

Scotland's Beach Awards

Guidance for entrants
2025

Contents

Keep Scotland Beautiful	3
Why apply for Scotland's Beach Awards?	4
Important information for 2025	5
FAQs	5
Entrant fees	5
Calendar of key dates	5
Entrant support	6
Award categories	6
Application process	7
Site assessments	7
Beach Managers' Forum	7
Appendix 1: Criteria and compliance	8
Criteria and compliance	8
Section A. Access, Facilities and Safety	9
Access, facilities and safety checklist (for all)	9
Access, facilities and safety (additional criteria for designated bathing waters)	9
Section B. Local Environmental Quality	10
Local Environmental Quality Checklist (for all)	10
Local Environmental Quality (additional criteria for designated bathing waters)	10
Section C. Community and Heritage	11
Community and Heritage checklist (for all)	11
Compliance procedure	12
Appendix 2: Application form guidance	13
Background information	13
Part A: Access, Facilities and Safety	14
Additional criteria for designated bathing waters	14
Part B: Local Environmental Quality	15
Additional criteria for designated bathing waters	15
Part C: Community and Heritage	16
Part D: Additional site details	17
Checklist	17
Further information	17

Keep Scotland Beautiful

We are your charity for Scotland's environment, with a vision for a clean, green, sustainable Scotland.

We provide environmental campaigns, services and practical initiatives which aim to combat climate change, tackle litter and waste, and protect and enhance the places where we live, work and visit.

Our mission is to inspire changes in behaviour to improve our environment, the quality of people's lives, their wellbeing and the places that they care for.

Scotland's Beach Awards are the benchmark for quality beaches which are well managed and enjoyed by people across Scotland. It has been more than 30 years since we began awarding Scottish beaches, in 2024, 51 beaches were awarded.

Awarded beaches demonstrate excellent beach management and environmental best practice promoting the maintenance of high standards. The award is open to anyone managing a beach in Scotland, including local authorities, trusts, community councils and volunteer groups. The award recognises excellence across three key areas:



