

Cup Movement[®] in the Highlands

Final report - January 2024



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We support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



200 million
single-use cups are used
in Scotland each year.



Introduction

So many single-use cups are used and thrown away, with only around 4% being recycled.

Unfortunately, the majority of the remaining 96% go to landfill or end up as litter across Scotland.

Our [Scottish Litter Survey](#), published at the end of 2023, found that 29% of people surveyed think littered single-use (hot and cold) drink containers had become more common over the last year. Changing behaviours to make reusable cups a mainstream choice is an essential part of reducing the impact of single-use cups.

Cup Movement® in the Highlands was a large-scale reusable cup pilot scheme based in the Scottish Highlands. It was designed to promote the use of reusable cups and reduce the number of takeaway drinks sold in single-use cups. The pilot was funded through the Bring It Back Fund, a £1.4million fund from UK environmental charity Hubbub and Starbucks.

Cup Movement® in the Highlands was one of six projects funded across the UK to increase up-take and remove barriers for reusable packaging in the food and drink sector in the UK. The campaign operated between April and October 2023 at 22 Highland businesses including cafés, visitor attractions, a campsite and more unique locations, all selling takeaway drinks in and around the iconic NC500 route.



Campaign development

Since 2019, Keep Scotland Beautiful has been delivering Cup Movement[®], its campaign to help transform our relationship with single-use cups: striving to find solutions that work, to raise awareness, share information and help people to make more sustainable cup choices.

Cup Movement[®] in the Highlands was a pilot scheme that provided an opportunity for Highland businesses to trial reusable cups in a supported and reduced risk framework; and provided Keep Scotland Beautiful an opportunity to trial new and innovative communications and marketing ideas to promote sustainable consumption to Highland residents and visitors.

We engaged with businesses and customers to understand the potential challenges and barriers of a reuse scheme and to develop from the outset and implement the scheme in a way that was as easy and convenient as possible.

Highland

Cup[®]
Movement



Engagement of participating businesses

To encourage businesses to participate in Cup Movement® in the Highlands, the campaign was promoted on social media, through contacts in the Highlands and many Highland businesses were approached directly. Businesses who expressed interest in joining Cup Movement® in the Highlands were provided with a readiness assessment to ensure they were aware of the details of the campaign and that they would be likely to be suitable to participate. Different types of businesses were engaged to see the impact of the pilot scheme in a range of locations and situations.

A total of 25 businesses in the areas near the North Coast 500 route in the Highlands were successfully onboarded for the scheme, receiving training, cups and marketing collateral (signage and stickers) to promote their involvement in the campaign. A soft launch in early April enabled businesses to test the technology and infrastructure, before additional marketing collateral was developed including videos for use online, and leaflets with responses to potential FAQs.

Given the 'real world' nature of the pilot, external issues impacted three of the businesses, who could then not participate in the scheme, meaning that only 22 of the businesses were active and checked out cups during the April to October operational phase.

Participating businesses were visited by Keep Scotland Beautiful at least twice, once during onboarding and again during the operational phase. Businesses were provided with regular updates, 'how to' guides for the check out and return of cups and communications support. Some businesses were visited more frequently to provide additional cups or campaign signage and for troubleshooting where required.





Research to determine appropriate cup model

Cup Movement® in Glasgow identified that monitoring cup use and waste is not straightforward and data is hard to come by. The 2020 report identified practical challenges with the collection of data, as well as with robustness and consistency. Working through these challenges required collaboration and asking the right questions from the outset.

With this in mind, the start of Cup Movement® in the Highlands was a research phase to identify the key needs, challenges, barriers and opportunities to develop an appropriate cup reuse scheme for the Highlands. We worked with Diffley Partnership and Resource Futures to undertake a webinar, surveys and workshops to gain insights from businesses and customers to inform our decisions for the scheme.

Research identified potential barriers and challenges to a reusable cup scheme. These barriers were then addressed through the development and delivery of the campaign as outlined in the table below:

Barrier/Challenge	How this was addressed
The capacity for participating businesses to manage the collection and return of a deposit if a deposit return model was used.	We decided against a deposit return model.
Internet connectivity requirements in the remote Highlands for an app-based model.	While internet connectivity was required to download an app, the model did not require a customer have internet connection to check out or return cups.
The number of cups that a business needed to have available, to ensure that businesses both had enough cups, but also had sufficient space to store the cups.	We worked with our cup supplier, Vytal, and participating businesses to determine a figure of 30 to 40 cups for each business as a starting quantity, with additional cups available to be provided as required.
The cup design needed to be good enough that customers wanted to use the product but not so distinctive that customers, and in particular tourists, would want to keep the cup as a memento of their trip.	We decided to not have project specific branding to avoid the temptation to keep the cup. Feedback on the Vytal cups was positive.
The cup return method needed to be easy, and avoid the need for customers to queue to return the cups.	An app-based model allowed customers to return their cup using a QR code bespoke to each participating business.
Hygiene issues and washing facilities were raised as barriers for reuse.	Participating businesses were required to have a dishwasher available to wash the cups and lids on their return. Vytal cups are made of polypropylene and are suitable for dishwashing in temperatures up to 130°C.

Choosing an app-based cup-loan reuse model with Vytal

Following our research, we opted for a cup loan model working with German reusable cup supplier Vytal. With this model customers download a free app and then borrow a reusable cup from participating businesses by scanning a QR code on the lid, with no upfront cost for the cup. The reusable Vytal cup could then be returned to any of the participating businesses across the Highlands. As an incentive to return the cup, a £4 charge was applied to the user if the cup was not returned to a business within 14 days.

Connectivity and technology requirements were identified as the main barrier of an app-based model. Customers require a smartphone to download the app and scan cups and lids for check-out and return. While internet connectivity is required to download the app, it was not required to check out or return cups. The app model also allowed customers to easily locate participating businesses where Vytal cups could be returned after use.

The app-based model had three key advantages. There were no upfront costs for customers to download the Vytal app or to borrow a cup – no deposit was required. The app-based model also allowed for the automatic collection of key cup usage and return data. This was effective, efficient and removed pressure on participating businesses to provide regular data updates, or to manage the collection and return of a cup deposit. Not having to seek data also freed up project management capacity to provide support to businesses and to promote the scheme.

As the identifying QR code was on the lid, there was an operational advantage of the Vytal model to streamline the ordering and checkout process within the participating businesses: customers order as they would for any cup, and the barista makes the drink with a Vytal cup from a stack of generic cups. This allows for the customer to check out the lid while the coffee is being made, rather than adding an extra step for the barista.

The cups and lids were washed in the dishwashers of the business where they were returned, in the same way as any dine-in crockery and cutlery. Feedback from participating businesses was that there were no issues identified with the Vytal items going through the dishwasher.



1,051
Vytal cups
checked out

269
app users

148
repeat app users

92%
cup return rate

27%
increase in customers
using their own
reusable cup

Campaign delivery

Cups moving around the NC500

One of the features of Cup Movement® in the Highlands was the capacity for customers to use the Vytal cups while travelling around the NC500 route – customers could borrow a cup from a business in one location and return it to another location. It was expected that this movement of cups may have caused a potential bottle neck and required logistical arrangements for redistribution of cups. However, while there was some movement of cups around the NC500, the majority of cups checked out were then returned to the same business. The app data was able to identify that one of the cups that was borrowed in Inverness was returned to a business using Vytal products in Germany.

82% of cups in businesses checking out more than 50 cups were returned to same store (6 businesses).

73% of cups in businesses checking out more than 10 cups were returned to same store (13 businesses).

Between April and October, only four cafés needed additional cups. These were the four businesses who checked out the most Vytal cups across the pilot. Given the greater number of cups checked out, the main reason for these four businesses needing new cups was to replace 'sold' cups – cups that were not returned to a business within 14 days. The non-returned (sold) cups were only a small proportion of total check outs (6% for the six businesses checking out more than 50 cups) but made up a high proportion (45%) of the 30-40 physical cups that the businesses were allocated at the start of the scheme.

The four businesses that needed additional cups are continuing to use the Vytal cups beyond the pilot and they have been provided with an additional stock of cups to keep them going.



Increasing the use of customers' own cups

A pre-project ScotPulse Survey of 784 Highland respondents noted that 27% of people said remembering to bring their cup would be their main barrier to using a reusable cup. Using an app-based cup loan model for Cup Movement® in the Highlands provided a reusable cup option for customers who either do not have, or have forgotten, their own reusable cup.

Participating businesses encouraged customers to use either a Vytal cup or their own reusable cup for takeaway drinks, providing an easy alternative to single-use cups. For some participating businesses, being part of Cup Movement® in the Highlands and having the Vytal cups available increased the opportunity for conversations around reusable cups as an option in general and increased the sale of drinks in customers own cups. Twenty-seven per cent of survey respondents who had heard of Cup Movement® in the Highlands had increased the use of their own reusable cup.

Sixty per cent of businesses surveyed reported selling more takeaway drinks in reusable cups than before their involvement in Cup Movement® in the Highlands, with one business recording an 89% increase in takeaway drinks sold in customers' own cups between April and October 2022 and the same period in 2023. Another business sold 2,588 drinks in customers' own reusable cups between April and November 2023.

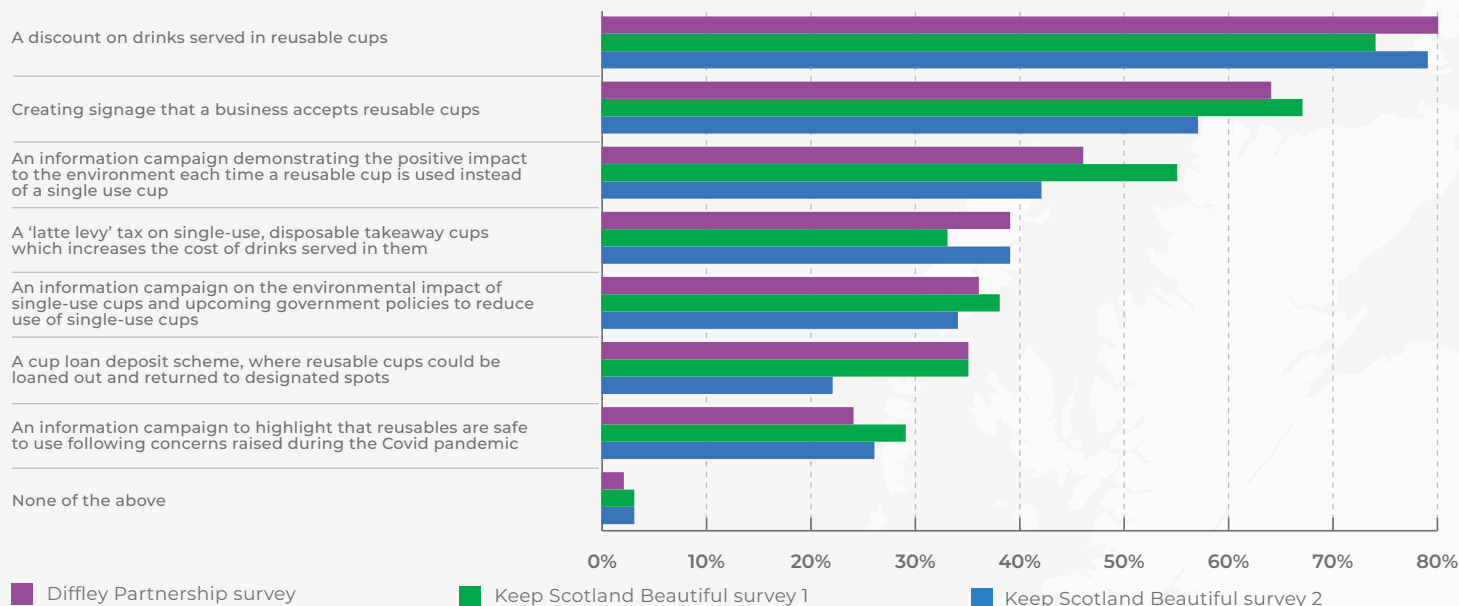


Breaking down barriers and incentivising reusable cups

Challenges and barriers to reusable cups

Part of the process of changing behaviours is understanding the reasons behind people's existing behaviours and working out how best to influence a change. As part of Cup Movement® in the Highlands, we undertook three surveys to understand customers' thoughts and motivations around reusable cups. In September 2023 we released a survey through Survey Monkey, which received 400 responses. Those responses were compared with a similar survey prepared by Keep Scotland Beautiful which was open in January and February 2023 (217 respondents) and a Diffley Partnership survey using the ScotPulse panel undertaken in December 2022 (784 respondents). Responses were fairly consistent across surveys and the figures below highlight the key incentives and barriers identified through the surveys.

Figure 1 - Effective incentives to increase the use of reusable cups (% responses)



The top incentive to increasing the use of reusable cups, for nearly 80% of respondents across all surveys, was a discount on drinks served in a reusable cup. This was followed by having clear signage that the businesses accepted customers' own reusable cups (67% of pre-project and 64% of end of project survey responses). All the businesses participating in Cup Movement® in the Highlands were provided with signage to advertise both their use of the Vytal cups, and also that they accept customers' own reusable cups. The third most effective incentive to increase use of reusable cups was having an information campaign demonstrating the positive impact to the environment of a reusable cup instead of a single-use cup.

80%

say a discount for drinks in a reusable cup would increase uptake

38%

say a levy for a drink in a single-use cup would increase uptake

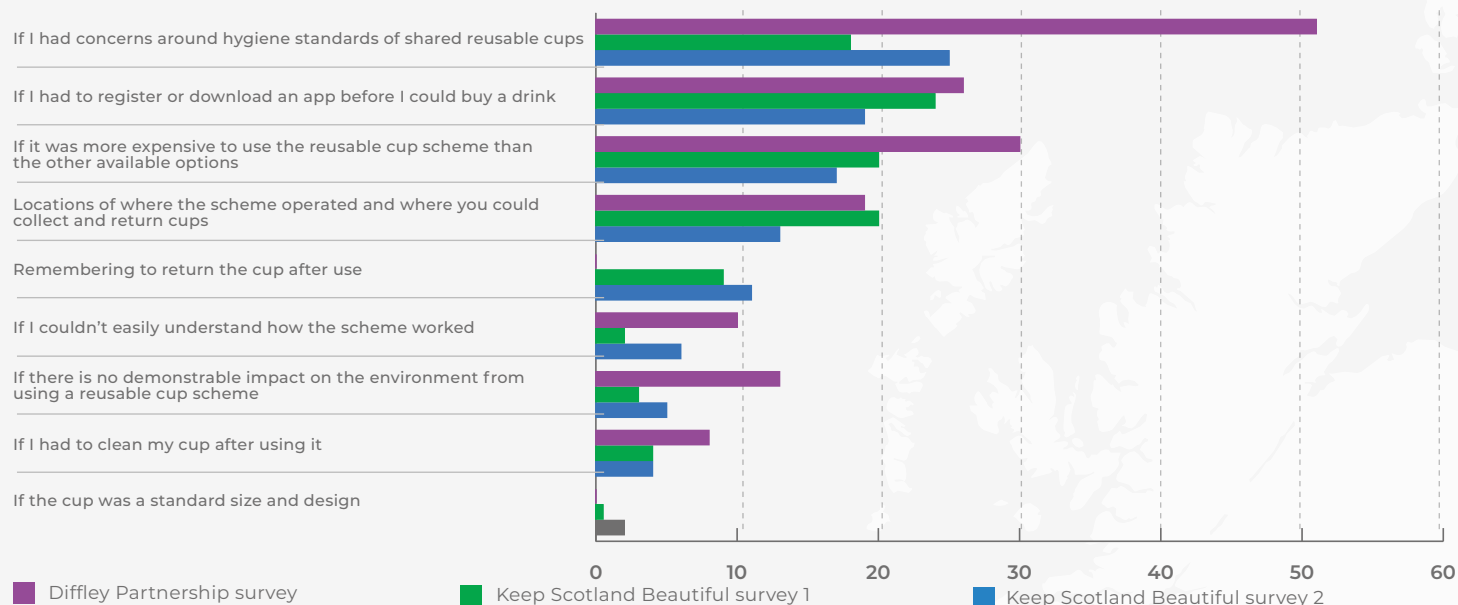
67%

say businesses need clear signage identifying that they accept reusable cups





Figure 2 - Main disincentives to a reusable cup scheme (% responses)

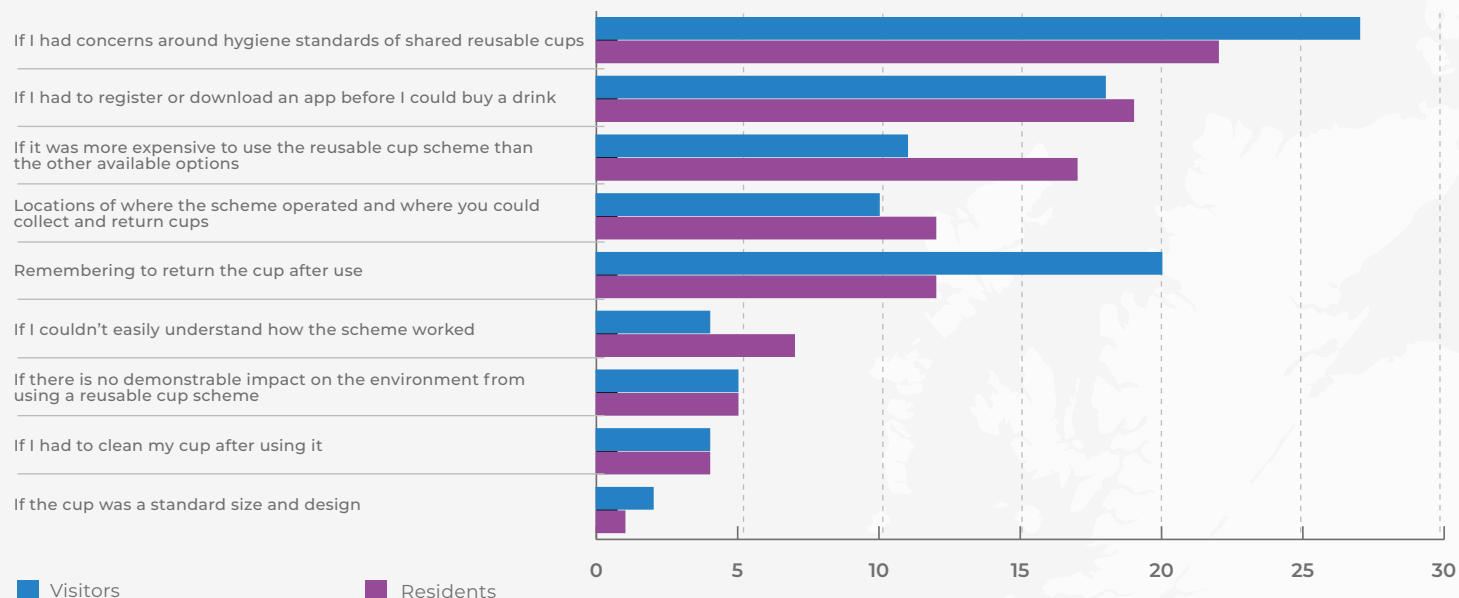


In the Keep Scotland Beautiful surveys the question around disincentives only allowed for a single response and so highlighted the main disincentive, whereas multiple responses were possible for the Diffley survey.

Across the three surveys, concerns around hygiene were the most consistent disincentive to use of reusable cups, followed by the need to download an app in order to purchase a drink using a reusable cup. The third main disincentive to a reusable cup scheme was if it was more expensive to use the reusable cups compared with a single-use cup.

When looking further into the issues that customers would find most off-putting for a reusable cup scheme, we compared the responses from visitors to the Highlands with those of residents of the Highlands (figure 3). Hygiene issues were the most significant issue for both residents and visitors. Having to download an app was the second biggest issue for residents, whereas the potential for an increase in cost for a reusable cup was second for visitors.

Figure 3 - Issues that would be most offputting for a reusable cup scheme - comparing residents and visitors (% responses)



When looking at the issues across the different age groups completing the September survey, having to download an app was the primary issue that would put those over 55 years of age off a reusable cup scheme, whereas an increase in the cost of a drink if it was in a reusable cup would be the most off-putting issue for those in the 16 to 34 age group.

While surveys and discussions with businesses and customers identified that downloading an app was a barrier to reuse, we received feedback that once people had downloaded and activated the Vytal app, it was easy and convenient.

To achieve the behaviour change required to reduce the use of single-use cups for takeaway drinks, any scheme needs to be easy and visible to those who may be interested. Many of the reusable cup pilots that have been undertaken in Scotland to date have utilised the traditional cup deposit model. Using the Vytal cups, with access to the data provided through the Vytal app, has been beneficial in information gathering and widening the scope of reusable cup options in Scotland.

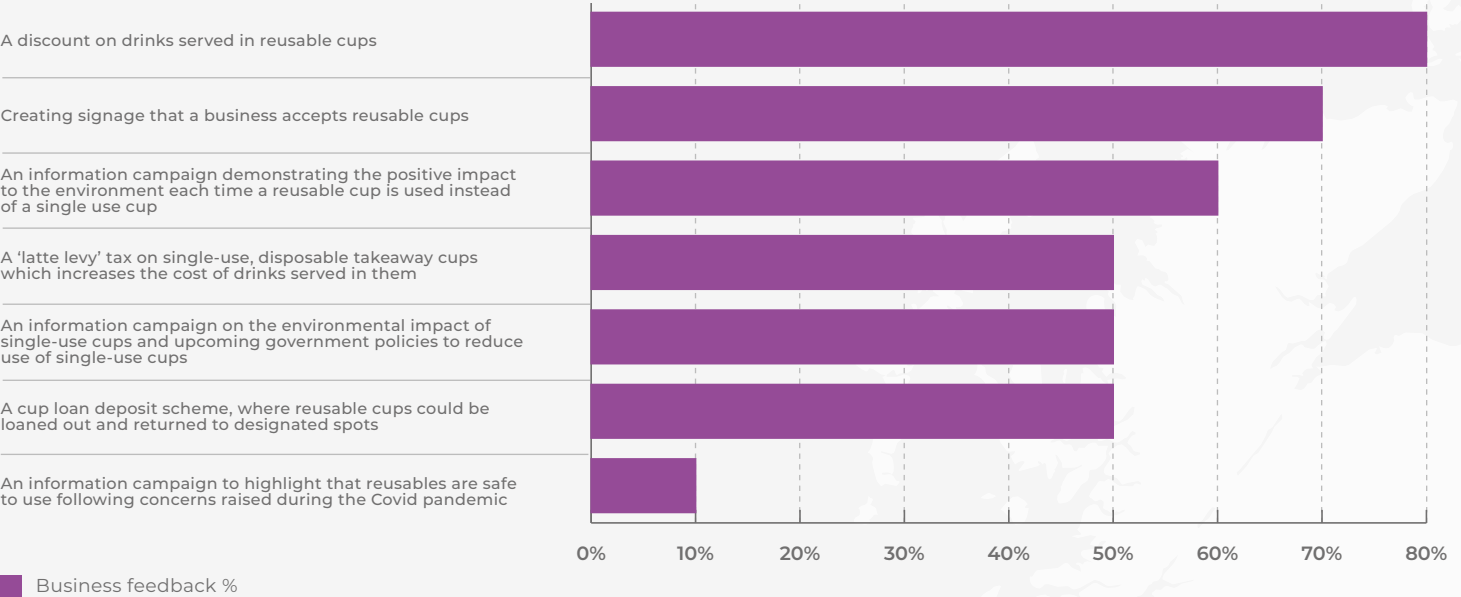
Feedback from some businesses highlighted that staff did not have the time to explain the scheme, and then allow for people to download the Vytal app in the midst of a café queue in busy tourist season. In response to this concern, we developed a leaflet explaining Cup Movement® in the Highlands, including a detailed FAQs section. The leaflets were available in tourism facilities across the Highlands as well as within each of the individual cafés. This allowed for customers who were interested in using the scheme, particularly locals, to take a leaflet to read at their leisure, download the app when they had good internet connectivity and be ready to order their coffee in a Vytal cup the next time they visited a participating business.



Business feedback

Participating businesses were surveyed with 10 responses received, relating to 11 of the 22 businesses checking out cups throughout the trial.

Figure 4 - Business thoughts on incentives to reuse (% responses)



60% reported selling more takeaway drinks in reusable cups than before their involvement in Cup Movement® in the Highlands

60% reported positive impacts of their involvement in Cup Movement® in the Highlands

90% reported having no issues using the Vytal app



Reducing barriers and increasing incentives at the same time generated success at multiple businesses who have either added a surcharge on single-use cups, or added a discount for reusable cups.

“Alongside the movement, we added a surcharge for single-use cups which has helped encourage people towards bringing their own or borrowing reusable cups. My costs on takeaway supplies have dropped massively too.”

Anonymous feedback

Businesses identified the importance of time and staff resources to explain the campaign, and in particular the process for using the Vytal app to access the cups, particularly in areas where the demographic was less likely to be interested in using an app to get their coffee.

“We have had some customers who have visited us specifically due to our involvement in the pilot which is positive. Staff were initially positive about the pilot, but have found it somewhat cumbersome to get customers to sign up, especially during very busy periods in the café where they don’t feel they can take the time to explain and show customers what it’s all about.”

Anonymous feedback

Unexpected benefits of the campaign included the use of Vytal cups by staff. In some cases, this use will not have been captured through the app data, but will be a significant additional decrease in the numbers of single-use cups used by a business, as well as increasing knowledge around the options for reusables for takeaway drinks.

“The drop in staff use of disposable cups has been 100% with many now using their own cups as well as Vytal.”

Anonymous feedback

“..being part of this community/regional scheme helped the staff get a better understanding of such schemes and also knowing the benefits and costs involved in reusables and single use products.”

Anonymous feedback



Participating businesses:



Applecross Inn Inside Out
Applecross

Attadale
Gardens

Attadale Gardens
Strathcarron

CARRON
RESTAURANT
TRUE HIGHLAND HOSPITALITY

Carron Restaurant
Strathcarron

THE
CASTLE &
GARDENS
OF MEY



Castle and Gardens of Mey
Mey



Coast Coffee
Gairloch



Coffee and Bakes
Poolewe



Corner on the Square
Beaully



Corrieshalloch Gorge
Visitor Centre Braemore



Delilah's
Lochinver



Elphin Tearooms
Elphin



Ferry View Campsite
Gills



James at the Putting Green
Nairn



Midge Bite Cafe
Achnasheen



North Coast Coffee & Gifts
Tain



Rosemarkie Beach Cafe
Rosemarkie



Seaboard Centre Cafe
Balintore



Slaughterhouse Coffee
Cromarty



Sweets + Treats
Invergordon



The Coffee Bothy
Golspie



The Highland Weigh
Nairn



Waterside Café
Lochcarron

WEST
COAST
DELICATESSEN

West Coast Delicatessen
Ullapool



Whisk Away
Inverness



XOKO Bakehouse
Inverness



11.2 million

Overall promotion and marketing reach



319,754

views through Chris Lawlor influencer partnership



409,537

reach through NC500 socials and website



252,602

impressions with DAX audio advertising



24,000

reach with promotional signage in Highland train stations



146,077

reach with our Keep Scotland Beautiful socials and website



99%

distribution of 5,000 leaflets in tourist destinations across the Highlands

Communication, promotion and marketing

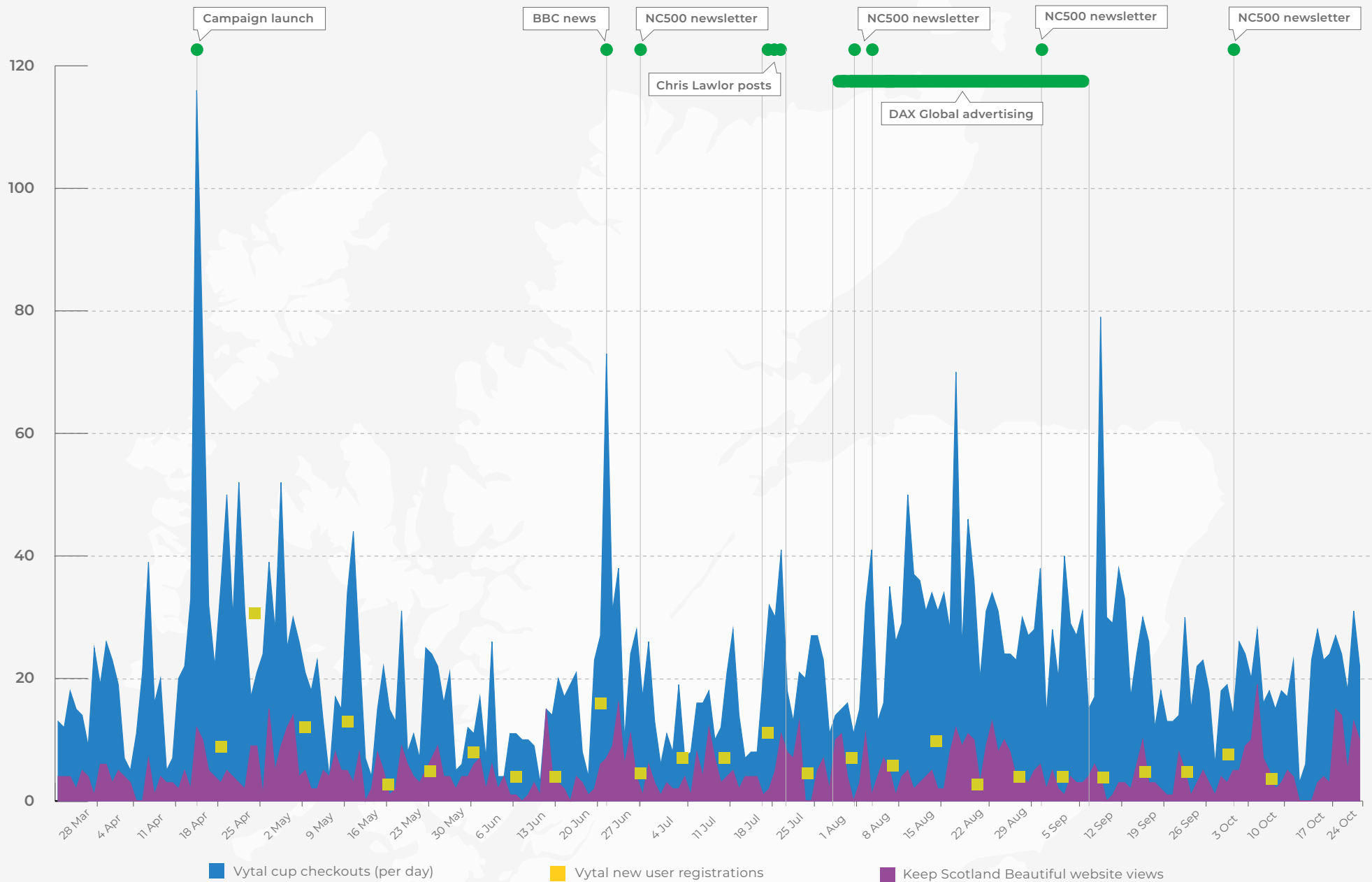
Promotion and marketing was crucial to raise awareness of the scheme, particularly when reaching out to an unengaged audience. Our communication focused primarily on increasing awareness of the scheme, and on encouraging customers, whether they be Highland residents or visitors to the area, to download the Vytal app before travelling to the more remote areas of the Highlands, to ensure they had the option of using the Vytal cups if they were in one of the more remote locations.

The advertising and marketing of Cup Movement® in the Highlands achieved a reach of over 11.2 million, utilising traditional and social media, and the campaign was also featured on the BBC News. Reaching a Highland resident and visitor audience led to new and innovative means of campaign promotion, including a paid partnership on Instagram with Scottish adventure travel influencer Chris Lawlor and targeted DAX digital advertising, reaching those streaming radio and audio downloads through the Global network in the Highlands. Promotion of Cup Movement® in the Highlands through the NC500's e-newsletter (65,000 subscribers) was the highest source (referrer) of views to our website homepage.

