

Bid to use What3Words to help tackle 'grot spots'

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An app used by Mountain Rescue to find lost walkers could be used to alert county bosses to illegally dumped waste.

Police forces and other emergency services are increasingly urging the public to download What3Words, which can share a location with a simple three-word code.

And now bosses at Durham County Council have raised the prospect of it being repurposed to help local authority teams clean up "grot spots" as part of their new "Find and Fix" initiative.

Cllr Olga Milburn said: "I'm really interested in Find and Fix and I think you're going to be inundated."

"It's a brilliant scheme to get rid of all the little grot spots, however, my question is about fly-tipping when things are in really isolated locations, have we given any thought to

using the What3Words app?

"It's very handy for being able to pinpoint a particular spot, within three metres, rather than trying to describe where something is, especially if it's out in the open countryside."

Cllr Milburn was speaking at a meeting of the county council's Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which was held by videolink and broadcast via YouTube.

The county councillor for

Tanfield raised the app, which is also used by organisations as diverse as the Red Cross, Network Rail and Honest Burgers to coordinate their operations, following a presentation on the council's new Find and Fix scheme.

This is intended to see three teams working across the county to deal with fly-tipping and other waste services, based on "their local knowledge of their areas, as well as complaints/service requests".

And the suggestion of using the What3Words was praised

by Oliver Sherratt, the council's head of environment.

He added: "We do get, when we look at fly-tipping figures, a percentage where our crews go out and nothing is found."

"We scratch our heads and think where we record it as fly-tipping or not and there are wasted efforts sometimes in us going to a location which cannot be precisely described."

"What you've suggested isn't something we've actively looked at before, but we would be delighted to take it forward."