



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

BACKGROUND, DOCUMENT

# Local authority recorded fly-tipping: quality report

Covers the general principles and processes leading up to the production of our statistics.

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# Contents

**What are these statistics?**

**Policy and operational context**

**Users and uses**

**Strengths and limitations of the data**

**Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Data processing cycle**

**Quality**

**Evaluation**

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# What are these statistics?

An annual summary of fly-tipping incidents in Wales, as recorded by local authorities. The headline includes data collected for the number of fly-tipping incidents, including incidents by size and waste type as well as the number of enforcement actions and prosecution outcomes.

Fly-tipping is the illegal deposit of waste on land, contrary to Section 33(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. It can pollute the environment, be harmful to human health and spoils our enjoyment of our towns and countryside. It also undermines legitimate waste businesses and can affect the inward investment potential of an area.

Local authorities and Natural Resources Wales both have a responsibility in respect of illegally deposited waste. Local authorities have a duty to clear fly-tipping from public land in their areas and consequently they deal with the vast majority of fly-tipping on public land, investigating these and carrying out a range of enforcement actions. Natural Resources Wales is responsible for dealing with large-scale, serious and organised illegal dumping incidents which pose an immediate threat to human health or the environment.

Data on fly-tipping in Wales are collected in order to help the Welsh Government, local authorities and Fly-tipping Action Wales tackle the problem. The Fly-tipping Module within WasteDataFlow – a web-based, fly-tipping database, allows local authorities to record the number of fly-tipping incidents on land within their area each month. The Fly-tipping Module replaced the previous Flycapture system that was used up until 2014. The Flycapture database was introduced in 2004 as one measure to help meet the requirements of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, 2003. The information in this release only covers incidents of fly-tipping dealt with by local authorities. It is possible the actual number of incidents for Wales is higher than indicated.

The full dataset, including local authority breakdowns is available on the StatsWales website.

## Policy and operational context

The Welsh Government is committed to improving local environmental quality, tackling fly-tipping and reducing the amount spent in clean up costs.

The Welsh Government's draft [Litter and fly-tipping prevention plan](#) aims to make Wales free from the unacceptable social, economic and environmental harm caused by fly-tipping. A clean, safe, accessible and attractive local environment is an essential part of the Wales the Welsh Government wants for future generations.

To help support delivery the strategy, the Welsh Government continues to fund Fly-tipping Action Wales, an initiative which seeks to develop a truly integrated approach to tackling fly-tipping and one which aims secure its long-term reduction through a combination of measures including education, evidence, enforcement and community engagement.

During the 2018/19 reporting period the Welsh Government introduced new powers to allow enforcement authorities to issue fixed penalty notices to householders who have failed to meet their household waste duty of care. This is in addition to new powers introduced during the 2017/18 reporting period enabling fixed penalties to be issued for small-scale fly-tipping offences.

## Users and uses

Data on fly-tipping is used by the Welsh Government, local authorities and

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Natural Resources Wales to help monitor occurrences, identify emerging issues, and provide important evidence to inform policy and legislative development. Fly-tipping Action Wales, in consultation with Welsh Government, use the data to, support partner organisations, develop effective awareness campaigns and, where appropriate, support interventions.

Fly-tipping statistics are also important for Welsh Government and local authorities when planning and delivering public services. Some of the uses include:

- monitoring, reporting and prevention
- staff and resource allocation
- advice to Ministers and elected representatives
- informing debate in the Welsh Parliament and beyond
- geographic profiling, comparisons and benchmarking

Other users of fly-tipping statistics include, the media non-governmental organisations, landowners, researchers, and members of the public

## Strengths and limitations of the data

### Strengths

- The information is processed and published regularly and in an orderly manner to enable users to see the statistics when they are current and of greatest interest.
- Improvement in the consistency of reporting between local authorities with clear guidance now in place.
- Data can be used to indicate emerging issues regarding problem waste types or land types.
- Detailed statistics are provided via our [StatsWales](#) website at local authority

level.

