



Upstream[®]

Battle

on the Tay
Phase 1: 2021-2022



Keep Scotland
Beautiful

Your charity for Scotland's environment

Upstream Battle[®] on the Tay

Upstream Battle was launched over three years ago in response to the huge public and political concern around marine litter. Building on this success, in August 2021 we launched Upstream Battle on the River Tay - the longest river in Scotland.

In year one we wanted to gain a better understanding of the River Tay and its tributaries. In July 2021 we commissioned polling to understand how members of the public feel about marine litter.

We have recruited and supported local Anchor Groups who have adopted stretches of their local waterway. We have been working with communities to collect data on the types of litter found locally.

The campaign helped set marine litter firmly in the context of the climate emergency. It helps highlight how our unsustainable consumption of single-use items, for example from food packaging and wet wipes, is driving up carbon emissions, wasting scarce resources and often polluting our land, streams, rivers and seas as litter.

We know that people want to see more action to tackle litter and keep our waters clean and the Upstream Battle campaign will help make that happen. The campaign has already been a success on the Clyde so it's welcome news that it's now coming to the Tay. Marine litter is a blight on our natural environment. This project will bring local communities together and support them in making a real difference to our waterways and seas."

Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform
Màiri McAllan



Setting up Anchor Groups

Anchor Groups have led the way by engaging their local community, removing litter, and gathering evidence on the levels and types of litter on stretches of local waterways across Tayside.

To kick off the campaign we recruited nine Anchor Groups, spread across the Perth and Kinross, Dundee and Angus local authority areas.

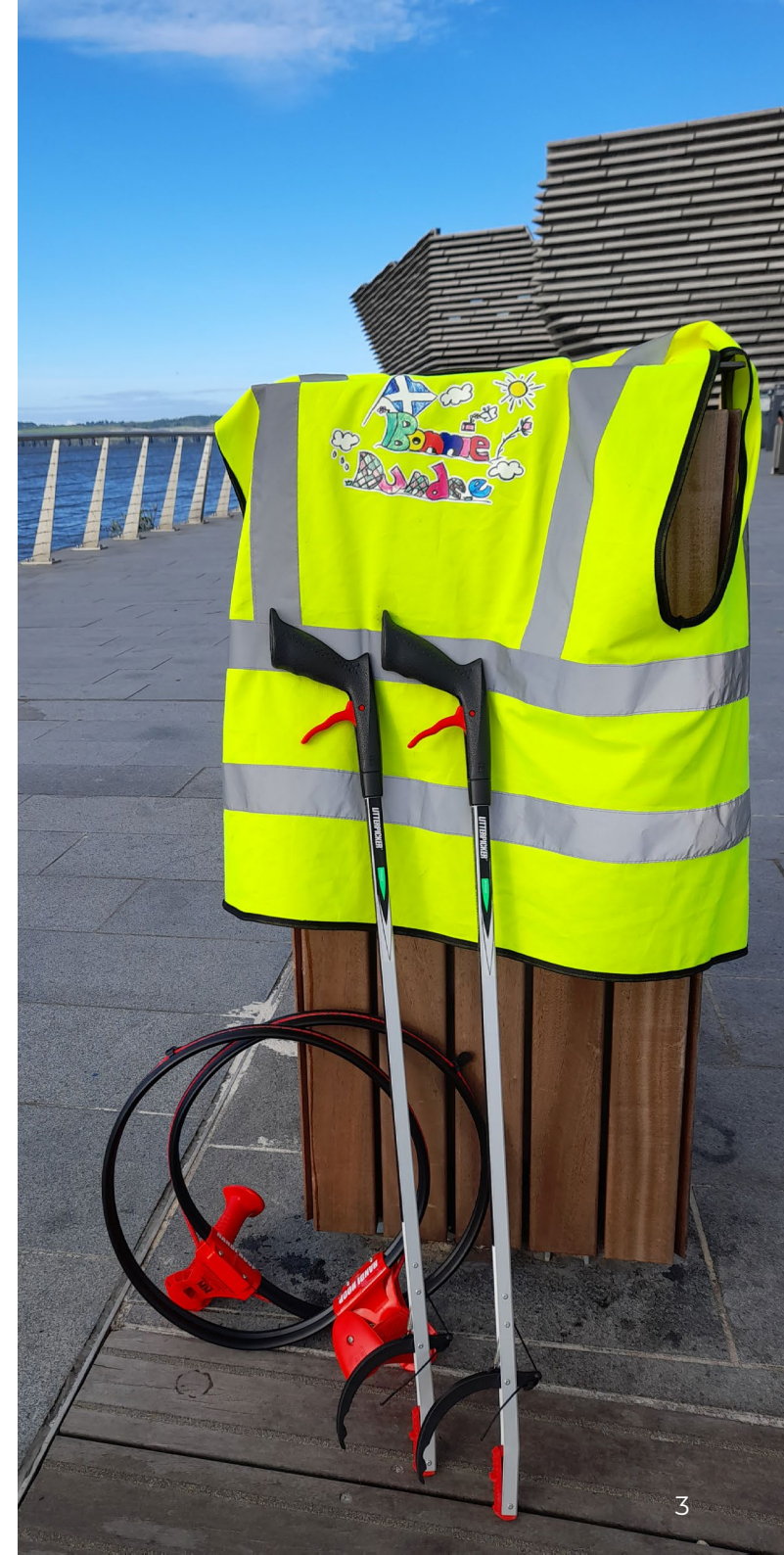
At the start of their journey, Anchor Groups received support to adopt a site along the Tay, or one of its tributaries, and were asked to survey litter at this site to add to a growing dataset.