Access, facilities
and safety



Local environmental
quality



Community
and heritage

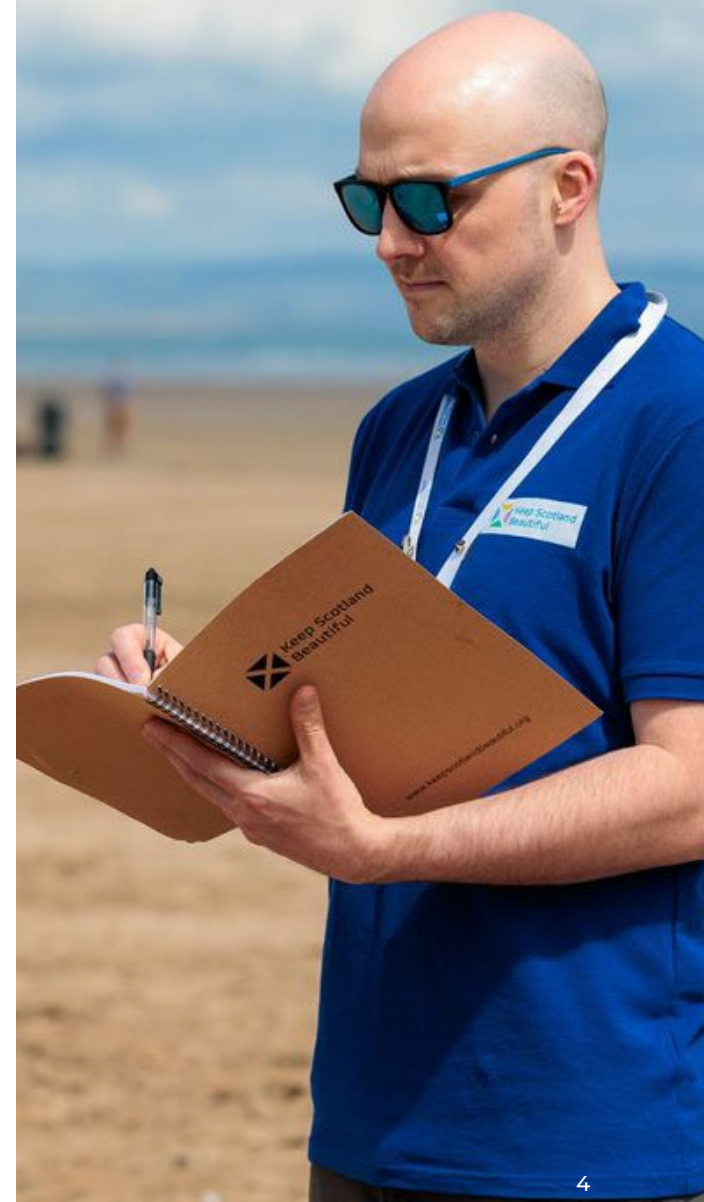


St Andrews East Sands

Why apply for Scotland's Beach Awards?

Scotland's Beach Awards offer a wealth of benefits:

- 1** Independent accreditation based on a national framework for best practice in environmental management.
- 2** Recognise and celebrate the efforts of local authorities, agencies and communities striving to offer an excellent beach experience to locals and visitors.
- 3** Standardise visitor expectations, particularly when visiting designated bathing waters.
- 4** National, regional and local promotion through media releases, website features and promotional materials, including our striking award flag.
- 5** Dedicated support from our team and regular opportunities to improve practice through peer-learning at our Beach Managers' Forum.
- 6** Opportunities to network and develop strong partnerships with organisations occupying the marine space.
- 7** Expert advice to improve your blue space for the benefit of people's health and wellbeing and nature leading to tangible recreational, educational, and economic benefits.



Important information

FAQs

Do I need to reapply?

Yes. Scotland's Beach Awards are awarded on an annual basis and do not automatically renew.

Who can apply for Scotland's Beach Awards?

Applications from anyone who has guardianship of a beach may be considered for any site, whether coastal or inland. Beaches which are classed as a designated bathing waters must meet the requirements of the Bathing Water Directive and have a water quality classification of Sufficient or above.

It is our first time applying for an award. What support is available?

Our team can guide you through the process of applying for Scotland's Beach Awards. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch:

Email beach@keepscotlandbeautiful.org, or call us on 01786 471333.

You will also be invited to our regular Beach Managers' Forum, where beach managers across the country meet to discuss best practice, share ideas and discuss challenges.

When will we know if we are successful?

Applicants are usually informed of their result in May, ahead of the new summer season. If successful, you will be supplied with a communications pack to help share your success in social media and press.

Do I need to be a local authority to apply for Scotland's Beach Awards?

No. We welcome entrants from other agencies, including trusts, community councils or community groups who may have guardianship of a beach. You don't need to be a local authority to apply, but the local authority should be contacted prior to an application being submitted.

Can the award ever be removed?

In order to protect the integrity of Scotland's Beach Awards, the award may be removed, permanently or temporarily, if there is infringement of the criteria. More information on this process can be found in the Compliance Procedure in [Appendix 1](#).

Entrant fees

Keep Scotland Beautiful is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. As a charity, we require funding from a range of sources in order to deliver our activities. Scotland's Beach Awards carry an application fee to cover the cost of administering each application. As an entrant you will receive:

- Promotional material: a flag (or plaque) and certificate.
- A site visit from a trained assessor.
- Detailed report on your beach's compliance with the framework and recommendations for improvement.
- An invitation to our regular Beach Managers' Forum and other relevant events.
- Support from Keep Scotland Beautiful's Senior Officer, Awards.
- Website and press promotion.
- Access to relevant reports and campaigns.

The cost of entry for 2025 is **£315 + VAT**. Please note fees are subject to change.

Calendar of key dates	
Month	Activity
January	■ Applications open
April	■ Deadline for entries is 28 March ■ Desk assessments ■ Visits to new entrants
May	■ Beach Managers' Forum ■ Award announcement
June - September	■ Field assessments
November / December	■ Beach Managers' Forum



Local
environmental
quality



Access,
facilities and
safety



Community
and heritage

Entrant support

Award criteria

Scotland's Beach Awards comprise of criteria which fall under three broad categories:

The criteria are listed in [Appendix 1](#). To gain and maintain Scotland's Beach Awards, beaches must:

- Fulfil the requirements of all major criteria.
- Have no more than three counts of non-compliance to minor criteria.
- Demonstrate ongoing commitment to improving best practice.

Beaches are initially assessed based on the information provided in your application form. Following this, we visit successful sites annually between 1 June – 15 September for a site assessment. Any new entrants to the scheme will receive an additional site visit prior to any award being given.

Application process

If you manage a beach and would like to see it recognised by Scotland's Beach Awards, you need to:

- Check that the beach meets the award criteria listed in [Appendix 1](#).
- Download the application form from [our website](#) and submit a full application to beach@keepscotlandbeautiful.org by 28 March 2025, ensuring that all relevant support documents are attached (for example, risk assessment). See [Appendix 2](#) for guidance.
- Following receipt of the application form, we will invoice you the cost of entry (please provide a purchase order number in your application, if required).
- Once the application deadline has passed, we will carry out a desk assessment of all applications and initially make awards on this basis.
- Arrangements will be made with new entrants to be visited in person to check whether the beach meets the required standard.

Scotland's Beach Awards are presented annually, typically in late May, to coincide with summer holidays of schools in Scotland. At this time, awarded beaches will be promoted on our website and we will issue a media release naming the season's awarded beaches. We will provide you with a communications pack to assist with social media and/or press promotion.

During the season arrangements will be made for our assessors to judge all entrants against the criteria using our assessment procedures.

Site assessments

Assessments are carried out during the summer to check whether applicants meet the criteria to the standard required.

The beach is assessed according to the criteria outlined in [Appendix 1](#). Following an assessment, the survey form will be checked in our office. A report will subsequently be issued to the Beach Operator.

- If there are any major or more than three minor breaches of essential criteria, this may result in us asking you to remove the flag and certificate, with immediate effect, until the identified issue has been resolved, as outlined in [Appendix 1](#).
- Compliant beaches will receive a report within three weeks of your site assessment. The report will contain space for you to comment on any points raised by the assessor. Please return your comments on the report within three weeks of receipt – this will allow us to keep a record of improvements and will assist your application in subsequent seasons.

Beach Managers' Forum

All beach managers are invited to attend our bi-annual forum. This allows managers the opportunity to speak in person to our team at Keep Scotland Beautiful, share best practice between each other, and hear from relevant agencies including: [Scottish Environmental Protection Agency](#) (SEPA), [Royal National Lifeboat Institution](#) (RNLI), and [Marine Conservation Society](#) (MCS).

Appendix 1:

Criteria and compliance

Scotland's Beach Awards comprise of criteria which fall under three broad categories:



Access, facilities
and safety



Local environmental
quality



Community
and heritage

Each category contains 'major', 'minor' or 'best practice' criteria. To gain and maintain Scotland's Beach Awards, beaches must:

1

Fulfil the requirements of all major criteria.

2

Have no more than three counts of non-compliance to minor criteria.

3

Demonstrate ongoing commitment to improving best practice.

Applicants where the site includes designated bathing waters: please read the extra criteria in each section for your award application.

Scotland's Beach Awards
are an independent accreditation
which show the public that the beach
and its environs are managed to the
highest standard.



Monifieth

Section A. Access, facilities and safety

Includes criteria which relate to the infrastructure management of the site including toilets, parking, amenities, noticeboards and safety equipment.

Criteria for all applicants

Major criteria

- A1.** The Beach Operator must ensure a site-specific risk assessment, carried out by appropriate qualified personnel, details suitable control measures to ensure safe use of the beach and surrounding area.
- A2.** Beach users must be warned of the potential hazards of swimming and advised of appropriate behaviour close to water.
- A3.** Where rescue equipment is provided by the Beach Operator, this should be well maintained and easily accessed. In some cases, this may also include a lifeguard station.
- A4.** So far as is reasonably practicable, safe access to the awarded area must be provided for all.
- A5.** The Beach Operator must have an appropriate local emergency plan to cope with incidents which require the closure of the beach.

Minor criteria

- A6.** Safety information regarding hazards e.g. swimming.
- A7.** Useful contacts including: Beach Operator, emergency contacts and first aid point/local hospital.
- A8.** A code of conduct that reflects local rules governing the use of the beach.
- A9.** Promotional mark (flag or plaque, and certificate) with basic information about the award should be displayed.
- A10.** A map of the beach which indicates the location of all facilities.
- A11.** The information board must be up to date, well maintained and legible.

A12. Information should be provided on emergency contacts and advice on what to do in the event of an emergency.

A13. The Beach Operator must provide appropriate litter bins in adequate numbers, properly secured and well maintained.

A14. The Beach Operator should provide appropriate facilities for the disposal of dog waste.

A15. The Beach Operator must ensure that any buildings, facilities and equipment present are maintained to a high standard. If buildings are found to be in a state that may pose danger to the public, this will be escalated to a major non-compliance issue.

Additional criteria for designated bathing waters

Major criteria

A16. Toilet facilities must be clean and well maintained, with provisions for washing/drying hands, toilet roll, waste bins and sanitary bins. Opening times should be displayed clearly. Areas where there are no toilet facilities will only be considered in special circumstances. Where there are no facilities on-site, Beach Operators should provide an explanation detailing any alternative arrangements which are in place for visitors.

Minor criteria

A17. The Beach Operator must provide adequate parking facilities, and where appropriate, with suitable disabled access. Where necessary, advice should be sought from suitable organisations to develop traffic management plans.

Section B. Local environmental quality

Includes criteria which relate to management of conflicting beach uses. Criteria relate to biodiversity, cleanliness, water quality and pollution.

Criteria for all applicants

Major criteria

B1. Information about water quality testing and the classification must be displayed according to the table below, depending on the bathing water designation status of the beach.

Bathing water status	Most recent classification	Information requirements to be displayed
Designated bathing waters	Sufficient or above.	Bathing water profile summary and classification must be displayed.
	Poor	Not eligible for award.
Not designated bathing waters	N/A - bathing water not tested.	Information must be displayed to state that bathing water quality is not monitored.

B2. The beach operator must inform the public of pollution or potential dangers by the posting of information at the information board and through the media if appropriate.

B3. The beach, intertidal area, backshore, dunes and any surrounding areas connected to the beach operation (e.g. carparks, playgrounds and amenity areas) must be predominantly free of litter, graffiti, flytipping and dog fouling in line with Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (CoPLAR) requirements.

Designated bathing waters applicants please see B4 and B5 below.

Minor criteria

B6. Where dogs are permitted, they must be kept under control within the award area.

B7. Where camping is permitted under the Scottish Access Code, the Beach Operator should have adequate measures in place to ensure that camping does not affect award criteria i.e. cleanliness. The Beach Operator should manage unauthorised camping or driving on the beach.

Best Practice

B8. Evidence that the interests of any protected sites (SSSIs) and rare or protected species have been addressed in liaison with the designating authority, NatureScot.

B9. Adaptation is about adjusting to the impacts of climate change to reduce negative impacts and exploit any opportunities. Evidence that climate change adaptations are in place, or in the planning phase, for the beach and surrounding areas.

B10. The Beach Operator should encourage and promote sustainable transport options such as bicycles (which may include provision for bicycle paths/storage) and bus travel (with appropriate timetable information).

B11. The Beach Operator should provide adequate recycling facilities, where appropriate, and encourage beach users to recycle their waste on site or at home.

Additional criteria for designated bathing waters

Major criteria

B4. The Beach Operator must highlight waste water discharge points and riverine inputs within one mile of the beach/water to the public.

B5. The Beach Operator must manage the conflicting needs of different users as well as local ecosystems, in line with health, safety and environmental plans.

Section C. Community and heritage

Includes criteria which relate to community ownership, promotion of heritage and engaging visitors with the beach environment.

Criteria for all applicants

Major criteria

C1. The Beach Operator should encourage community engagement. This may include supporting:

- Beach cleans and Clean Up Scotland activities.
- Marine Conservation Society: Beachwatch / Great British Beach Clean activities.
- The presence of user groups such as sailing clubs, canoe clubs, or wildlife groups.
- It's Your Neighbourhood / Beautiful Scotland groups.
- Local schools using the beach.
- Any other relevant activities.

