

Edinburgh Council handed out just one fine for littering last year

Edinburgh Council handed out just one fine for littering last year, it has emerged, sparking calls for the authority to step up efforts to tackle the problem.

Figures show only six fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for public littering have been issued in the capital since 2021.

And they reveal a dramatic drop in enforcement over the last 10 years, from 630 FPNs being issued to people for discarding waste on the street in 2014/15.

This fell slightly to 613 in 2015/16, before plummeting to 114 the year after and 20 in 2017/18.

The council's Lib Dem group leader Kevin Lang, who requested the data at a meeting last month, said those who litter "need to know they run the risk of being caught and fined".

He said "more active and visible patrols" were needed "especially in known litter hot-spot areas".

In Scotland, offenders are fined £80 if they're caught dropping litter, with local authority environmental wardens responsible for issuing tickets.

Edinburgh's environmental wardens service has been cut back significantly in recent years. There were 38 employed across

the city in 2014, ten of which were recruited specifically to focus on littering and dog fouling, which the council said led to a “significant rise in fixed penalty notices for that period”.

In the decade since, the team has more than halved to 18 wardens who have a wide range of responsibilities aside from catching litter bugs.

But with a single fine handed out in each of the last two years, it appears enforcement has all but stopped.

Cllr Lang said: “We know the actions of a small minority can have a big impact on the majority.

“That’s why it’s so frustrating to see such limited enforcement by the council when it comes to littering with barely one fine a year.”

He added: “We really need more active and visible patrols, especially in known litter hot-spot areas.

“We live in a great city which most people are proud to live in and take good care of.

“However, those people who do act irresponsibly need to know they run the risk of being caught and fined.”

Environmental charity Keep Scotland Beautiful said Scotland has a “litter emergency”.

CEO Barry Fisher said: “We know that government, nationally and locally, can and should do more to implement existing, and put in place new, legislation and policies to tackle littering.

“But, ultimately, standards are falling because of the behaviour of those who repeatedly litter.

“Nine in 10 people agree that litter is an issue across the

country and 85% of people want to see more efforts to prevent litter in their local area.

“The problems and inconsistencies with the enforcement system for litter fines across Scotland need to be urgently addressed, and we recognise that this is not an easy fix.

“In the mean time I urge everyone to play their part and bin their rubbish or take it home if no bins are available.”

Edinburgh Council were asked for comment.

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter