



Upstream Battle[®]

Anchor group case study

Upstream Battle success for Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore

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Over last three years Keep Scotland Beautiful's award winning campaign to tackle marine litter from source to sea, [Upstream Battle](#), has been raising awareness, gathering evidence and inspiring action in Glasgow and the Clyde Valley.

Anchor Groups have played a key part of leading the way in gathering evidence on the levels of litter on stretches of the River Clyde and its tributaries. One of the campaign's original Anchor Groups, Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore, have gone from strength to strength, even throughout a global pandemic.

Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore

Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore were only a few months old when they were asked to be an Upstream Battle Anchor Group.

Dumbarton local, Zoe Weir, started up the group thanks to her rescue border collie, Mackie who was a nervous ball of energy and needed long walks away from traffic and crowds - the nearby Clyde shore was ideal.



Image credit: Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore

In partnership with:



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Oighreachd a' Chrùin Alba

**"I found the sight of human-made
things in a natural space very depressing."**

Zoe Weir, Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore

Thanks for taking part in our Upstream Battle® campaign



Image credit: Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore



Image credit: Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore



Image credit: Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore

Rather than complaining, she acted, enlisting her kids and husband to collect litter on the foreshore. They soon realised they would not make enough impact on their own. They set up a Facebook page, contacted their local paper to advertise weekly litter picks for others to join and were given free Clean Up equipment from West Dunbartonshire Council.

As with many groups, at first no-one came, and the family almost gave up. Through persistence and with the family being visible on regular litter picks, volunteers started to show up. The group adapted to suit its volunteers. Litter picks were scheduled for weekends so that more people could join them. They learned that the best place to start the litter pick at was the farthest point away from where the waste would be collected from. The local community began to see the results of the group's efforts in improving their open spaces.

Becoming an Anchor Group

They became an Anchor Group to attract more members, but also found it helped with getting involved with specific littering issues.

From carrying out surveys through citizen science, they gathered data showing unusually high levels SRD (Sewage Related Detritus) on the foreshore. This led to SEPA identifying broken water pipes, which were then fixed by Scottish Water.

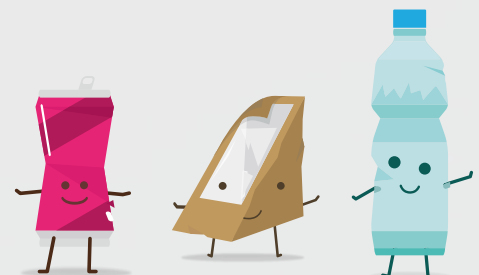




Image credit: Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore

The group campaigned to raise awareness on flushed waste, as many people wrongly thought that this waste was filtered before it reached our waterways. They shared an iconic social media image of “Beach Whistle Barbie” sitting atop a mountain of shoreline tampon applicators and included the Upstream Battle hashtag.

This was published nationally and the group joined many others in posting boxes of littered applicators from period products to the #EndPeriodWaste campaigner Ella Daish.

As part of Upstream Battle, the group have also visited schools to teach kids the dangers to wildlife of balloon releases. This led to a local councillor putting a motion to the Council to ban balloon releases in West Dunbartonshire – it was passed unanimously.

“We also got a lot out of the Keep Scotland Beautiful training sessions, which provided insight into the many causes of littering, as well as ways to turn around the perception of an area from litter-magnet to beauty spot.”

Zoe Weir, Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore

Continuing through lockdown

The pandemic struck, and the group were determined to find ways to continue with their activities while maintaining the safety of their volunteers. This included co-ordinated solo litter picking.

The shore paths were busy and local people appreciated the efforts of the group which helped them to enjoy the views, wildflowers and nature of the foreshore. This positive impact and increased reach brought more volunteers and energy, and Zoe formed a core organizing group with stalwart regulars Liz Daly, Gary Barrass, Jim Crosthwaite and Gordon Ross to plan expansion to new locations.

Social media was used to inspire involvement and celebrate activities of the group. For example sharing images of vintage plastic toys and decades-old plastic packets and containers collected from the foreshore. Details of interesting finds were shared; a four-foot python (deceased, and rather smelly!), a prosthetic leg; a 100-year old coin; vintage collectible toys; and a number of pairs of underpants (unfortunately not that an unusual find in Scotland!). Regular "Meet the Picker" posts were also added to introduce volunteers to the rest of the group.

As lockdown eased, members were keen to do a group litter pick. But with over 70 people and event numbers still limited by Covid they promoted a “Restore the Shore” event, which meant they split volunteers into teams, picking simultaneously at different shore locations. One of the teams included the new group, Friends of Leven River Valley, whose formation models the Upstream Battle concept of pushing back along the larger rivers and up the tributaries to prevent litter from reaching the foreshores and seas.

Tips for other groups:

- Be patient, groups will slowly grow. Often people just need to see what difference can be made.
- Use multiple social media platforms from the start to increase reach.
- Build a mailing list early – people want to hear what's happening.
- Form a relationship with your local authority – many councils provide equipment, and uplift of picked bags, training, insurance and advice.
- Understand the risks and liability – have an electronic/printable Safety and Code of Conduct advising volunteers they pick at their own risk, and that under 18s must be entirely in the care of an accompanying adult. As you get established, you should look into group insurance, and build a private “Core Group” on Whatsapp or similar to make important decisions. Ideally, a founder works to create a group that could run just as smoothly without them!
- Stay positive!

Get in touch

W: www.KeepScotlandBeautiful.org/upstreambattle

E: upstreambattle@KeepScotlandBeautiful.org