C2. Links to community events and activities.

Minor criteria

C3. Educational materials:

- Formal education for schools, colleges or universities (physical or online), and/or
- Public education (physical leaflets, online materials, self-led trails).

Best Practice

The Beach Operator should encourage engagement with local heritage sites by having:

- Interpretation panels highlighting local heritage sites (panels should be clean, secure and up to date).
- Marked trails guiding visitors around heritage sites nearby.
- Links with local heritage sites out with the immediate beach site (for example signposting to local museums and points of interest.).
- Demonstrable links with local historical societies.



Compliance procedure

Criteria type	Procedure for non-compliance
Major These criteria are essential to Scotland's Beach Awards and ensure a high standard of beach management.	<p>A beach failing to meet one or more major criteria does not meet the requirements of Scotland's Beach Awards.</p> <p>Non-compliance to any major criteria must be addressed by the Beach Operator immediately and while this is occurring the flag/plaque and certificate must be removed from the site.</p> <p>If resolved within ten working days, the award is reinstated. However, if evidence of resolution cannot be provided within this time by the Beach Operator, the award must be withdrawn for the remainder of the season. Keep Scotland Beautiful will provide advice and ongoing support to resolve issues.</p>
Minor These criteria ensure that beaches meet an appropriate standard for the award.	<p>A beach failing to meet three or more minor criteria does not meet the requirements of Scotland's Beach Awards.</p> <p>Non-compliance with three or more minor criteria: The issue(s) must be addressed within working ten days (the flag/plaque and certificate may stay up during this period). If evidence of resolution cannot be provided within this time by the Beach Operator, the award must be withdrawn for the remainder of the season.</p> <p>Non-compliance with less than three minor criteria: The Beach Operator must provide a response to the issue flagged and outline an action plan detailing how the issue will be addressed going forward, within three weeks of receiving the report.</p>
Best Practice Ongoing improvements to beach management standards to ensure the best experience of Scotland's beaches.	<p>All beaches should aspire to meet Best Practice standards where possible.</p>

Tangible economic benefits can also come from being awarded, including elevating the profile of your beach, encouraging a boost to tourism and the opening up of local revenue opportunities.

Appendix 2:

Application form guidance

The following information provides guidance on completing Scotland's Beach Awards application form. The application is divided into three sections. If your site is a Designated Bathing Water site, please complete the extra criteria questions highlighted throughout. Please complete these as fully as possible and return in full by 17:00 on Friday 28 March 2025 to beach@keepscotlandbeautiful.org.

If you have any questions or difficulties, please contact our team who will be happy to advise.

Background information

In the first section of the application form applicants are asked to provide details about the beach that is applying for the award. This includes:

