

My Beach, Your Beach

Campaign Overview Report 2018 - 2022

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Executive summary

Since 2018, the My Beach, Your Beach (MBYB) campaign has been helping people care for our beaches and supporting bathing water quality improvements at a number of Scottish beaches.

The MBYB campaign was funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by Keep Scotland Beautiful in collaboration with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), to support bathing water quality improvements and promote beach stewardship at seven Scottish beaches. It has achieved this through raising awareness and delivering behaviour change in relation to simple key habits, both on the beach (including littering, dog fouling and feeding of gulls on the beach) and in homes and businesses (being aware of the materials that can be flushed down the toilet or put down the drains).

Delivery of the MBYB campaign was structured around three strands: communication; community engagement; and business engagement.

While the MBYB campaign has come to a close, there are learnings from the campaign that can be taken forward to continue to drive behaviour change to support the reduction of marine and coastal litter, and encourage beach stewardship by communities and local businesses, all with the aim of protecting the sand and sea.

Greater beach stewardship can lead to better outcomes for our beaches: having less litter in an environment has been shown to lead to

more pride in an area as well as providing the environmental benefits of a reduction in litter.

Litter surveys undertaken at the campaign beaches were dominated by litter related to smoking and food and drink. These two litter types consistently made up over 60% of litter in the surveys over the five years of the campaign. In the final year of the campaign, 93% of respondents to a targeted online survey would be willing to take action to protect the beach, with 88% of respondents already taking some form of action to protect the beach.

The Scottish Government released its [Marine Litter Strategy](#) in September 2022. It's aim to support a 'clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal environment that meets the long term needs of people and nature' aligns well with the objectives of the MBYB campaign. The National Litter and Flytipping Strategy will also focus on the importance of behaviour change and key learnings from the MBYB campaign will help inform the delivery of the new Strategy.

This report highlights the key outcomes and learnings of the MBYB campaign.

[Watch the video for highlights of the My Beach Your Beach campaign.](#)



#MyBeachYourBeach



Campaign objectives

When the MBYB campaign was launched in 2018, the focus was to raise awareness and change behaviour in relation to dog-fouling, litter and feeding of gulls at three beaches. Over five years, the campaign expanded to cover seven beaches on the west and east coasts of Scotland.

The campaign achieved its four main objectives:



Encourage behaviour change in relation to littering to remove this source of food for gulls.

Encourage residents and visitors to bag and bin dog waste.

Create more community ownership of the quality of local bathing waters.

Create a campaign that can be replicated in other bathing water locations.



Growing the campaign

From 2018 through until 2022, the campaign grew year to year, expanding from three to seven beaches.

Regular litter surveys were undertaken to gauge the composition and amount of litter at each of the campaign beaches. Attitudinal surveys were also carried out to gauge the response to the campaign in terms of its effectiveness in increasing awareness and promoting behaviour change.

Over the years, linkages were developed with community groups, ScotRail and businesses and 2021 saw the introduction of a pilot project linking the My Beach Your Beach campaign messages with Scotland's Beach Awards.

Campaign messages were communicated through in person events, social media, the MBYB website and traditional media.

The campaign was significantly impacted by the covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic related restrictions impacted our ability to deliver the campaign as well as impacting the actual data.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Ayr					
Portobello					
Fisherrow Sands					
Kinghorn Harbour					
Troon					
Irvine					
Saltcoats / Ardrossan					

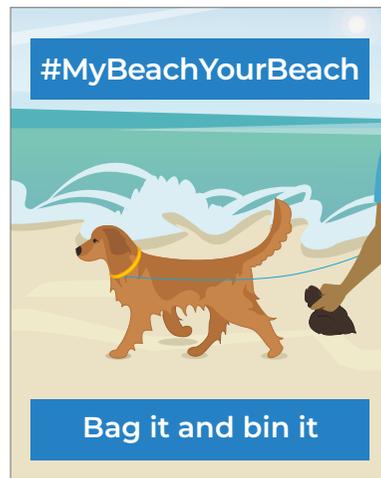


Key messages

A strength of the campaign has been consistency in key messages over the years, focusing primarily on the actions people can take at the beach to protect the sand and sea.



