

# **Stop the Drop**

## **Submission to the Parks and Beaches Sub Panel of The Planning and Environment Scrutiny Panel.**

**October 2010**

### Who are we?

Stop the Drop (StD) is an Island wide anti-litter initiative. It was formed by a group of about 15 people who meet, under the chairmanship of Margaret Holland Prior, about once a month to suggest and implement ways of curing Jersey's growing litter problem. It includes island politicians, civil servants, tourism representatives and concerned members of the public.

It emerged from St Brelade's participation in the Parish in Bloom competition, an annual awards programme run by Jersey Tourism based on the Britain in Bloom competition. These competitions emphasise community involvement in improving the appearance of the public domain, which includes the perennial problem of litter. In this way our concerns coincide with yours.

### Litter in Jersey.

The litter problem in Jersey, whilst not yet as bad as in the UK, is getting worse because;

- Prosperity has led to a growth in the consumption of take away food and drink supplied in non-degradable containers, such as Pet plastic bottles, Styrofoam cups and containers, foil based bags or wrappers and traditional ring pull cans.
- The smoking ban in indoor public places has increased the cigarette debris and chewing gum found on the roads and pavements, as smokers move outside to smoke and discard their butts before returning indoors without really thinking of them as litter.
- There is a trend, despite the modern emphasis on environmental awareness, among the public at large and especially the young towards accepting litter as an inevitable part of our surroundings, until someone else clears it up. who is paid to do so.
- The decline in the price of alcohol has led to an increase in its consumption, especially among the young, who often congregate in public parks and on the beaches. Influenced by alcohol, they want to be carefree and sophisticated and while aware that the penalties for breach are never enforced, they disregard their civic duty to clear up after themselves, whether or not some among are aware of that.
- The relevant legislation is a dead letter. Littering is often done covertly but, even if the offender is challenged by the Honorary or States Police, it can take three hours to process the personal details of anyone found littering. This seems disproportionate for what will probably just result in a caution in the Parish Hall. Those in authority (who may personally consider growing levels of litter to be inevitable) feel this is not good time management and that they have more important things to do. There has not been a prosecution before the Magistrates' Court in living memory.

- Modern society lays emphasis upon people's rights, but civic responsibilities are not emphasized, either because they relate to things for which we feel excused, having paid our taxes, or because, even to those in authority with budgets to manage, pointing them out can appear paternalistic and hectoring and so counter productive.

### What is this costing us?

The cost of clearing litter falls on us all, through the expenditure of The States and our Parishes, on rubbish collection and street cleaning. Clearing litter from our public places has been estimated to cost our community at least £1.3 million every year.

There must also be indirect costs arising from the associated environmental degradation and a declining visitor perception of Jersey as an unusually clean and attractive place, a matter noted in St. Brelade by the 12 European judges for this year's Entente Florale Europe competition. There is no doubt that litter is harmful to wildlife and that anything that can reasonably be done to control the spread of plastics into the environment at large should be considered, and will enjoy wide spread public support

### So what is to be done?

This is a time of financial constraint. StD believes it is time to end the waste of time and money spent *clearing up* litter. The States should take a proactive stance and devote resources to *preventing* litter in the first place. This will save money, be good for the environment, encourage tourism and be good for our pride in our island.

We set out below a list of initiatives for the States to consider. Some are very simple and others would require a big change in public behaviour. We are encouraged by the public's willingness to adapt its behaviour, once given a lead, as with the swift conversion to reusable shopping bags. We have only included proposals that will save money, or are largely self-financing, and that have been successfully introduced elsewhere.

We believe that by adopting all or most of the following Jersey would attract favourable publicity for itself as a community whose leaders have grasped the nettle and acted imaginatively for the good of its residents, its visitors, and the environment at large.