We organise litter picks quite a lot. We've found all sorts – beer cans, crisp packets, plastic bags and traffic cones. We are delighted to be part of the Upstream Battle campaign to raise awareness of litter and help to clean up our local waterway.

Ross Dempster, Beyond Adventure- one of our Anchor Groups

In autumn 2021, ahead of COP26, volunteers from the Anchor Groups received online citizen science and behaviour change training and a bespoke version of our innovative [Climate Emergency Training](#). The training equipped them to gather local litter data and use this, with support, to plan targeted campaigns challenging the behaviours that are causing issues locally.

In spring 2022 we worked with Anchor Groups to identify what litter picking equipment they required. Equipment was purchased to facilitate each group to carry out litter picking activities and allow them to lend it to people who are interested in getting involved. Two Anchor Groups, Broughty Ferry in Bloom and Monifieth Eco Force also agreed to become part of our [Community Clean Up Hub](#) network.



Anchor Group activities

Examples of the activities from Anchor Groups:



Beyond Adventure

With Kenmore Primary school collected 10 bags of litter from their local beach.



Giraffe

Their walking group carried out a litter survey in Perth and counted 32 littered cigarette butts.



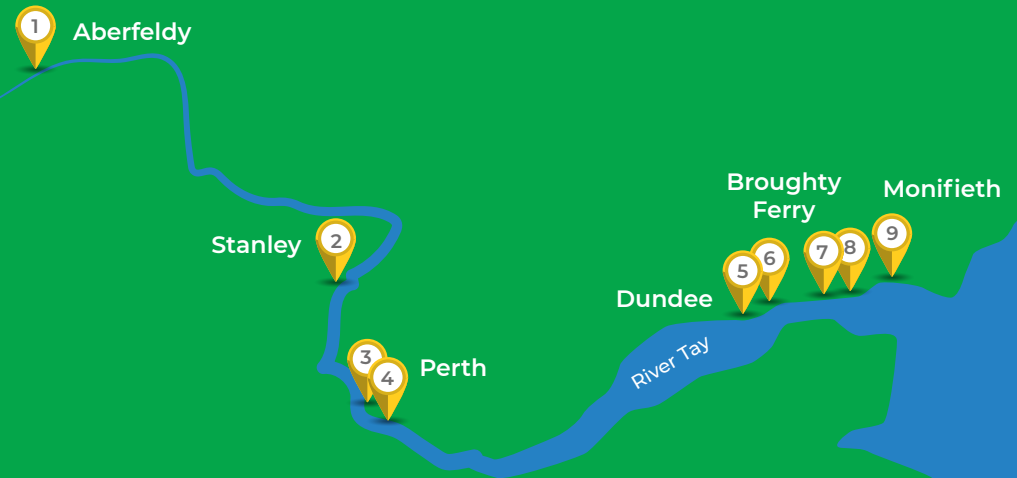
Willowgate Activity Centre

Collected when kayaking on the River Tay; 5 bags of litter including 3 odd shoes and half a wheelbarrow.



