

Guidance for volunteer litter pickers

## **Introduction**

Please note: Any works in the Council’s parks require prior agreement from NELC before organised activity is undertaken

Individuals and groups acting as volunteer litter pickers can be exposed to a number of easily avoidable hazards. This guide has been produced to help you identify these hazards and help keep you and other volunteers safe.

This guide has been written for volunteers organising litter picks with the help of the Council, but it applies to all volunteer litter pickers in the North East Lincolnshire.

## **COVID-19**

Keep Britain Tidy have prepared guidance to help keep litter picking activities safe during the coronavirus pandemic. Read the guidance at www.keepbritaintidy.org/get-involved/support-our-campaigns/great-british-spring-clean/coronavirus-guidance.

**Informing the Council**

Please complete the special form you can find on this website <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/licensing/organising-an-event/> to let us know about your litter picking event. The form can be found listed under this guidance.

## **Protective clothing and equipment**

The following items should be used at all times by volunteer litter pickers:

* Reflective hi-vis bibs to clearly highlight volunteers to traffic and pedestrians.
* Litter picker sticks to avoid direct contact with litter and too much bending over.
* Gloves to reduce direct contact with noxious or dangerous materials.
* Suitable footwear and clothing

The Council has some hi-vis bibs and litter picking sticks it can loan to litter picking groups, subject to availability. Please contact cleanandgreen@nelincs.gov.uk for more details.

## **Noxious and dangerous materials**

You may find the following materials during a litter pick. They should be treated with caution:

* Broken glass – remove using a litter picker or a brush and shovel, avoiding contact by hand, and dispose of in a sturdy container.
* Drug related litter/hypodermics – these should not be moved under any circumstance. Instead note the location and report to the Council for specialist removal.
* Suspect materials and fly tipping – items that are possibly dangerous such as unknown liquids in containers, building materials, asbestos, or fly-tipping should not be moved by volunteers. Instead, note the location, take photographs if possible and report it to the Council for specialist removal.
* Dog mess – should not be moved, note the location and report to the council for removal.

If there is any doubt about an item leave it and let us know.

## **General site safety and inspection**

Always use extreme caution when litter picking near roads as there is a risk of being struck by passing vehicles. Roadside litter picking should be restricted to only where there are wide verges or pavements, suitable for pedestrians, and you should always face oncoming traffic. It is essential that volunteers are visible to road users – wear hi-vis clothing and only work in clear daylight. Volunteers should not attempt to clear litter from the carriageway. Any area with a speed limit above 30mph should be avoided due to the increased risks associated with passing vehicles. Spotters should be used to identify and possible hazards whilst people are picking litter.

Avoid reaching into hedges or undergrowth in such a way as to expose the face, eyes and skin to scratches from thorns or branches. If an item of litter cannot be safely reached with a litter picker, leave it.

Avoid working close to rivers or on steep slopes, as there is an increased risk of slips and falls. When working close to ditches, avoid reaching into the ditch to remove litter, unless it can be safely reached with a litter picker.

Be mindful of planning litter picks on beaches, tide times and locations on the beach can be hazardous, seek advice in the first instance. Contact cleanandgreen@nelincs.gov.uk

Be mindful of wildlife. In the springtime avoid disturbing animals and birds that may be nesting and in the summer time be wary of wasp and bee nests.

Do not enter an area, or attempt to litter pick an area, where works are restricted, are already taking place (for example road works) or where the public do not have a right to entry. Have a clear understanding of who the land belongs to prior to planning a litter pick.

The level of risk will vary at each location, so before you start a litter pick, carry out a site inspection and risk assessment so you’re fully aware of the risks and other possible hazards. Volunteers have a duty towards themselves, to fellow volunteers and the public to work safely. If there is any doubt about the safety of a site or material, then it should be avoided.