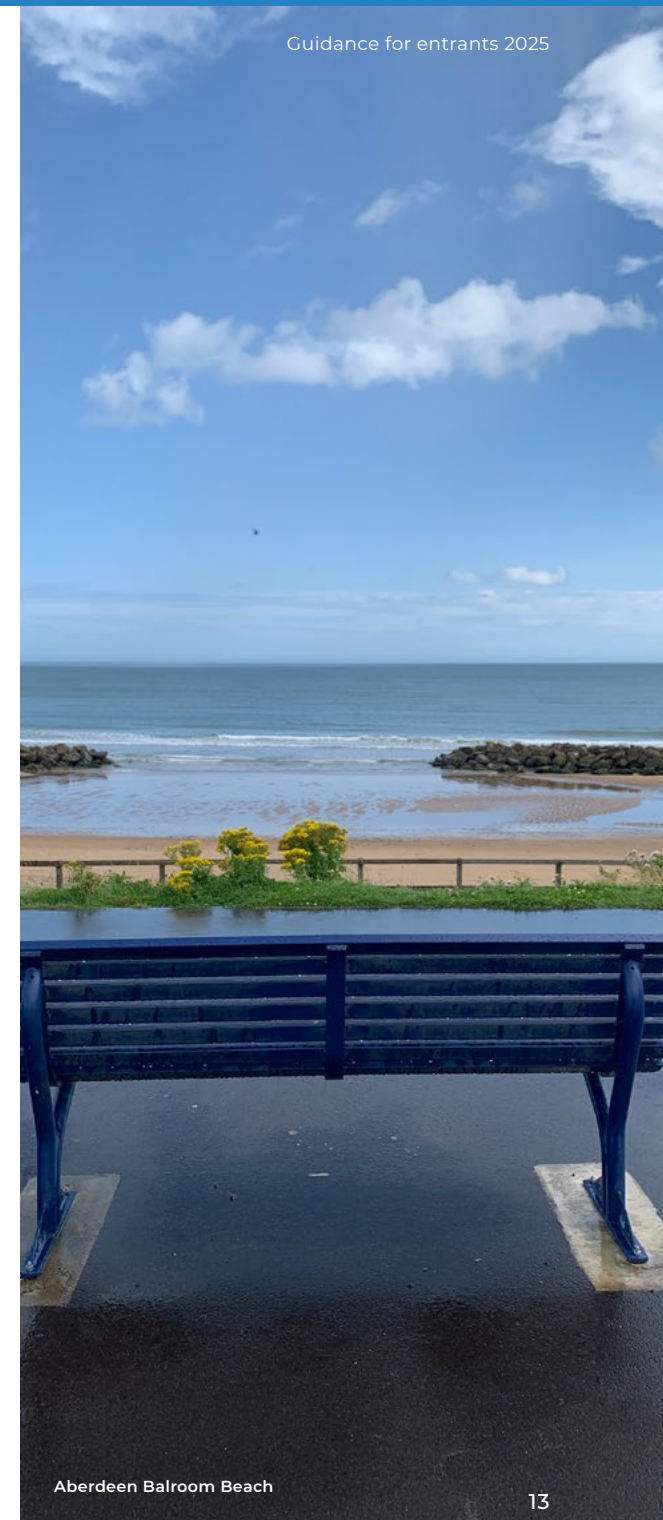
- Beach name
- Grid reference (for map uses)
- Nearest town
- Name and contact details of lead contact
- Beach operating authority
- Beach website (if applicable)
- Beach/Management social media accounts (if applicable)

Beach description: Providing a description of the beach allows us to communicate with the public what the beach has to offer and whether it suits their needs. Detailing the beach in a concise paragraph, along with a list of facilities, enables anyone who does not know the beach to determine whether the beach is suitable for them based on the information prior to a potential visit.

Beach location: Please detail the location of the beach and directions in order that someone can find their way. As an environmental charity we promote sustainable transport where possible and as such ask that any public transport links and cycle routes are noted.

Facilities: A checklist of facilities, features and activities should be completed to determine what the beach has to offer. This helps us to market the beach appropriately on our website.

We ask you to provide up to three promotional photographs for display on our website.



Aberdeen Balroom Beach

Part A. Access, facilities and safety

The beach environment should be as safe as possible. A risk assessment should be carried out to identify what potential hazards are present at the beach and opportunities for mitigation.

A copy of the risk assessment must be provided with the application form.

A beach should have plans in place in the event of any emergency. In most cases this will be first aid provision, information on nearest hospitals etc. In some locations lifeguard stations are also present during the season (June – September). Safety provisions should be appropriate for the beach meaning that some locations have more hazards than others and may require more safety provisions as a result. An explanation should be provided on how the beach is managed for the hazards present and how these are communicated to the wider public. A plan should be in place in the event that an emergency occurs.

A copy of the local emergency management plan or procedures should be provided with the application form.

It is expected that an information point and map will be on display at the beach. This section of the application form lets us know what information is available to the public, and whether you meet the award criteria for information provision.

Information point: Please answer the questions regarding information provided on your noticeboard, including details of the information displayed on your map.

Please provide a copy of the map used for the beach with the application.

We provide downloadable poster materials on Scotland's Beach Awards webpages which you may wish to use, including: 'Beach Safety', 'Beach Code' and 'Marine Litter'.

Details should be provided on bin facilities: what type, how many, how often they are emptied, who empties them and what has been taken into consideration when selecting and placing facilities. In some more remote locations, it may be appropriate to have fewer facilities. In both cases it is best practice to have signage encouraging litter to be taken home or recycled in the appropriate receptacles.