Broughty Ferry Rotary

On a litter survey of the Dighty recorded 42 foil wrappers and 50 glass fragments.



Groups	Location 
1. Beyond Adventure	Aberfeldy
2. C406 Tackle Litter Group	Stanley
3. Giraffe	Perth
4. Willowgate Activity Centre	Perth
5. Bonnie Dundee	Dundee
6. Wild Shore	Dundee
7. Broughty Ferry Rotary Club	Broughty Ferry
8. Broughty Ferry in Bloom	Broughty Ferry
9. Monifieth Eco Force	Monifieth

Wider engagement

We launched the campaign with support from Dundee, Perth and Kinross, Angus and Fife Councils and the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, who have supported individuals and communities with expertise, equipment and uplift of litter.

“It was very positive to support the launch of Upstream Battle on the Tay in Dundee in August 2021, meeting and working with partners on what is an important issue. It’s critical we continue to receive buy-in from all who live, work, study and visit Dundee to help us take the required action to prevent litter from entering the River Tay from land and the damaging effects it can have.

“The publication of this citizen science report and the findings from the litter survey data are welcomed and contribute towards tackling litter and changing the behaviour behind littering.”

Dundee City Council Leader Councillor John Alexander

Local and national businesses play a key role in preventing and cleaning up litter. In March 2022 we joined Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce and presented at their “Preparing for Net Zero” event to let businesses know how they can support the campaign and their local Anchor Group.

To increase engagement and gather additional survey data, we launched a prize giveaway of a paddleboard experience with Wild Shore Dundee or Willowgate Activity Centre, two of our Anchor Groups, to anyone completing a litter survey from April 19th to May 16th. We also designed new posters, with a QR code to encourage surveys, that our supporters displayed at key locations across the area.