Bin your litter or take it home: Reminding beach users to take litter away and put it in the bin, to avoid polluting the beach and attracting gulls.



Bag it and bin it: Encouraging dog owners to clean up after their dogs.



Don't feed the gulls: Discouraging beach users from attracting gulls by feeding them. Attracting gulls to popular beaches by feeding them can result in them disrupting bins and ingesting litter, harming the gulls themselves as well as leading to gulls becoming aggressive towards beach goers.

These 'on the beach' messages were supplemented by key actions people can take indoors, in homes and businesses, to reduce the likelihood of blocked drains.

Only flush the 3Ps



Never pour fats, oils or greases



These messages support Scottish Water's Nature Calls campaign, highlighting that blocked drains can cause releases from combined sewer overflows, resulting in litter and waste polluting the beach.



Online engagement

The Covid-19 pandemic created a new and unique context for the MBYB campaign. The restrictions presented challenges with regards to what could be delivered but also provided opportunities to explore alternative approaches and ultimately to expand the scope and impact of the campaign.

[The MBYB campaign website](#) was developed to strengthen online engagement and provide opportunities for locals to highlight and celebrate different aspects of their beaches. The website detailed the key messages of the campaign and outlined ways in which people could get involved in the campaign.

Online quizzes for each campaign beach were developed, along with an online gallery which provided an opportunity for locals to submit photographs to celebrate why they felt #LuckyToLiveHere at their beach. After launching in 2020, by the end of 2022, 2,395 people had completed a quiz. Engagement with the quizzes, which were promoted on social media, led to an increase in views of the campaign webpages further promoting the key messages of the campaign and reminding people of actions that they can take to help protect the sand and sea.

As part of the Year of Coasts and Waters 2020/21, a curriculum-linked classroom resource for S1-S6 on the water quality issues that can affect local bathing water was developed. This resource allowed local schools to get involved in protecting the sand and sea with beach-specific information developed for each of the campaign beaches.



Scotland's Beach Awards pilot

In 2021 and 2022, a pilot campaign was delivered linking the MBYB messaging with Scotland's Beach Awards (SBA). SBA is a programme that celebrates beaches that are clean, well-managed and sustainable, as a way of encouraging and supporting beach managers to achieve high standards against key criteria.

As part of this pilot, MBYB campaign materials were made available to a selection of SBA beaches to test their effectiveness as a supporting resource for beach managers. The pilot demonstrated that the messages, signage and communications associated with the MBYB campaign were well received at SBA beaches. Although effective, implementation of the campaign was dependent on local resources and capacity.

As a legacy of the campaign, a toolkit has been prepared for SBA beach managers aligned with the award criteria to support the ongoing promotion of the key messages around binning litter and dog poo and not feeding gulls.





Collaboration

Throughout the campaign, we engaged with SEPA, ScotRail, Scottish Water, local authorities, beach managers, community groups and local businesses. Local community groups have demonstrated that they are essential to protecting Scotland's beaches, and are vital in the promotion of the stewardship of our beaches.

Local community groups were involved in citizen science, undertaking litter surveys, particularly during 2020, to provide ongoing litter survey data for campaign beaches when Keep Scotland Beautiful staff could not access the beaches. Litter picks were undertaken at campaign beaches in collaboration with local community groups and schools. We also supported the Marine Conservation Society's Great British Beach Clean, coordinating beach cleans at campaign beaches.

A partnership with ScotRail in 2021 and 2022 allowed for a wider dissemination of the key campaign messages to train users on the Ayrshire and Fife coasts. Campaign signage was displayed at Glasgow central station, as well as Saltcoats, Ardrossan, Irvine, Troon, Ayr and Kinghorn stations and messages were shared and promoted to a wider audience through ScotRail's social media reach.



Key outcomes



75%

of respondents would pick up litter at the beach

(2022 end of season survey)



93%

of people would do or already do something to protect the marine environment

(2022 end of season survey)



81%

respondents noticed aspects of the campaign

(average over 5 yrs of campaign)



33%

thought dog fouling was an issue

(average over 5 years of campaign)



42%

thought litter was an issue

(average over 5 years of campaign)



70%

of swimmers check Bathing Water Quality

(average over 5 yrs of campaign)



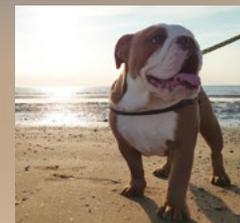
Plastic snack packets were the top food and drink related litter item over the five years of the campaign



Summer litter counts reduced at the 3 original campaign beaches



Smoking related litter dominated litter surveys, particularly on the proms



Doggy Ambassadors average reach of over 52,000 each year

Helping to improve bathing water quality

Online perception surveys undertaken at the end of each summer season showed a consistently high percentage of people noticing the campaign, averaged at 81% over the five years. There was, however, a reduction in respondents checking bathing water quality (BWQ) signage in the early years but this had started to improve again towards the end of the campaign. Each year, people who went to the beach for swimming and other water based activities were more likely to check BWQ than those not using the water (70% of respondents averaged over the five years).

Criteria	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of campaign beaches	3	4	6	7	7
Number of online survey responses	171	131	547	323	148
Percentage of respondents who noticed the campaign	82	95	77	74	77
Percentage of respondents who checked BWQ	75	73	32	45	45
Percentage of respondents who noticed BWQ signs during the season	59	65	35	54	30
Percentage of respondents who use the beach for swimming (or other water sports)	21	2	11	24	18
Percentage of those who swim at the beach who check BWQ	97	100	52	51	52

The restrictions of the pandemic led to an increase in people wild swimming. This was reflected in an increase in the percentage of respondents from each beach going to the beach to swim or for other water activities. This peaked in 2021 but dropped off again in 2022. More people reported swimming at Portobello, Ayr and Kinghorn Harbour beaches than at other campaign beaches.



The Scottish Environment Protection Authority (SEPA) undertakes monitoring at Scotland's designated bathing water beaches between May and September each year. The table below shows the general improvement in bathing water classifications for the beaches that have been part of the MBYB campaign. Fisherrow Sands lost its bathing water designation in 2021 due to a 'Poor' water quality classification for five years in a row. As a result of ongoing investigation and action, Fisherrow Sands is to be re-designated as a bathing water site in 2023. After the 2022 season, the Kinghorn Harbour classification dropped from sufficient to poor. It is the only reduction in water quality classification over the course of the MBYB campaign. Kinghorn had been classified as poor in 2019 but improved to sufficient for three years before returning to a poor classification. SEPA are investigating ways to identify and resolve issues at this beach.

Beach	Year					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ayr	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	↑ Good	Good
Portobello (central)	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient	↑ Good
Portobello (west)	Poor	↑ Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Fisherrow Sands	Poor	Poor	Poor	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kinghorn Harbour		Poor	↑ Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient	↓ Poor
Troon			Sufficient	Sufficient	↑ Good	Good
Irvine			Poor	Poor	↑ Sufficient	Sufficient
Saltcoats/ Ardrossan				Sufficient	↑ Good	Good

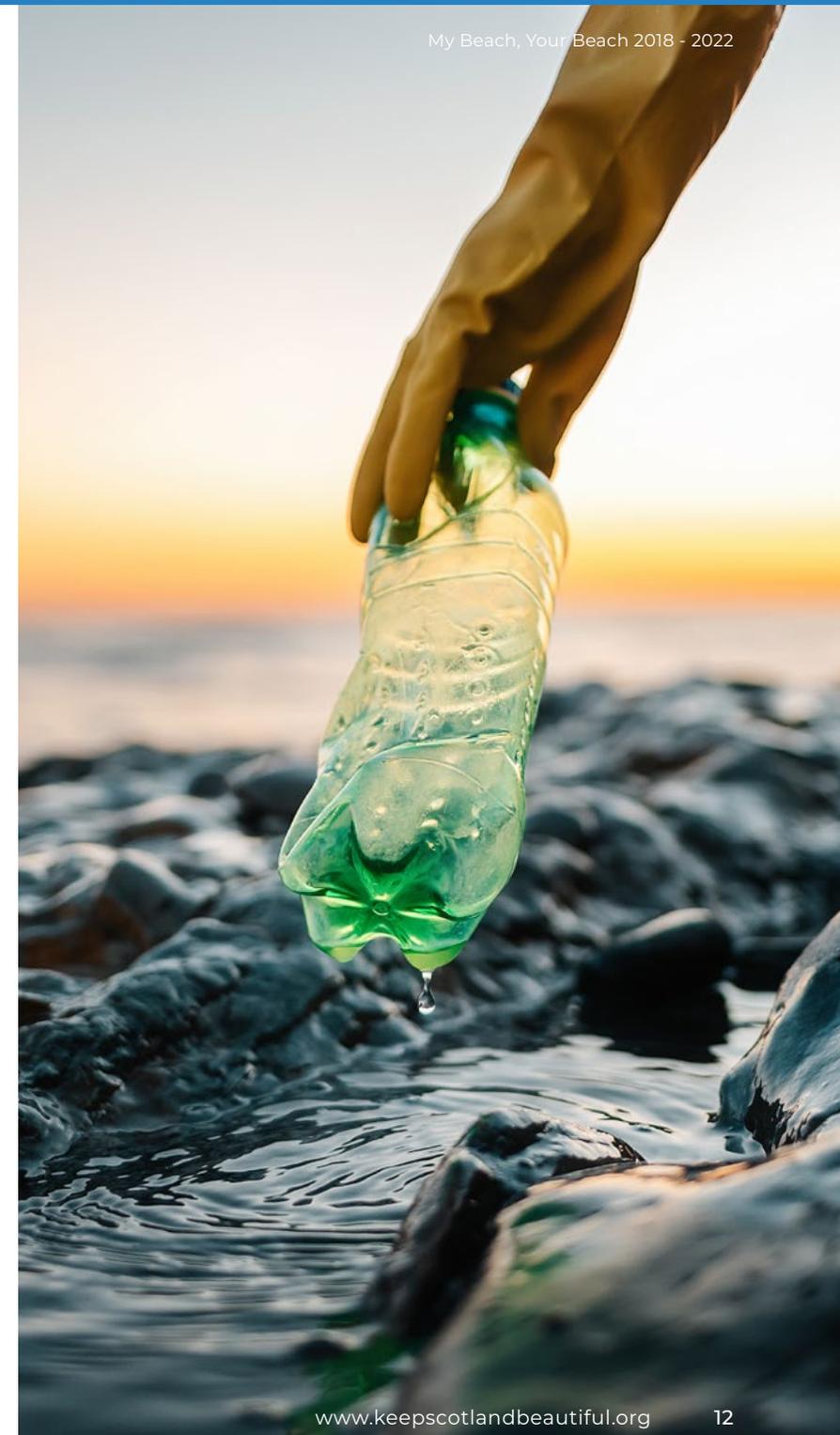
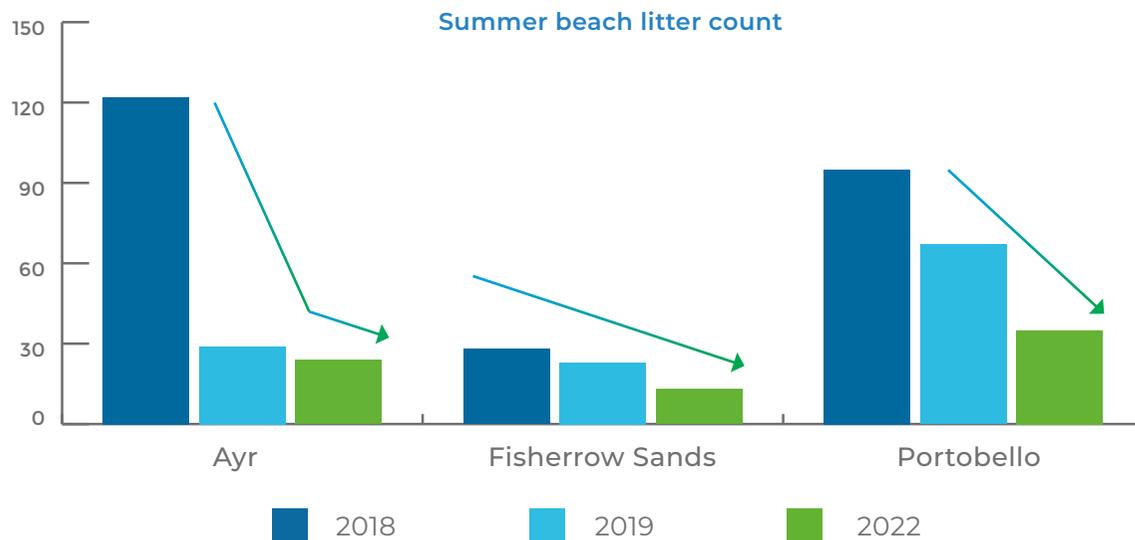


Composition and amount of litter

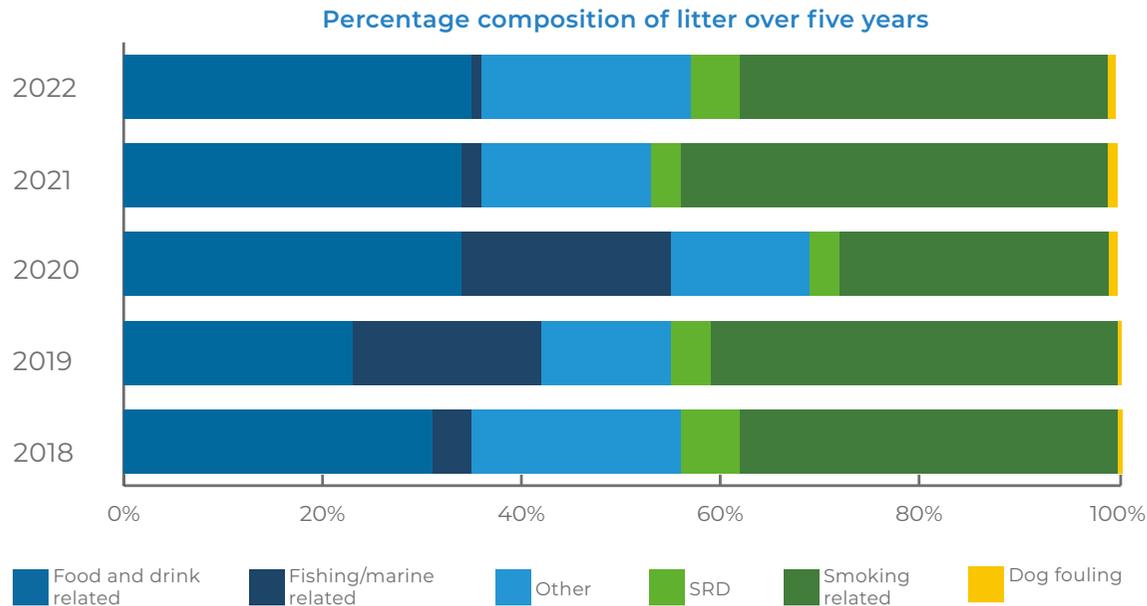
The average number of items of litter per survey varied from year to year, peaking in 2021 at 199 after a low of 25 items per survey in 2019. The drop in number of litter surveys conducted in 2020 was linked to the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is likely that the peak average litter count per survey in 2021 was also linked to impacts associated with the Covid-19 restrictions.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of campaign beaches	3	4	6	7	7
Number of litter surveys	36	34	12	26	56
Average litter count per survey	82	25	38	199	83

The campaign started at Ayr, Fisherrow Sands and Portobello beaches in 2018. The summer litter counts over a 100m² area reduced at these three beaches over 2018, 2019 and 2022. The summer data for 2020 and 2021 at these beaches were not available to be compared in this manner due to Covid-19 restrictions.



The litter survey data from the beaches and proms over the five years of the campaign was used to calculate average composition of litter at the beaches. The graph below shows a comparison of changes in overall litter composition over the course of the campaign.