A risk assessment should be completed before the event and any identified risks highlighted to people who take part before they start. Risk assessment examples are readily available online (e.g. CPRE: https://www.litteraction.org.uk/infocentre/organising-a-cleanup)

## **Lifting and handling materials**

Volunteers should be aware of the risk of injury by carrying bags of collected litter and attempting to lift and carry heavy materials. To avoid injury, the following basic principles of manual handling should be applied:

* Use litter pickers to prevent constant bending and stretching.
* Make sure an item is safe to handle with no sharp edges or noxious contents.
* Decide if an item can be safely moved either by one or two people.
* Only try to move an item if this can be done so without straining.
* When lifting an item, bend the legs and keep the back straight.

## **Young volunteers**

While it is beneficial to get young people involved in litter picks, age plays a big part in the ability to recognise and avoid risk. Accordingly, volunteers under the age of 18 should be supervised by an adult and permission for their participation should be gained from a parent or guardian. In the interest of safeguarding children, adults supervising or working with volunteers under the age of 18 should be Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked.

## **Collection and disposal of litter**

Where possible, litter collected should be disposed of by the volunteers through their own household waste and recycling collections. We appreciate that this is not always possible if you collect large amounts of rubbish. If you can’t dispose of it in your own bin, please to take the litter to your nearest Community Recycling Centre (CRC) in Grimsby or Immingham. If you have registered your litter pick with the Council, we can let your local CRC know you will be taking the litter to the site. cleanandgreen@nelincs.gov.uk

Volunteers are not expected to separate recyclables from the litter collected, but if you are willing to do this it is a big help. The recyclable items should be added to your normal recycling collections (where clean and acceptable) or taken to your nearest recycling point. This can be either the CRC or your nearest Bring To recycling site - these can be found on (https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/where-to-recycle/)

For one-off litter picks, where larger quantities of litter are likely to be collected, the Council can supply bags and arrange for the litter collected to be disposed of after the event. If you complete the form in the attached link you will be contacted by the waste team to discuss what is possible (ESAG form).

## **Disclaimer**

If the litter pick is being organised or supported by a ward councillor or an officer of the Council it will be covered by the Council’s insurance.

If the litter pick is not organised or supported by the council volunteers should not participate in litter picks unless they understand and accept that participation is entirely at their own risk. Volunteers are not working for, or on behalf of, North East Lincolnshire Council, therefore the Council will not be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused as a result of the actions and omissions of volunteers or this guidance.

## **Public Liability Insurance**

Obtaining public liability insurance is very important and strongly recommended. This will provide cover for your legal liability arising from accidental damage or injury that may occur during the event, including damage or injury to a member of the public or their property. If you are an individual organising a tidy up your current household insurance may cover you for public liability. You will need to check your policy to ensure you are covered. If not you will need to take out a separate public liability insurance.

## **Frequently asked questions**

**Can I borrow litter picking equipment from the Council?**

Yes. The Council has litter pickers and hi-vis clothing available to borrow. Please contact cleanandgreen@nelincs.gov.uk if you would like to loan and use this equipment.

**Am I insured by the Council when litter picking at a community organised pick?**

No. Volunteer litter pickers are not working for, or on behalf of the Council and are not covered by the Council’s insurance. If you are representing an organisation, check that you are covered by the organisation’s insurance.

**What is the difference between litter and fly-tipping?**

There is no clear definition of the difference between litter and fly-tipping. Litter is generally considered to be waste associated with eating, drinking and smoking, which has been improperly discarded and left by members of the public, or waste that is spilt during business operations. Fly-tipping is controlled waste (household, commercial, industrial or clinical waste) which has been dumped illegally rather than being disposed of correctly. Fly-tipping should not be moved by volunteers.

**Can I leave litter pick bags next to my bin for collection?**

No. It is the Council’s policy not to accept side waste next to bins, so any bags you leave next to your bin will not be collected. Either put the bags in your bin once it has been emptied or take them to your local CRC.

**What do I do if I find evidence of where litter may have come from or witness someone dropping litter?**

Please report this information to the Council’s Community Protection and Compliance Team (add e-mail), who will follow up your report, and will take enforcement action depending on the strength of the evidence available.

To contact the Council about any of the items raised in this guidance, please use the online reporting or send an e-mail to cleanandgreen@nelincs.gov.uk.