## Limitations

- There are still some inconsistencies in the way data is recorded by local authorities (see quality section). Many local authorities have recently improved the way they capture and report fly-tips over the past few years, so the changes over time should be interpreted with some care.
- Fly-tipping on private land is thought to be under reported.
- Data does not indicate the exact location of incidents within a local authority area.
- The accuracy of the data reported to the Fly-tipping Module within the WasteDataFlow database is entirely dependent on the measurement, data management and reporting by local authorities. While Fly-tipping Action Wales carry out validation on behalf of Welsh Government and in accordance with the guidance, the validation of WasteDataFlow and the cross checks with other available data is limited to the accuracy of those reporting.
- The cost of clearing each incident is estimated based on size. However, not every incident has a recorded size, meaning that they are excluded from the overall cost estimates. Reasons for this often include human and/or technical errors, and steps are being taken to improve size recording methods. This should be considered when comparing the clearance cost of different local authorities, and across different years.

## Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Currently all COVID-19 restrictions introduced in Wales have been eased, however changes in societal behaviour and attitude have remained. Care needs to be taken when comparing pre and post COVID results. As well as year to year

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comparisons it is recommended to compare the most recent data with data from 2018-19, which was the last year before the start of the pandemic. This will show which local authorities were most affected by the pandemic, as well as show changes in trends.

Every local authority has its own rules on how to deal with waste to prevent COVID-19 infections, which makes comparisons between local authorities challenging. In addition, some local authorities have made more progress than others in dealing with the backlog of fly-tipping incidents and investigations.

The biggest changes to the data seen during the pandemic is the increase in the number of fly-tipping incidents and the decrease in fly-tipping enforcement actions. Fly Tipping Action Wales in NRW compiled information from local authorities to put together a summary of some of the key impacts of COVID-19 at the Wales wide level, which include:

- COVID-19 restrictions led to recycling centres being closed for long periods of time, as well as
- Restricting the abilities of local authorities to collect household waste.
- An increase in people working from home led to an increase in household waste. In particular, there was an increase in reconstruction work which led to a large increase in construction waste.
- Some local authorities stopped staff from looking through bagged waste and interviewing suspects to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Some prosecutions were postponed, leading to a large backlog of cases in the years following the pandemic.

**Information on COVID-19 restriction is available in this timeline (Welsh Parliament).**

# Data processing cycle

## Data source and coverage

The statistics are based on the returns made by local authorities to the Fly-tipping Module within the Waste Data Flow database. Not all incidents of fly-tipping will be recorded by a local authority, therefore the figures in this release are considered to be an underestimate of the total amount of the fly-tipping in Wales.

The costs for the size categories (single items, single black bags, car boot or less, small van loads and transit van loads) are set in the system based on national averages. For the other categories (tipper lorry loads and significant multiple loads), the costs are entered by the local authority. As these costs vary, a rise or decrease in incidents will not necessarily have the same rise or decrease in costs.

It should be noted that prosecutions do not necessarily take place in the same year as the relevant fly-tipping incident occurs.

Whilst fly-tipping figures are no longer designated as “National Statistics”, they continue to be published in accordance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

## Data collection

Local authorities are notified of the data collection exercise timetable in advance. This allows adequate time for local authorities to collate their information, and to raise any issues they may have. There is [guidance to the Fly-tipping Module within the Waste Data Flow database System](#).

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## Validation and verification

Information is collected quarterly via Waste Data Flow (WDF). The WDF system includes some in-built validation checks. Fly-tipping Action Wales carry out further validation of the data recorded in the Fly-tipping Module within the Waste Data Flow database. Validation involves a procedure of checking that all relevant Waste Data Flow questions have been completed by the local authorities and any discrepancies in calculations between entered inputs and outputs are identified. Any anomalies are then communicated to the individual local authorities and remedial action is taken to resolve them.

As well as the guidance made available to data providers, FtAW held a workshop for all Local Authorities in 2018 in order to improve understanding and to aid consistency. A [best practice guide \(Fly-tipping Action Wales\)](#) is available.

## Publication

Once the data has been finalised, the release is compiled and key points and commentary are drafted. The release is independently checked and a final sense check is carried out by the relevant statistician prior to publication on the website.

## Standards

The statistics that are prepared adhere to recognised professional standards. They are produced in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics independently under the responsibility of the Welsh Government Chief Statistician.

Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political reference.

More detailed quality information relating specifically to Fly-tipping in Wales, which is not included in the quality report, is given below.

## Quality

The statistics are based on the returns made by local authorities to the Fly-tipping Module within the WasteDataFlow database.

The annual report previously published as National Statistics was discontinued in 2014, following the consultation 'Proposals concerning the publication of Official Statistics'. We have reinstated the publication of StatsWales tables and headline figures and whilst the figures are no longer designated as "National Statistics", they continue to be published in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Welsh environment statistics adhere to the Welsh Government's **Statistical Quality Management Strategy**, and this is in line with the European Statistical System's six dimensions of quality, as listed in Principle 4 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Details of the six dimensions, and how we adhere to them, are provided below.

## Relevance

The degree to which the statistical product meets user needs for both coverage

and content.

The data in this Statistical Headline form the basis of evidence for monitoring fly-tipping incidents in Wales.

We actively review all our outputs and welcome feedback.

## Accuracy

All local authorities in Wales entered 4 separate quarterly monthly returns to the Fly-tipping Module within the WasteDataFlow database between April 2022 and March 2023.

**Detailed guidance is available via the Fly-tipping Action Wales website** to help data providers gather and complete the monthly data collection returns for the Fly-tipping Module within Waste Data Flow. The guidance should minimise differences in how different local authorities classify and record fly-tipping incidents.

## Limitations associated with this data set

- Care should be taken when interpreting these figures due to changes and improvements in data reporting mechanisms and associated guidance. For example, the recent annual increase recorded by Carmarthenshire is largely due to improved recording procedures since adopting the FlyMapper fly-tipping recording tool.
- The number of investigation actions has fallen but this may be due to stricter guidance on what actions can be included. For example, warning letters should only be included when they have been sent to the perpetrator in relation to a specific fly-tipping incident.
- Not all incidents of fly-tipping will be recorded by a local authority, therefore

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the figures in this release are considered to be an underestimate of the total amount of the fly-tipping in Wales. Whilst it is possible to record incidents of fly-tipping on private land into the database, not all local authorities are aware of this or choose to do so. Also, many private landowners do not report incidents to the local authority as they know that whilst the local authority may investigate, they will normally only clear incidents on public land. Due to the reasons outlined above, it is likely that the number of fly-tipping incidents occurring on private land is under reported and therefore it is possible the actual number of incidents for Wales is higher than indicated.

The total number of fly-tipping incidents recorded by local authorities in Wales should be greater or equal to the total number of fly-tipping incidents by size, as this relates to the fly-tipping incidents cleared by the local authority only, not those cleared by others. However, after carrying out quality assurance checks on historic data this was found not to be the case for 2007-08 and 2010-11. To ensure this issue doesn't occur in future years, validation processes will be improved to ensure consistency between data relating to incidents recorded by local authorities and incidents cleared by local authorities.

The costs on the Fly-tipping Module within the WasteDataFlow database for the size categories 'single items', 'single black bags', 'car boot or less', 'small van loads' and 'transit van loads' are set in the system based on national averages (it should be noted that these are based on information from selected local authorities provided between 2003 and 2016 so may not accurately represent current costs). For the other categories, 'tipper lorry loads' and 'significant multiple loads', the costs are entered by the local authority, however in the guidance national average costs per loads are provided to help local authorities calculate their estimates. This approach aims to reduce differences in local estimation methods and therefore allow for equivalent comparisons to be made at the local authority level. However there is still a large amount of variation between local authorities in the costs relating to 'tipper lorry loads' and 'significant multiple loads'.

As estimated clearance costs vary, a rise or decrease in incidents will not necessarily have the same rise or decrease in costs.

It should be noted that prosecutions do not necessarily take place in the same year as the relevant fly-tipping incident occurs.

Successful outcomes of prosecutions include conditional discharge, community service, fine, custodial sentence and other successful outcomes.

The number of fly-tipping prosecutions increased from 18 in 2020-21 to 94 in 2021-22. This was due to many legal cases being postponed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore not processed until the following year.

## Revisions

We follow our [statistical revisions policy](#). Where data has been revised it will be clearly marked with an (r).

## Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the time lag between the actual and planned dates of publication.

All outputs adhere to the Code of Practice for Statistics by pre-announcing the date of publication through the [upcoming pages on the Statistics for Wales website](#). Furthermore, should the need arise to postpone an output this would follow our [revisions, errors and postponements](#) arrangements.

We publish releases as soon as practical after the relevant time period.

## Accessibility and clarity

Additional data are available to download from our [StatsWales](#) interactive website.

## Comparability

To ensure that Local Authorities only report fly-tipping incidents (and not presentation of waste issues) and to ensure more meaningful enforcement actions were recorded, the following changes were made to the Welsh Specific Guidance in September 2018. These changes will have partially affected some of the data submitted in this release when compared to previous years.

- Warning letters should only be included if a letter has been sent or handed to the perpetrators or the land occupiers/owners. Do not include letter drops sent out to multiple occupancies/houses. The total number of enforcement actions may have been impacted significantly due to this change.
- Clearer guidance is now in place regarding whether section 46 issues (side waste and mis-presentation of waste) can be included in both the number of incidents and the enforcement actions sections.
- Changes to whether littering FPNs can be included under enforcement actions - Removal of s47ZA of the EPA (offences relating to waste receptacles) in the FPN section of guidance. From April 2018, local authorities have been able to record FPN data in 3 separate categories. From October 2018, local authorities have also been able to record FPNs issued for Duty of Care. Therefore comparisons should be treated with caution.
- Some local authorities have reported that increases and decreases in number of incidents are the result of changes in how they are recording data e.g. more accurate systems have been put in place to record incidents.
- In 2022-23, Wrexham reported a large increase in incidents compared with

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the previous year. This was found to be due to many incidents not being reported, and since the dates of these incidents were not known, they were all submitted under the year 2022-23.

- Carmarthenshire were unable to provide information on the land type of incidents in 2018-19 (all were recorded under 'other'). Therefore national, regional and Carmarthenshire trends over time should be treated with caution.
- In 2021-22, Newport saw a significant increase in incidents compared with the previous year. This was due to improved reporting, with incidents on housing association land being included for the first time. Therefore national, regional and Newport trends over time should be treated with caution.

## Coherence

The degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but which refer to the same phenomenon, are similar.

## Related Statistics for Other UK Countries

### England

The Fly-tipping Module of WasteDataFlow is used by English local authorities. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) publish [fly-tipping statistics for England \(DEFRA\)](#) on an annual basis.

### Scotland

The Environment Agency manages a UK wide fly-tipping database called Flycapture; this is free of charge for Scottish local authorities to use. This web

based database helps local authorities improve intelligence on fly-tipping and focus resources on hot spots. In Scotland contributing to and using the Flycapture database is not compulsory but on average over half of local authorities make regular monthly returns enabling access to standard reports highlighting local trends. For further information on fly-tipping in Scotland please refer to the following:

### [Flytipping \(Scottish Environment Protection Agency\)](#)

### [Dumb Dumpers \(Zero Waste Scotland\)](#)

## **Northern Ireland**

In 2011, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) set up a new fly-tipping team to progress implementation of a Fly-tipping Framework, working in partnership with local councils. One key objective is to trial different options for effective data capture direct from NIEA and council staff at fly-tipping sites using GPS technology as a possible alternative to the UK Flycapture database. For further information on fly-tipping in Northern Ireland please refer to the following:

### [NIEA reveals illegal fly-tipping costs \(Northern Ireland Environment Agency\)](#)

### [Fly-tipping \(NI Direct\)](#)

## **Evaluation**

We always welcome feedback on any of our statistics. Please contact us via email: [stats.environment@gov.wales](mailto:stats.environment@gov.wales)



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