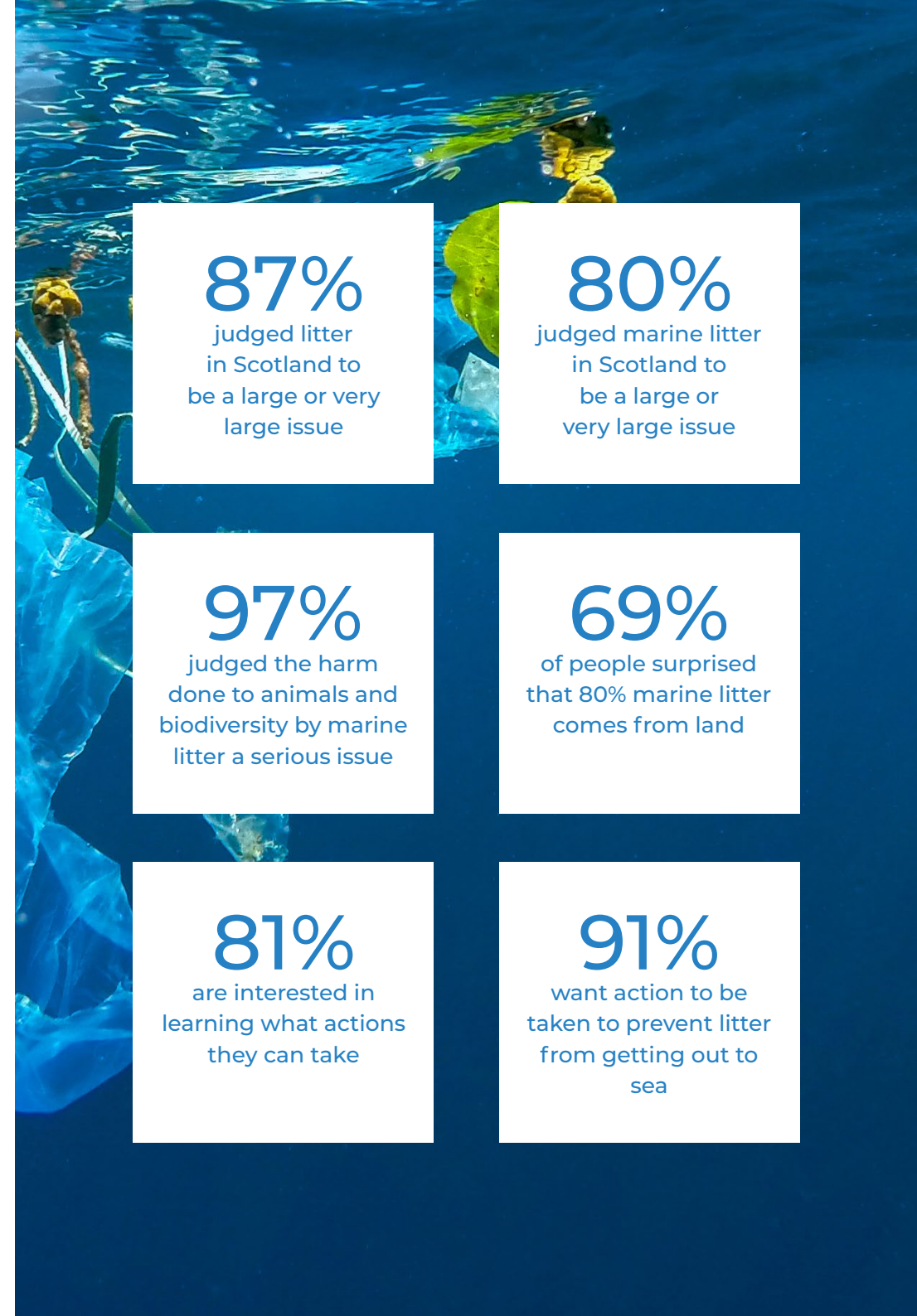


Public perception

In July 2021 we commissioned polling¹ across Tayside to help understand public concern and knowledge of marine litter and the source to sea pathway.

- The public care about marine litter roughly as much as they care about litter on land: **87%** judged litter in Scotland to be a large or very large issue, and **80%** said the same of marine litter. They also appreciate that these are both issues globally with **94%** saying so in both cases. For many people, particularly further inland, marine litter might be less visible, but that doesn't diminish how much they still care and see it as a problem.
- People understand how serious the consequences of marine litter are. When asked about a variety of potential impacts, over **4 in 5** people considered each one to be a serious issue. **97%** judged the harm done to animals and biodiversity by marine litter to be a serious issue, and **77%** deemed this "very serious".
- Whilst people care, they might not necessarily understand the sources. When told that **80%** of marine litter comes from land **69%** of people were surprised by how high this was. However, upon hearing this, **81%** said that they'd be interested in learning the actions they can take to prevent their waste ending up at sea, and **91%** would like more action to be taken to prevent litter from getting out to sea.

1. Polling undertaken by Diffley Partnership using the Scotpulse online panel, on behalf of Keep Scotland Beautiful



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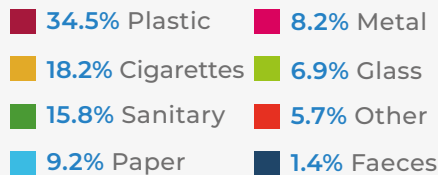
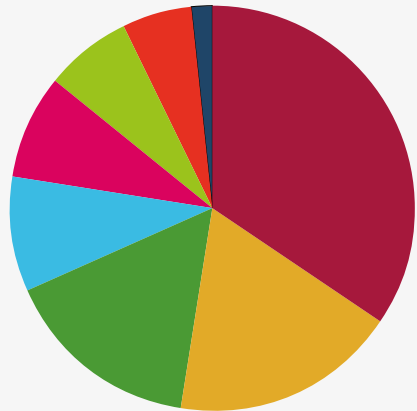
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Report findings

The following is using the data collected from surveys completed across Tayside from August 2021 to May 2022 by Anchor Groups and members of the public.