We encouraged early participation and app downloads in May through a promotion where customers could get their first drink free on activation of the app. Given the scenic nature of the NC500 route, through July and August we encouraged people to share photos of their reusable cup in a scenic spot around the Highlands as part of a #BrewWithAView social media campaign. We also offered a hamper of Highland products, purchased from the participating businesses, for people who completed an end of season survey – which resulted in 400 completed surveys.

Despite just six months between the launch of Cup Movement® in the Highlands and our September survey, we found that from a baseline of zero more than 30% of respondents had heard of, or seen promotion for, the scheme, an impressive figure reached thanks to an ambitious combination of traditional and modern promotion across broadcast, print, and social media alongside out of home advertising.

Figure 5 - Cup Movement® in the Highlands - Vytal cup checkouts and marketing



Key learnings

Cup Movement® in the Highlands has had a significant, positive impact in raising awareness of reuse options for takeaway drinks in the Highlands. The pilot demonstrated that it is possible for reuse to be successful in a remote area.

However, extra importance should be placed on promotions and marketing to reach an unengaged audience in a remote setting, where the customer base is made up of a high proportion of visitors during the tourist season.

To encourage behaviour change away from consumption of single-use products, it is important to raise awareness, educate customers on why it is important and make it easy to connect with the issue and make a change. Solutions must be communicated along with the behaviour change we want to see with further promotion to embed the changes. Every time a customer is asked whether they would like their drink in a reusable cup, it is a seed planted and a thought there for next time.

Through our wider Cup Movement® Campaign, Keep Scotland Beautiful will continue to work with a range of stakeholders to encourage and support the development and implementation of a network of regional and local reuse schemes with common principles and the facility to interact, that reflect local circumstances.

- 1 To encourage behaviour change towards reusable cups, interventions need to be easy and convenient for both businesses and customers to implement and reflect the setting within which they are being deployed.
- 2 In a remote area there needs to be a longer lead time to allow for design and preparation of communications strategies.
- 3 Staff training and staff engagement is vital to ensure that key messages reach customers.
- 4 In-store campaign signage, that works for individual businesses, allows key messages to reach customers more easily.
- 5 Plans need to be in place to support infrastructure and logistics, with the flexibility to adapt in real time to the ongoing needs of the businesses and customers throughout the campaign.
- 6 An app-based cup loan model allowed for solid data collection, and a convenient option when people forget their own cup.
- 7 More than 70% of Vytal cups were returned to the business where they were first purchased with a 92% return rate.
- 8 There was consistent support (78% over three surveys) for a discount on drinks served in reusable cups with lower (37%) support for a 'latte levy' on single-use disposable cups.
- 9 You can never have too much promotion and marketing.
- 10 Many businesses across Scotland already sell reusable cups and accept reusable cups from customers. There is value in promoting and supporting systems that are already in place.

Looking forward

Although Cup Movement® in the Highlands will not continue in its current form, four of the businesses have signed ongoing partnership agreements to continue directly with Vytal. The continuing businesses checked the most cups out throughout the pilot scheme and see continuing with the Vytal cups as a viable option. As such, the reusable cups will continue to be available on an ongoing basis, and cups can be borrowed and returned between the continuing businesses. Vytal cups continue to be checked out across these businesses.

Cup Movement® in the Highlands has had a significant, positive impact in raising awareness of reuse options for takeaway drinks in the Highlands and has encouraged significant engagement and interest in reusable cups, with considerable momentum within a number of the participating businesses.

The key learnings from Cup Movement® in the Highlands will be used to engage with relevant stakeholders across Scotland to promote the uptake and use of reusable cups while reducing use of single-use cups.

Keep Scotland Beautiful, through the Highland Community Waste Partnership, continues to promote sustainable consumption through the Conscious Consumption Campaign.

If you are interested in working with us on reusable cups and tackling the challenge of single-use cups, get in touch: cups@keepsScotlandbeautiful.org



You can also join us in keeping Scotland beautiful by:

- Getting involved with our Conscious Consumption Campaign as part of the [Highland Community Waste Partnership](#).
- Registering a litter pick as part of [Spring Clean Scotland 2024](#).
- [Carrying out a litter survey](#) to help us collate real information on the issue where you live.
- Sharing our messages and tips to help everyone become litterate.

You can read the Scottish Litter Survey 2023 report here:

[Read report](#)



We support the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keep Scotland Beautiful is your charity for Scotland's environment. We work with you to help combat climate change, tackle litter and waste, restore nature and biodiversity and improve places.



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