

Scotland's Beach Awards



Guidance for entrants
2020

Contents

Keep Scotland Beautiful	3
The history of Beach Awards in Scotland	3
Why apply?	4
Important information for 2020	5
FAQs	5
Entrant fees	5
Key dates for 2020	5
Entrant support	6
How to get awarded?	6
Application process?	7
Site assessments	7
Beach Managers' Forum	7
Appendix 1: Criteria and compliance	8
Criteria and compliance procedure	8
Section A: Access, facilities and safety	9
Section B: Local environmental quality	10
Section C: Community and heritage	11
Appendix 2: Application form guidance	12
Background information	12
Part A: Access, facilities and safety	13
Part B: Local environmental quality	14
Part C: Access, facilities and safety	14
Part D: Miscellaneous	14
Checklist	15
Further information	15

Keep Scotland Beautiful

We campaign, act and educate on a range of local, national and global issues to change behaviour and improve the quality of people's lives and the places they care for. We are committed to making Scotland clean, green and more sustainable.

Having been part of the environmental landscape for over 50 years, we draw together government, local authorities, businesses, community groups and individuals in this common cause. We are present in every village, town and city in Scotland, and our activities are estimated to make a difference to 1 in 5 people living in Scotland.

We provide environmental campaigns, services and practical initiatives that help Scotland with its environmental ambitions. Our unique spectrum of activities focuses on four main areas: Sustainable Development Education, Local Environmental Quality, Sustainability and Climate Change, and Environmental Services.

The history of Beach Awards in Scotland

Scotland's Beach Awards are the benchmark for quality beaches which are well managed and enjoyed by people across Scotland.

From 1993 to 2015, we offered two versions of the Seaside Awards (Resort Seaside Award and Rural Seaside Award), alongside the international Blue Flag Award.

In 2016, we took a new approach, and began offering Scotland's Beach Awards, a comprehensive all-encompassing award which rewarded clean, well-managed and sustainable beaches. This trial of the new awards allowed us to take time to consider your comments and make changes around your feedback.

For 2020, we are pleased to roll out a new look awards which aim to celebrate all of Scotland's beaches and coastal communities whilst driving up the environmental standards around our coastline. The new awards will celebrate more beaches by giving every beach the opportunity to apply. The following document lays out the new criteria for Scotland's Beach Awards 2020.

Awarded beaches demonstrate excellent beach management and environmental best practice ensuring the maintenance of high standards. The award is open to local authorities, as well as other agencies such as community councils, trusts and community groups. The award recognises excellence across three key areas:

Access, facilities
and safety

Local environmental
quality

Community
and heritage

It has been more than 25 years since we began awarding Scottish beaches, and the number of beaches who received awards in 2019 was 61.

Why apply?

Applying for, and obtaining, an award brings with it a wealth of benefits and provides a national guideline for good environmental standards.

- Scotland's Beach Awards are an independent accreditation which show the public that the beach and its environs are managed excellently.
- Scotland's Beach Awards recognise and celebrate the efforts of local authorities, agencies and communities striving to offer an excellent beach experience to locals and visitors.
- Scotland's Beach Awards standardise visitor expectations when visiting a designated bathing water site in particular.
- Well managed beaches offer recreational, educational, health and wellbeing benefits to your community. This includes improvements in mood and cognitive attention, self-reported quality of life, and reduced stress¹.
- All winners of Scotland's Beach Awards feature on our [website](#) and receive promotional materials. As a award winning beach, you will receive dedicated support from our team and opportunities to improve practice through peer-learning at our bi-annual Beach Managers' Forum.
- Tangible economic benefits can also come from attaining an award, including elevating the profile of your beach, encouraging a boost to tourism and opening local revenue opportunities.



Beaches and the economy

- It is estimated that domestic visits to sea-side locations in Scotland generate £323 million in expenditure per annum.
- 26% of tourists visit a beach while on their holiday in Scotland.
- There are an average of 2,300 online monthly searches relating to Scottish beaches.