Material types found



What was involved?

- 3** rivers and tributaries
- 4** local authorities
- 39** surveys
- 3,000** items counted in total



The top five in: River Tay - Aberfeldy

1. Plastic bottles
2. Plastic snack packets
3. Plastic bags
4. Drinks cans
5. Tissues

The top five in: Nytie Burn

1. Plastic bags
2. Plastic snack packets
3. Glass fragments
4. Drinks cans
5. Plastic pieces

The top five in: River Tay - Perth

1. Plastic snack packets
2. Plastic bottles
3. Metal drinks cans
4. Plastic bags
5. Food containers

The top five in: River Tay - Dundee

1. Cigarettes
2. Paper pieces
3. Metal ring pulls
4. Metal caps
5. Metal chain

The top five in: Dighty Water

1. Glass fragments
2. Foil wrappers
3. Paper fragments
4. Plastic bags
5. Plastic drinks caps











The top five in: River Tay - Broughty Ferry

1. Wet wipes
2. Period products
3. Plastic sheeting
4. Fishing line
5. Glass fragments

Key findings

- Cigarettes are at the top of the list and have been counted more than any other item. Through our [Local Environment Audit and Management System \(LEAMS\)](#) smoking related litter (predominantly butts) continues to be the most frequently found item, affecting four out of five high public use areas audited.
- Sewage Related Debris, which includes Wet Wipes and Period Products, are issues in certain areas. A large proportion of this litter can be attributed to two surveys near to Broughty Ferry. We are supporting [Scottish Water's Nature Calls](#) campaign, calling for a ban on wipes containing plastic and encouraging people to make sure they bin their wipes.
- Plastic Pieces, Foil Wrappers and Plastic Snack Packets demonstrate the unsustainable consumption of single use items. Their inclusion in the top 10 list may also be due to additional plastic packaging being used during the pandemic as a means to reduce transmission of the virus. These are also lighter items and could be more likely to blow into waterways and out to sea.
- Items associated with eating and drinking on the go continue to feature heavily in top 10 lists. Many spots along the Tay are popular visitor areas, particularly through lockdown when there were travel and indoor restrictions. It's unsurprising that we're seeing more picnic and food packaging littered. Some of these items, like Plastic Bottles, Glass Fragments and Metal Drinks Cans, we might see decrease with the introduction of the Deposit Return Scheme.

Top 10 littered items

-  Cigarettes
-  Wet wipes
-  Plastic pieces
-  Foil wrappers
-  Period products (inc tampons)
-  Glass fragments
-  Plastic snack packets
-  Plastic bottles
-  Plastic bags (other)
-  Metal drinks cans

Next steps

We are committed to tackling marine litter at source along rivers as part of our support for the [Scottish Government's Marine Litter Strategy](#). We will continue to work with all stakeholders to build on the valuable data gathered for this report as part of the legacy of the first phase of Upstream Battle on the Tay.

The polling demonstrates the significance of public concern about the marine litter problem. Through campaigns like Upstream Battle we can continue to raise awareness of the problem and educate people on how they can prevent their waste entering the environment and inspire action to clean up the litter already making its way to sea.

Upstream Battle is successfully running across two key rivers in Scotland. Each river has its own history, personality, and distinct community. We are continually learning how to adapt our approach to roll-out the campaign across Tayside.

To do this we will:

- Continue to support with our Anchor Groups community led activities in 2022-2023.
- Coordinate a national "Source 2 Sea" Week of Action in September 2022 to highlight the marine litter pathway.
- Continue working with Local Authorities and with local businesses through Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce.
- Pursue further funding opportunities to enable a roll-out of our Upstream Battle Education Programme for schools, young people and educators.

Get in touch

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Thanks to the funders:





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, and protect and enhance the places we care for.



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