#### *Take away food business licencing conditions*

a) Takeaway businesses licenced under the Places of Refreshment Law should be required as a condition of their licence:

i) Clearly to identify, (eg with sticky labels,) all food containers and drinks containers provided by them not covered by the deposit scheme described below so as to provide evidence of whose premises nuisance litter is coming from.

ii) At closing time to conduct a litter patrol for an area within a given radius of their premises.

iii) Prominently to display notices setting out the penalties for litter and the location of adjacent litter disposal facilities

The branding requirement will allow the authorities to identify whose customers are causing the most litter and target enforcement measures under accordingly

### *On the spot fines*

b) Conduct an awareness campaign in the local media prior to introducing a zero tolerance policy; to be enforced by the introduction of On the Spot fines for those caught littering. The UK Legislation on the same issues is attached. This will require new law but there is a precedent in Jersey for an on the spot penalty system for parking offenders. An on the spot traffic fine system is also envisaged to cut the cost of prosecuting road traffic offences, so this could be done at the same time. Authority to issue fines would be granted to the parking wardens, and members of the Honorary and States Police forces. An on the sport fine programme could be conducted for several periods of one or two weeks, without warning, so that this is not a continuing burden on the States or the Parishes.

The City of London introduced such a scheme in 2009, and it has enjoyed a good success rate. The City has 10 environment officers who are empowered to fine irresponsible smokers and other litterers £80. Those who give false details are fined £1,000.

### *A bottle bill*

c) Introduce a sealed beverage container deposit scheme, or "Bottle Bill". Most European and many Commonwealth jurisdictions have these. Barbados is a small island state that has one. Milk is nearly always excluded from such schemes, which cover both alcoholic and soft drinks. Placing value in the form of a deposit on empty beverage bottles and tins ensures they are no longer discarded along the island's highways or across its beaches and countryside. It is in effect a financially incentivized recycling scheme with collection running in tandem with distribution across the retail network.

In brief, the deposit is levied at the place of import into the island and passed from wholesaler to retailer to consumer. Such deposit schemes are these days made easier for retailers to participate in if they have on their premises Reverse Vending machines, which exchange empty bottles for tokens redeemable in the retailer's premises. Retailers can accept returned bottles manually; those who decline to participate may see a drop in custom. The retailer's IT system submits a claim for the deposit, which at that stage is still in the government's deposit fund. Since virtually all beverage retailers have liquor licences, one way to counter retailer opposition could be to require retailers to provide reverse vending facilities as a condition of the renewal of their liquor licences. Containers not redeemed can be expected make a significant profit for the government, which can defray set up costs or be spent assisting smaller retailers with the leasing costs of reverse vending machines. The authorities can also expect to make savings on litter clearing activities, as henceforth nearly all bottles will be available to collect crushed and bailed from the reverse vending machines.

### *Non bio degradable packaging prohibition*

d) Introduce, after due warning to consume existing stocks, a ban on certain particularly non bio degradable but commonly used take away food packaging, especially white Styrofoam "clam shells" and beverage cups. This has already been done under municipal legislation in certain communities on the Pacific coast of North America.

*Alcohol Free Areas in town and on the beaches:*

e) Many areas around the world have adopted alcohol free areas, either in their parks and or on the beaches. New Zealand has whole villages and towns, which become alcohol-free zones during public holidays. This will achieve many things but among them should be a reduction in litter as irresponsible behaviour in public places should decline.

*Discarded chewing gum control*

f) New forms of less polluting gum are believed to be close to production. Pending and after its arrival could the infrastructure for the charging of GST be adapted to allow for a special increased rate of tax on chewing gum? This would be a proto-type environmental tax for Jersey and the sum raised would be devoted to the cost of discarded gum removal, but not of course charged on the new cleaner variety.

*Smokers' litter*

g) Since the health authorities of the Channel Islands are already intervening to place their own health warnings on local cigarette packaging could these warnings be supplemented by information to smokers in Jersey about the fines to which they are liable if they illegally discard their butts, their packets or their cellophane wrappers?

*Community service resource*

h) Clearly consultation with the unions is required, but there would be great public support for the use of the Community Service scheme to provide litter-monitors, particularly to clear black spots identified by a public anti litter hot line. If there is concern that the punishment should not unduly stigmatize the offenders their interventions could be managed discreetly, or this issue should be kept under review. A change in the climate of opinion about litter may change the perception that clearing it is an obviously demeaning activity

StD offers these proposals for further consideration and would be happy to appear before Scrutiny to expand upon them if so requested.