Coastal Tourism in Scotland. Visit Scotland, 2016².

The number of awarded beaches in Scotland has grown in recent years as new local authorities and other bodies increasingly recognise the value of an award status to the local economy, community pride and tourism.

Scotland has award-winning beaches extending from Shetland to South Ayrshire. We have sandy beaches, rocky beaches, beaches great for families and dogs, and beaches which have provisions for watersports. We cater for all types of tourism in Scotland and have a variety of different kinds of awarded beaches to meet the needs of locals and visitors.

¹ Scottish Government (2018) The value of bathing waters and the influence of bathing water quality: Final Research Report. Available: <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/value-bathing-waters-influence-bathing-water-quality-final-research-report/>

² VisitScotland (2016). Coastal Tourism in Scotland. Insights Department Topic Paper.

Important information for 2020

FAQs

Do I need to reapply?

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

Who can apply for Scotland's Beach Awards?

Applications from anyone who has guardianship of a beach will be considered for any site, both coastal and inland. Beaches which are on a designated bathing water site will have to 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 Scotland's Beach Awards. 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@keepsotlandbeautiful.org, or call us on 01786 477168.

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

When will we know if we are successful?

All applicants will be 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.

Will the award ever be removed?

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

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.

Entrant fees

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

- Promotional material: a flag (or plaque) and certificate.
- A site visit from a trained assessor.
- An invite to our bi-annual Beach Managers' Forum (as well as other events of relevance).
- Officer support.
- Website and press promotion (along with other promotional materials).
- Access to reports and campaigns where relevant.

The cost of entry for 2020 is **£300 + VAT**. Please note fees are subject to change.

Key dates for 2020

Month	Activity
January	Applications open
February	Deadline for entries: 28 February
April	Desk assessments Visits to new entrants
May	Beach Managers' Forum Award announcement
June - August	Field assessments
November /December	Beach Managers' Forum

Entrant support

How to get an award

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

[Access, facilities and safety](#)

[Local environmental quality](#)

[Community and heritage](#)



The criteria are listed in [Appendix 1](#). To gain and maintain an award, 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 with an award, 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 before the 28 February 2020, 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 award 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 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 the beaches who have applied for Scotland's Beach Awards 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

Forums are held bi-annually, which all beach managers are invited to attend. This allows managers the opportunity to speak to us as well as share best practice between each other. The forums are typically held in May and November/December, allowing the opportunity to discuss anything which may be relevant from the previous year and looking ahead to the next. If you would like to add a point to the agenda, or present at the Beach Managers' Forum, please let us know.

Each meeting also has external speakers, allowing managers the opportunity to speak with relevant stakeholders. Previous representatives have been from [Scottish Environmental Protection Agency](#) (SEPA), [Royal National Lifeboat Institution](#) (RNLI), and [Marine Conservation Society](#) (MCS).

Appendix 1: Criteria and compliance procedure

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

Access, facilities and safety; local environmental quality; community and heritage.

Within these categories, there are individual points, categorised as 'major', 'minor' or 'best practice' criteria. 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.

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.</p>
Minor These criteria are core to Scotland's Beach Awards and 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 ten working 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 Scotland's Beach Awards promote 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>

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.

Access, facilities and safety checklist (for all)

Major criteria

- A1. The Beach Operator must ensure a site-specific risk assessment has been carried out by appropriate qualified personnel. Suitable and sufficient control measures must be put in place to ensure safe use of the beach and surrounding area. This must be provided to us at the point of application.
- 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 beach award 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.
- 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, plaque or 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 with 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.

Designated bathing waters applicants please see A15 below.

Access, facilities and safety (additional criteria for designated bathing waters sites)

Minor criteria

- A15. 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.

