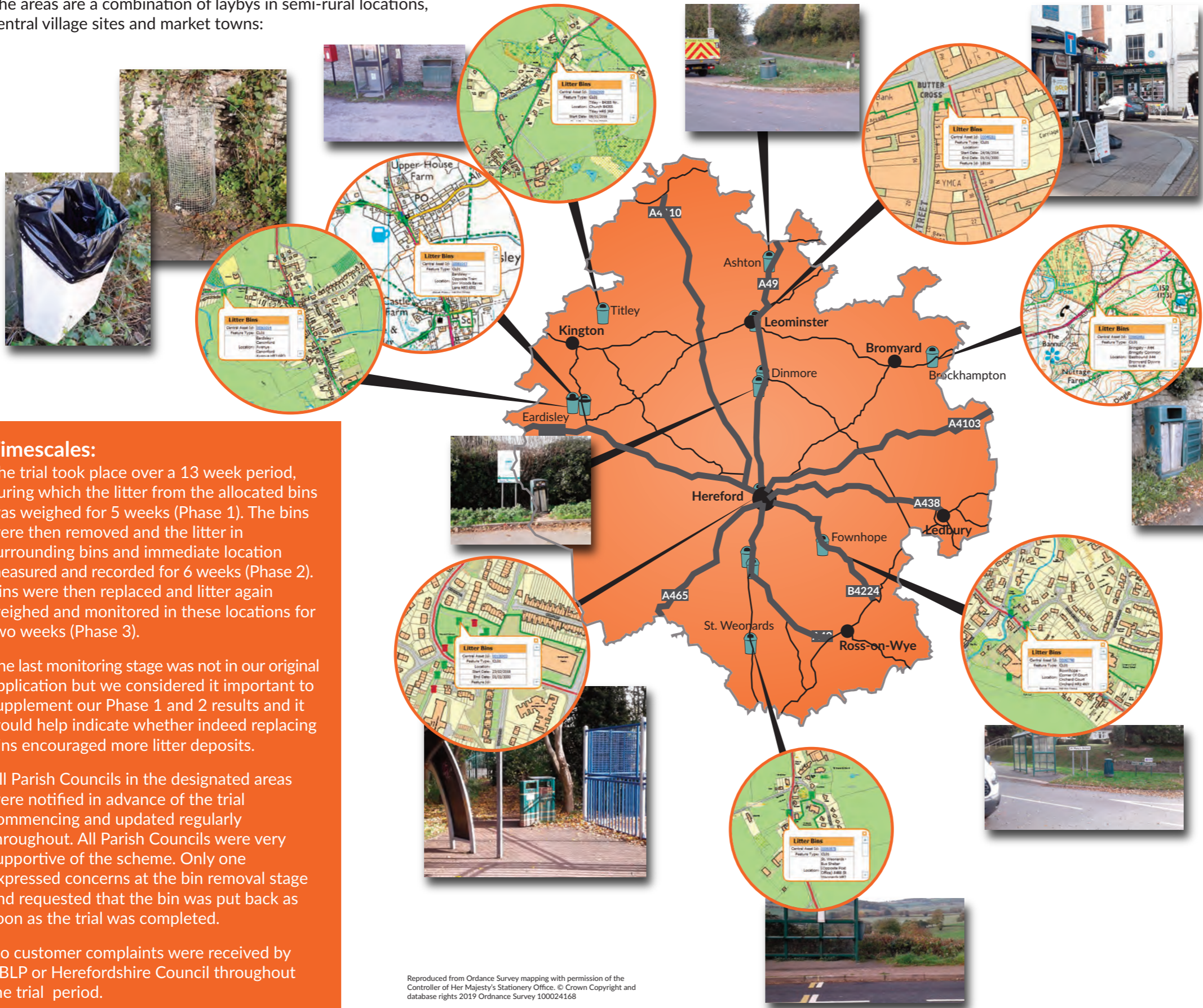
Key staff involved were Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) Street Cleaning operatives and Communications Team and Herefordshire Council's Energy and Active Travel and Communications Teams.



Locations of the bins in the study

Herefordshire has 1509 litter bins in the county. They are managed, monitored and maintained by our Public Realm Delivery Partners, Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP). In conjunction with BBLP, we identified a series of locations across the county in which to carry out the trial.

The areas are a combination of laybys in semi-rural locations, central village sites and market towns:



Timescales:

The trial took place over a 13 week period, during which the litter from the allocated bins was weighed for 5 weeks (Phase 1). The bins were then removed and the litter in surrounding bins and immediate location measured and recorded for 6 weeks (Phase 2). Bins were then replaced and litter again weighed and monitored in these locations for two weeks (Phase 3).

The last monitoring stage was not in our original application but we considered it important to supplement our Phase 1 and 2 results and it would help indicate whether indeed replacing bins encouraged more litter deposits.

All Parish Councils in the designated areas were notified in advance of the trial commencing and updated regularly throughout. All Parish Councils were very supportive of the scheme. Only one expressed concerns at the bin removal stage and requested that the bin was put back as soon as the trial was completed.

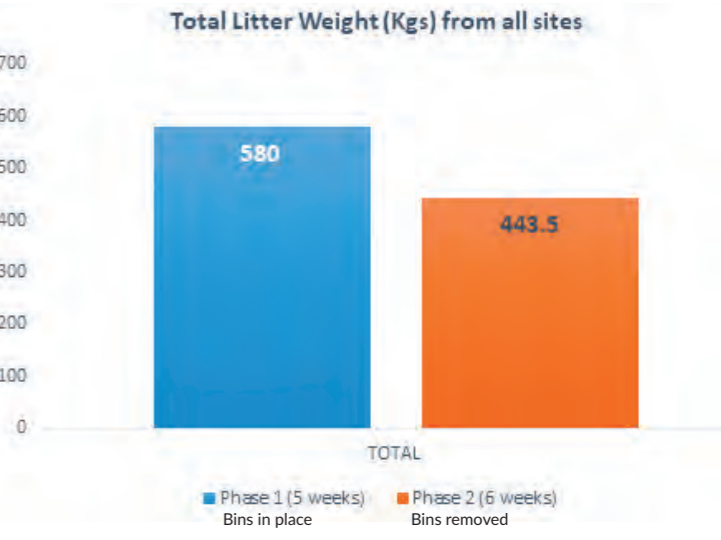
No customer complaints were received by BBLP or Herefordshire Council throughout the trial period.

Results

For Phases 1 and 2, results indicated that the removal of the bins reduced the total level of litter across all trial locations by 23.5 % (136.5 Kgs). With the exception of two sites (Ashton and Fownhope) there was no discernible increase in litter incidents (litter on surrounding group).

The additional data collected when the bins were returned to sites (Phase 3) indicated that there was a decrease of 15.8% in overall amount of litter collected from bins and surrounding areas overall. However, some areas experienced increases in amounts of litter in Phase 3, notably the 4 main laybys.

The litter in the urban areas of Leominster and Penhaligon Way decreased by 40% and 81% respectively.



Phase 1 (bins in place) and Phase 2 (bin removal): Results indicated that the removal of the bins reduced the total level of litter across all trial locations by 23.5 % (136.5 Kgs).

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Qualitative Feedback

Additional qualitative feedback on public perception and behaviour and litter and bins was gathered from a series of 4 focus groups held in Hereford city during two weeks in November.

"These days it's acceptable to 'eat on the hoof' and then litter. When I was growing up, it wasn't acceptable."

Beaches were discussed with the group of young people who mostly litter; who said they probably wouldn't do so on a beach as more aware of the impact on wildlife and often barefoot so more aware of impact on others.

General consensus is that it's an individual's responsibility to dispose of litter in a bin nearby or taking it home with them. However, it is the Council's responsibility to provide bins and empty them regularly.

Low level of awareness, of costs to the Council which could be spent on other things to support people. However, with a group of young people, after discussion, they would prefer the money to be used to support homeless people or drug addicts.

Suggestions of ways to stop people from littering
Catching people at it, otherwise no point. Punishment should be to pick-up litter (community service)
Wall of shame of people who were caught

Conclusion

This project could be scaled up or down to suit any area's needs. It relies on a good relationship with the department or organisation responsible for the litter bin maintenance and collection schedule. Herefordshire is a very rural county and the impact of the bin removal on very rural or roadside locations may not have as positive an impact if they are removed in very busy, urban towns and cities.

The overall aim of this project is to research the impact of litter bin removal on various locations across Herefordshire. We wanted to understand how public behaviour is affected by the removal of litter bins in 11 locations (2 urban, 4 rural and 5 roadside) and whether or not this has a positive impact on reducing litter incidents.

This research informed a new promotional public awareness campaign that challenged the hypothesis that the installation of more bins will alleviate the litter problem and encourage the public to take more responsibility for their waste.



Penhaligan Way

Poster and Social media campaign developed to raise awareness of study findings