It is good practice to have a litter management plan for the beach in order to effectively co-ordinate the removal of litter to keep the beach clean.

Where available, your litter management plan should be attached to the application as additional supporting evidence.

Details should be provided on efforts to minimise dog fouling, including waste bins (many bins now allow both litter and dog waste), posters and warden patrols.

Additional criteria for designated bathing waters

During busy periods it is useful to provide information on toilet facilities to the public, such as opening hours and location. These should be clean, well-stocked and checked regularly. Where facilities are not located at the beach, information should be provided on the nearest available toilets.

While we encourage sustainable transport, any provisions for car parking (including disabled parking) should be noted.



Part B. Additional site details

We expect all awarded beaches to inform visitors of any local issues so they can make decisions about their use of the beach. This may be by a public or online (for example, social media) notice.

A description on how the beach is managed for different user groups should be given in this section.

Any structures should be maintained to a high standard, clean and free from graffiti.

Dogs are permitted in some areas but are expected to be under control. Reasonable measures should be taken (such as signage and patrols) to monitor this.

Information should be provided about any rare or protected species which are present at the beach and any efforts made to encourage beach users to protect and conserve the beach environment. Please detail the presence of any Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). A full list of SSSIs are available from NatureScot.

Adaptation is about adjusting to the impacts of climate change to reduce negative impacts and exploit any opportunities. We expect Beach Operators to be planning to reduce climate change impacts for the beach and surrounding areas, but also to exploit opportunities. Please provide details of any climate change adaptations currently in place and what future plans may look like.

For adaptation guides and advice please visit www.adaptationscotland.org.uk

As an environmental charity, we expect beach managers to consider the impact of travelling to and from their beach and therefore encourage use of any public transport and cycle/walking routes, where possible. We also expect recycling to be encouraged so if facilities are not provided then taking litter home to recycle must be advised.

Additional criteria for designated bathing waters

Up to date information about water quality should be provided here. Designated bathing waters will have predicted qualities, available from <https://bathingwaters.sepa.scot> published ahead of the bathing season (1 June to 15 September).



Part C. Community and Heritage

Community engagement should be encouraged at the beach; details should be provided on any communities involved and what plans there are for work across the next year. This could include supporting or promoting:

- Beach cleans and [Clean Up Scotland](#) activities.
- Marine Conservation Society: [Beachwatch](#) / [Great British Beach Clean](#) activities.
- The presence of user groups. For example, sailing clubs, canoe clubs, and wildlife groups.
- [It's Your Neighbourhood](#) / [Beautiful Scotland](#) groups.
- Local schools using the beach.
- Any other relevant activities.

Although not a requirement for Scotland's Beach Awards, we would like to see beach managers promoting local cultural, industrial and natural heritage. Relevant interpretation panels, trails and links with local historical societies are all considered best practice.



Gullane Bents

Part D. Additional site details

In order for us to understand the management regime at the beach it is useful to describe who manages the site (as in some cases this may be through collaborations with community groups or private land owners).

This section details any issues identified and measures taken to improve the beach as well as any plans which are in the development pipeline.

Checklist

- A map.
- A risk assessment.
- A local emergency plan.
- Promotional photographs of the beach for our website.
- Any additional evidence that may support your application. For example, a litter management plan or normal operating procedures.



Please submit your application to beach@keepsotlandbeautiful.org by 17:00 on 28 March 2025.

Further information

If you would like to know more about Scotland's Beach Awards, please visit our dedicated [webpages](#).

You can also email us at beach@keepsotlandbeautiful.org or call us on 01786 471333. Our team will be happy to offer advice and support on all aspects of the award and the application process.

A wide, sandy beach at sunset. The sky is filled with golden light and clouds. The sand is covered in numerous tracks, likely from birds. A blue rectangular text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Scotland has beautiful beaches which are loved by local communities, visitors and the wildlife that call them home.



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, reduce litter and waste, restore nature and biodiversity and improve places. We aim to inspire changes in behaviour to improve our environment, the quality of people's lives, their wellbeing and the places that they care for.



**Keep Scotland
Beautiful**

T: 01786 471333 E: info@keepscotlandbeautiful.org



www.keepscotlandbeautiful.org