Local environmental quality checklist (for all)		
Major criteria		
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.		
Status	Most recent classification	Information requirements to be displayed
Designated bathing water site	Sufficient or above.	Bathing water profile summary and classification must be displayed.
	Poor – SEPA live signage installed at site.	Bathing water profile summary and classification must be displayed.
	Poor – SEPA live signage not installed at site.	Beach not eligible for award.
Not a designated bathing water site	N/A - bathing water not tested.	Information must be displayed to state that bathing water quality is not monitored.
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.		
<input type="checkbox"/> B3. The beach, intertidal area, backshore, dunes and any surrounding areas connected to the beach operation (carparks, playgrounds and amenity areas etc) 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 – B6 below.		
Best practice		
<input type="checkbox"/> B10. Evidence that the interests of any protected sites (SSSIs) and rare or protected species have been addressed in liaison with the designating authority, Scottish Natural Heritage.		
<input type="checkbox"/> B11. 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).		
<input type="checkbox"/> B12. The Beach Operator should provide adequate recycling facilities, where appropriate, and encourage beach users to recycle their waste.		

Local environmental quality (additional criteria for designated bathing waters sites)
Major criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> B4. The Beach Operator must highlight waste water discharge points and riverine inputs within one mile of the beach/water to the public.
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input type="checkbox"/> B6. 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. Beach Operators should provide an explanation as to why there are no facilities and any arrangements which are in place for visitors.

Section C: Community and heritage

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

Community and heritage checklist (for all)
Major criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> C1. The Beach Operator should encourage community engagement. This may include supporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<input type="checkbox"/> C2. Links to community events and activities.
Minor criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> C3. Educational materials. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal education for schools, colleges or universities (physical or online). • Or public education (physical leaflets, online materials, self-lead trails).
Best practice
<input type="checkbox"/> C4. The Beach Operator should encourage engagement with local heritage sites by having: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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). • Demonstratable links with local historical societies.

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, then please complete the extra criteria questions highlighted throughout. Please complete these as fully as possible and return by 17:00 on Friday 28 February 2020 to beach@keepsotlandbeautiful.org.

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

Background information

The first section of the application form helps us to gain 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 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 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 promoted.

Facilities: A checkbox of facilities, features and activities are listed to choose from which can be used 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.

Part A: Access, facilities and safety

Attempts should be made to make the beach environment as safe as possible. A risk assessment must be carried out to identify what potential hazards are present at the beach and how these can then be mitigated against.

A copy of the risk assessment must 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 if 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 Award webpages](#) which you may wish to avail of, including: 'Beach Safety', 'Beach Code' and 'Marine Litter'.

Details should be provided on what bins are provided, 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 less 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.

Any litter management plan should be attached to the application as additional supporting evidence.

In some locations dog waste is an issue, and details should be provided on attempts made to minimise dog fouling, including waste bins (many bins now allow both litter and dog waste), posters and warden patrols.

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

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 bathing water season (June – September). Safety provisions should be appropriate for the beach meaning that some locations have more hazards than others and may require more. 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.

Part B: Local environmental quality

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.

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.

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

Information should also be provided to us about any rare or protected species which are present at the beach and any attempts made to get 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 Scottish Natural Heritage.

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.

Up to date information about water quality should be provided here. Designated bathing waters will have predicted qualities, available from [SEPA's website](#), published ahead of the bathing season (1 June and 15 September).

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. In some cases, toilet facilities are not located at the beach, in this instance information should be provided on the nearest available toilets.

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 such as sailing clubs, canoe clubs, wildlife groups etc.
- [It's Your Neighbourhood](#) / [Beautiful Scotland](#) groups.
- Local schools using the beach.
- Any other relevant activities.

Although not a requirement for Scotland's Beach Award, 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 understood to be best practice.



Part D: Miscellaneous

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

Please submit your application to beach@keepscotlandbeautiful.org by 17:00 on 28 February 2020.

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@keepscotlandbeautiful.org, call us on 01786 477168 or visit us at Keep Scotland Beautiful, First Floor, Glendevon House, The Castle Business Park, Stirling, FK9 4TZ.



We support the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keep Scotland Beautiful is the charity that provides advice and support to help create and maintain cleaner, safer and healthier local environments where people and communities can thrive. It's part of our work to make Scotland clean, green and sustainable.



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