Smoking related litter is generally the most prevalent litter type, closely followed by food and drink related litter. Marine/ fishing related litter showed the most variability over time, making up an increased proportion of the litter recorded in 2020 and 2021. It was initially expected that this may have been linked to the addition of new campaign beaches, however this trend was also seen in litter at the three original beaches (Ayr, Portobello and Fisherrow Sands) when tracked over the years, as shown in appendix 2. ‘Other’ litter comprised mainly non food and drink related litter composed of plastic, paper, wood and metal, and included items such as plastic pieces, tissues and plastic toys. SRD is sewage related debris and this included wet wipes, cotton bud sticks and period products.

In terms of individual litter items, plastic snack packets were the top food related litter item on the beaches in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2022.

Appendix 2 details the changes in percentage litter composition at the three original beaches over the five years of the campaign.



Attitudes to litter, dog fouling and gulls

KSB's [2022 Scottish Litter Survey Report](#) found that 67% of Scots believe litter is a problem in their local area and 87% believe that litter is an issue across Scotland. This is reflected in the marine environment, with a [Marine Scotland Ocean Literacy Survey](#) reporting that the Scottish public believe marine litter and plastic pollution are significant threats to Scotland's marine environment, with 72% considering it the biggest threat facing the marine environment.

The perception surveys for the end of the season in 2022 identified that for each of the key issues of litter, dog waste and gulls, around half of the respondents said that the impact was around the same as last year suggesting that while these issues are not getting worse, they are also not getting better.

Do you think this matter is an issue (% reporting it is 'an issue' or 'a big issue')	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Litter	44	54	37	38	34
Dog fouling	41	42	30	25	25
Gulls	-	-	7	30	34

Campaign interventions, such as #DoggyAmbassadors, were well received and provided an opportunity for the community to get involved with a competition based at their local beaches and helped to reinforce the #BagItandBinIt message. The reach for the #DoggyAmbassador was high across the years, averaging over 50,000 each year.

Do you think this matter is an issue (% reporting it is 'an issue' or 'a big issue')	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
#DoggyAmbassador Facebook Reach	82,000	30,143	25,734	55,242	67,315



Behaviour change and actions to protect the sand and sea

Through a number of surveys, both in the My Beach Your Beach campaign and beyond, the Scottish public have demonstrated both support for measures to reduce littering and a willingness to undertake actions that will reduce litter at our beaches. Comments in the perception surveys prompted us to recognise that many people have changed their behaviour through the course of the campaign and are already taking action in their local communities.

By the final year of the campaign, 93% of survey respondents would be willing to take action to protect the sand and sea, with 88% already taking action to protect the sand and sea. In the SBA pilot campaign, 75% of respondents would pick up litter and 87% would take action to protect the sand and sea at their beaches. Survey comments highlighted that one aspect that came out clearly in the comments from the 2022 surveys was that many people recognise that people need to take responsibility for their own litter. While not everyone wants to pick up what others have left behind, it is important to recognize that if everyone just took care of their own rubbish, the current litter emergency would not be such an issue.

Many groups across Scotland have years of experience tackling litter in their local community. To help support these groups, supply litter picking equipment and encourage wider community action, Keep Scotland Beautiful has coordinated the [Community Clean Up Hub Network](#). There are hubs at three of the seven MBYB beaches and two of the eight beaches involved with the SBA pilot. These hubs as well as other community groups and individuals help to promote, by example, the actions that people can take to protect the sand and sea, keeping local environments clean and undertaking vital citizen science through conducting litter surveys. Litter surveys are an important way to identify trends in both type and amount of litter at our beaches. Where individuals are interested in collecting such data, there is information and support available from Keep Scotland Beautiful to encourage this.



Legacy: Continuing to protect the sand and sea

Developing a toolkit for SBA beaches

In order to continue to promote the key messages of the MBYB campaign, a toolkit has been prepared for beaches awarded a Scotland's Beach Award in 2023. This will support Scotland's beach managers to help protect the sand and sea.



The toolkit will be provided to the managers of 2023 SBA winning beaches and will highlight key messages linked to the beach award criteria:

Access, facilities and safety: Code of conduct, safety documents and avian flu guidance.

Local environmental quality: Highlight the key messages (littering, dog fouling and gulls) and provide access to signage reflecting these messages.

Community and heritage: Provide litter survey guidance in the context of supporting citizen science, and providing social media cards reflecting the key messages to support ongoing community education.





Tackling unsustainable consumption

Scotland's ban on single use plastics was implemented in 2022, which has restricted the sale and use of many [single use plastics](#). However, we need to reduce our use of single use items overall. In 2022, litter surveys at Fisherrow Sands and Irvine recorded both plastic cutlery and wooden chip forks in the top ten litter items for those beaches.

The single use plastics ban will take time to have full effect. Legislation to ban plastic-stemmed cotton buds was introduced in 2019, however they are still being found on our beaches. On Saltcoats/ Ardrossan beach in 2022, plastic cotton bud sticks were the 9th most common litter item recorded.

A behaviour change campaign highlighting the issues around consumption of single use items, whether they be plastic or any other material, would be a beneficial future project, and would link well with Scotland's move towards a circular economy.

Reducing smoking related litter (cigarettes and vapes)

Significant numbers of cigarette stubbs, cigarette related litter and more recently disposable vapes have been recorded in litter surveys across the campaign, with cigarette stubbs frequently being the most common litter item on our beaches and proms. It is clear there needs to be more of a push on this issue and additional signage is being prepared in the style of the MBYB campaign to highlight the need to put cigarettes in the bin. There is also potential for the installation of targeted cigarette butt bins on our proms.

In February 2023, Keep Scotland Beautiful, in conjunction with ASH Scotland, Marine Conservation Society and climate activist, Laura Young, sent a joint letter to Scottish Ministers calling for a ban on the sale of single use vaping products and will continue to be vocal on the issue of single use vaping products which are an unnecessary source of litter that goes against Scotland's transition to a circular economy.



Conclusion

My Beach Your Beach has addressed its campaign objectives through:



Encouraging behaviour change in relation to reducing littering.

Encouraging beach users to bag and bin dog waste.

Development of community ownership and interest in the quality of local bathing waters at campaign beaches.

Development of a toolkit linking the messaging of the My Beach Your Beach campaign with Scotland's Beach Awards as an example of how we have created a campaign that can be replicated in other bathing waters around Scotland.

The campaign has shown it is essential to effectively engage all stakeholders, including local communities and beach managers, to encourage local action to protect the sand and sea. Ongoing investment is important in relation to both support for taking action at the beach, as well as infrastructure to ensure positive outcomes for bathing waters.

Campaign perception surveys highlighted that while some beach users don't pick up other people's rubbish, they do take responsibility for their own litter. If everyone did this, wherever they are, it would make a significant contribution to tackling the litter emergency.

Throughout the campaign, and as a result of the impacts and restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, we found that it is important to maintain a focus on the local community – working toward reconnecting and engaging at a local level. While Covid-19 restrictions prevented in-person action for a time, they provided incentive for the development of new and innovative ways to reach people and find ways to engage and encourage discussion around beach stewardship and bathing water quality.

When people care about their local area, it is easier to be engaged and see that protecting the beach is about more than bathing water quality. Focusing on beach stewardship to help protect the sand and sea helps to improve the wider beach environment.

With the rise in wild swimming and other beach activity year round, it is important to continue the education of the beach going public and the collection of data around bathing water quality.

The issues on our beaches are the same issues we face across society with litter. The Marine Litter Strategy and the Litter and Flytipping Strategy provide frameworks and opportunities to address wider litter issues.

At a local level, we will continue to promote simple messages to continue to encourage beach stewardship. Simple actions, such as picking up after yourself at the beach, can demonstrate that many people taking small actions can make a big difference.



Appendix 1:

MBYB campaign's yearly reports

MBYB main reports

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
MBYB 2018 report 	MBYB 2019 report 	MBYB 2020 report 	MBYB 2021 report 	MBYB 2022 report 
				

MBYB SBA reports

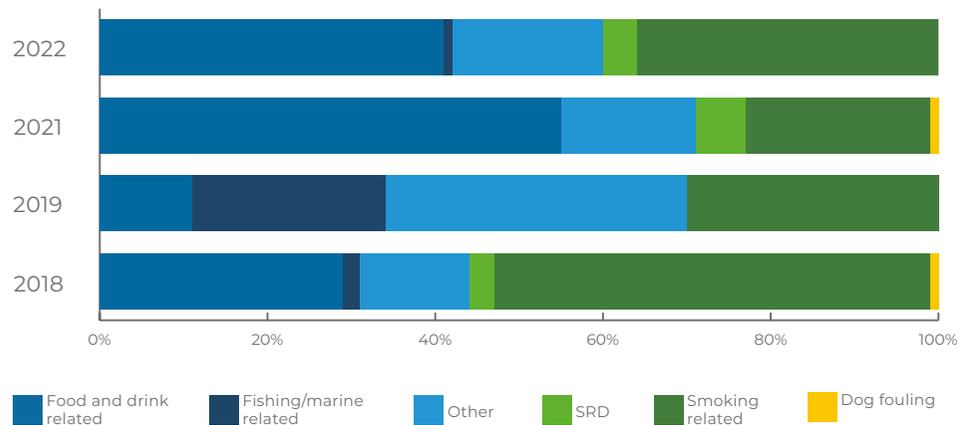
2021	2022
MBYB SBA 2021 report 	MBYB SBA 2022 report 
	



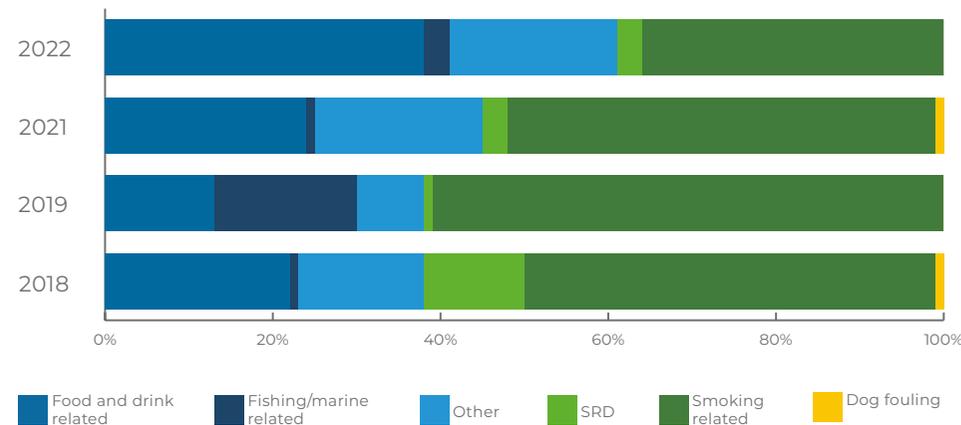
Appendix 2:

Changes in litter composition at the original three beaches

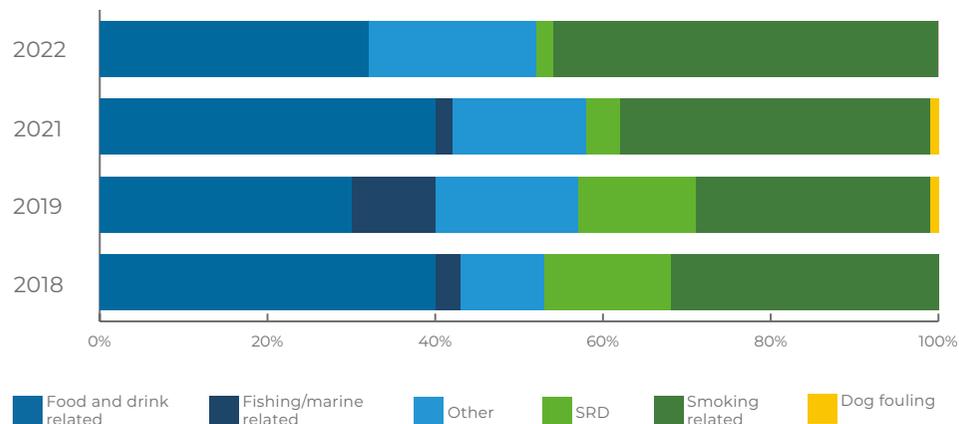
Composition of litter at Ayr between 2018 - 2022



Composition of litter at Fisherrow Sands between 2018 - 2022



Composition of litter at Portobello between 2018 - 2022





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.



Keep Scotland Beautiful

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