

# LOCAL AUTHORITY TEMPLATE PRESS RELEASE

## Media release

### 6.3 million vapes and pods are being thrown away a week despite the single-use vape ban

- XXX local authority says that vapes are still causing major issues in X area with regular fires in bin lorries and waste centres.
- 1.18 billion vapes have been thrown away over the past 4 years
- The number of vapes thrown away per year could instead be powering nearly 5,000 electric vehicles
- Waste and recycling companies say that vapes are still causing significant challenges with large volumes of vapes entering the waste system, and dealing with regular fires in bin lorries and waste centres

Latest research from Material Focus has found that the number of vapes thrown away or recycled incorrectly remains high with over 6.3 million vapes and pods being thrown away every week despite the single-use vape sales ban that came into force in the UK on the 1st June 2025. This is a reduction of 23% compared to last year, which shows that the ban has had an impact in reducing the number of vapes being thrown away. The loss of valuable materials such as lithium and copper, and the impact this is having on waste companies in XXX area with fires in bin lorries and waste and recycling centres are continuing to cause major problems.

Material Focus has launched its fourth Vape Research report that analyses the number of vapes bought and thrown away. The research, conducted by Opinium, assesses the impact that the single-use vape sales ban has had on purchasing and disposal behaviours.

The vapocalypse continues - vapes are one of the most environmentally wasteful, damaging and dangerous consumer products ever sold. Vapes are powered by lithium-ion batteries, which if binned can get crushed or damaged and spark dangerous fires in bin lorries and waste and recycling centres. XXX area has had XXX number of fires in bin lorries and waste and recycling centres believed to be caused by incorrectly disposed of vapes.

In addition, Material Focus received information from two of the largest waste and recycling companies in the UK who have reported that they are still experiencing significant challenges due to ongoing high numbers of vape waste in the system. Veolia is continuing to experience a fire a day in their vehicles and at their waste and recycling centres, a trend which has endured for around four years, which they think are likely caused by lithium batteries found inside vapes and other

electricals. And Biffa continues to receive over 200,000 vapes a month that have been incorrectly placed in mixed recycling collections.

Fires that are caused by vapes and other electricals with hidden batteries are on the rise across the UK. Material Focus research identified that the number of battery fires in the waste stream had increased to over 1,200, an increase of 71% from 700 in 2022. These fires cause serious damage to waste crews, fire services and the local community in addition to air pollution levels spikes in local areas, breaking WHO limits and affecting the health of local residents. Some of these fires are considered to be caused by vapes.

Scott Butler, Executive Director, Material Focus: “The vapocalypse continues, as we see a rise in battery fires in bin lorries and at waste and recycling centres across the UK. The single-use vapes ban has had an impact, but 6 million vapes and pods are still being thrown away a week and this is still a massive waste of valuable materials and a major fire risk. A new tobacco and vapes bill is progressing through parliament. The bill proposes that the sellers of vapes will need to be licensed to do this, similar to those who sell tobacco and alcohol. Requiring these licensed premises to also offer takeback and communicate this clearly to their customers could have a big impact.

“It should be as easy to recycle a vape as it is to buy one. We want more vapers demanding that the places where they buy them also provide recycling points. It is a long-standing legal obligation for all of the stores who are profiting from selling them must offer safe recycling drop-off points and cover the costs of doing that. Vape producers and importers should then cover the costs of recycling.”

**Draft Local authority quote;** “Vapes thrown away in bins can have a devastating impact on our local fire services, waste teams, as well our local communities. The fires can take hours if not many days to put out, putting our front-line workers at risk, as well as causing air pollution levels to increase. All vapes should be recycled, and you can find your nearest recycling point by visiting XXX.”

Summary of key findings;

- 80% of vapers say there isn't enough information on how to recycle.
- Being able to recycle their vape at the shop they bought them was the most popular location that people would choose to recycle their vape - 49%.
- 6.3 million vapes and pods thrown away per week compared to 8.2 million vapes in 2024, a 23% reduction
- 66% of people said that they threw their vapes away
- 9.4 million vapes including single-use, rechargeable and pods bought per week

All vapes can and should be recycled - 80% of the materials inside a vape can be recovered.

## ENDS

Material Focus is a not-for-profit organisation whose goal is to stop the nation throwing away or holding onto their old small electricals. Material Focus is delivering the UK-wide Recycle Your Electricals campaign. The campaign is revealing the value hidden in electricals and is making it easier for us all to recycle and reuse the small electricals we no longer need by providing more recycling points as well as providing practical information on how households can recycle.

The campaign is funded by producers of electrical appliances. The UK government sets annual targets for the recycling of all waste electricals, including small electricals. If producers of electrical appliances don't meet this target, then they contribute towards a fund (WEEE Fund) which pays for a range of activities, including communications, behaviour change activities, increased recycling projects and research. Ultimately the aim is to support actions that will help the UK increase the levels of reuse and recycling of waste electricals.

### **Research Methodology:**

Research was conducted online by Opinium Research between 29<sup>th</sup> December 2025 – 9<sup>th</sup> January 2026 to a sample of 1,000 people aged 16+ who have bought a vape since 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025, results have been weighted to be representative of the UK population.

Of a representative UK sample of 2,00 adults 345 had bought a vape since 1<sup>st</sup> June –  $345/2000 = 17\%$  of UK adults this is 9,491,339.

The number of those who buy / throw each type of vape were calculated by multiplying the % of the overall vapers sample they made up by the total numbers of vapers in the UK.