

## Take Charge Campaign: Re-launching for Halloween 2022

### Background

Every year, across the United Kingdom, hundreds of devastating fires occur in recycling and waste management facilities and vehicles. This compromises vital public services, causes millions of pounds worth of damage and puts people at risk of serious injury, or worse.

The majority of these fires are caused by batteries which have been improperly discarded and which are subsequently hidden in the general rubbish or mixed with other recyclable materials. The hidden batteries are likely to be damaged during the collection and treatment process and some batteries, particularly lithium-ion, can explode or ignite when this happens.

The *Take Charge* campaign launched in October 2022 with the purpose of encouraging the public to *recycle batteries responsibly* through raised awareness of the consequences of carelessly discarded batteries, alongside simple instructional messaging about how and where to recycle them.

The campaign was supported by hundreds of organisations across the UK including local authorities, regional fire and rescue services and private-sector recycling and waste management companies. It secured prominent media coverage across national online, radio, television and print news media – including the [BBC](#), [Guardian](#), [Daily Mail](#), [The Telegraph](#), and [Sky News](#) among hundreds of trade, regional and even international titles.

The campaign website at [www.takecharge.org.uk](http://www.takecharge.org.uk) has had over 16,000 page views and the [campaign film](#) has had over 6,000 views. Take Charge was even replicated (by permission) [in Finland](#) – showing that the problem is a global issue and not unique to the UK.

**Following its success in 2020, Take Charge will be re-launching over Halloween 2022 and we invite you and your organisation to participate.**

The campaign is coordinated by the Environmental Services Association (ESA) and this next phase is supported by generous sponsorship from battery compliance scheme Ecosurety.

### What have we learned since 2020?

In 2021, the ESA was kindly invited by Material Focus to be involved in its [research into consumer attitudes and behaviours](#) associated with loose and embedded household batteries. The full findings of this research are available [here](#)

The key findings suggest that higher awareness of the fire risk posed by batteries could help reduce “battery-binning” and that communications activity focusing on people who regularly bin loose and embedded batteries could have the greatest impact.

- The research suggests that at least 25% of the UK population appear to be binning batteries, and nearly a third (29%) of those people who dispose of electrical items have put at least one of them in a household bin or the wrong recycling container in the past year.
- Many people are unaware that there are embedded batteries in some electrical waste and the electrical items most commonly disposed of within the last year are electric toothbrushes (39% of respondents), device charger/powerbank (24%) and shavers/trimmers (22%). Other items commonly disposed of included electric toys, power tools, e-cigarettes and bluetooth earbuds.
- Of the people who throw batteries in the bin, most say they don't know what to do with them, and only 10% of those that bin batteries are aware of the fire risk. Those binning batteries appear more likely to be younger and female, particularly for loose batteries.
- People who are aware, or who are made aware, of the fire risk are less likely to bin batteries.
- Choice of language for communications is important and a more definitive, instructional, tone is more likely to ensure people act in the right way.

## What will the Take Charge campaign look like in 2022?

Based on the consumer insight research, the definitive message of the Take Charge campaign is that consumers should **never bin batteries**. This message will be justified by showing consumers evidence of the dangerous consequences associated with discarding batteries improperly. The campaign will support the correct behaviours through a call to action to visit the campaign website (or relevant local recycling information) to find out how to recycle batteries responsibly.

The re-launch of Take Charge will be split into two phases and two audience groups:

**Audience one:** The employees, stakeholders and customers/residents of supporter organisations (ie the general public)

**Audience two:** Younger adults (late teens to early twenties) who the research suggests are most likely to bin devices containing embedded batteries

- **Phase one – October Monday 24<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> November**
  - A focused period of activity over Halloween where all supporting organisations share a range of digital collateral across their social media channels targeting **audience one**.
  - A paid-for social media advertising campaign targeting **audience-two**
  - All collateral (both organic and paid) will be “zombie-battery” themed to tie in with the Halloween period.
  - This phase will be supported by a national and regional media engagement programme
- **Phase two – Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November onwards**
  - Supporter organisations will be provided with a range of editable collateral (including posters, banners, bin hangers, vector imagery, and social media content) for use across their locations and channels in perpetuity (**audience one**)
  - The post-Halloween suite of collateral will reflect a generic campaign branding and will not feature the zombie battery concept so that it remains relevant beyond Halloween.

- The website at [www.takecharge.org.uk](http://www.takecharge.org.uk) will also be “re-skinned” to reflect the generic Take Charge brand.
- The paid-for social media advertising campaign targeting **audience two** will continue but the advertising collateral will change to reflect the generic Take Charge brand.
- Measurement and review after six months

## How can I get involved?

We will write to you again in early October 2022 with more detail about what to expect and to share some of the creative concepts for the next phase. We hope to be in a position to share the final collateral by mid-October, under embargo, so that our supporters can prepare for the launch.

In the meantime, if you have any requests or questions, please contact Ben Johnson by email to [bjohnson@esauk.org](mailto:bjohnson@esauk.org)

The ESA, its members and Ecosurety would like to thank you for your continued support in helping to tackle fires caused by batteries and hope that, together, we can reverse the worrying growth trend of these incidents.

