

Community Litter Hub

Empowering communities to tackle the litter emergency



Find out how one volunteer group used nudge theory to improve their community.

East Haven Together case study 2

Tell us about yourself and/or group

East Haven Together is a community group on the east coast of Scotland between Carnoustie and Arbroath. In 2013 the village was affected by litter, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour. National Cycle Network 1 had just been extended to run through the village itself and up the coast. Residents wanted to do something about it and following a period of consultation decided on a number of different activities to try and change public behaviour and increase respect for the area.

What was the litter problem you wanted to tackle?

East Haven was impacted by the usual range of littering, dog mess and also the fly-tipping of items. It really was the broken window phenomenon in that the presence of visible litter seemed to be attracting further incidents and increasing anti-social behaviour.

Initially our efforts were focused on picking up the litter. We quickly realised though that we needed to do more. We started to consult with national organisations such as KSB, SEPA, Zero Waste Scotland and our own Local Authority to try and understand more about legislation and how we could reduce and prevent littering.

We attended a training session on nudge theory. Basically, this is about how we can 'nudge' people to change their behaviours. This is now the approach which guides most of our activities.

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What action did you take?

We looked at our whole area and where the main problems were. Although not all litter picking groups are in a position to make wider improvements to the amenity this was something we decided to do. We wanted the public to see that this was a village people cared about and that it should be respected

We therefore established a range of heritage features, interpretation boards and gardens. We also assumed responsibility for the cleaning and maintenance of our bus shelter. We turned our redundant telephone box into an attractive defibrillator unit.

Other strategies to give people a 'nudge' to change their behaviour included;

- Providing dog share stations. Asking people leave a bag, share a bag and clean up after their dogs.
- Painting all the public litter bins every year. When people stop and ask why the Local Authority aren't maintaining them we tell them how proud we are of our village and how we feel it is important for us the public to look after our own waste bins. We also empty them on hot busy days in the summer to prevent escape of litter. The waste is held in a temporary store out of sight of visitors.
- Engaging with visitors to talk about reducing the amount of waste we produce and find better ways of recycling it.
- Established a public litter share station. People can access pickers and bags and do some litter picking of their own whilst they are visiting the area
- We have held various campaigns to raise awareness about different litter types. e.g cigarette butts, dog poo, food and drink containers
- We extended our work outside the village into nearby communities to encourage others to become involved and set up their own groups. We maintain strong connections with other groups across Angus.

Established a productive working relationship with our Local Authority, All Local Authorities are now impacted by budget cuts so good partnership working with communities enables best use to be made of their resources and our volunteer time.

- We became involved in data collection in 2015. This enabled us to identify litter types and start to consider where it was coming from. This not only helps to guide campaigns but also to trace some litter back to source.

Why did you choose to take this particular action?

We realised early on that although cleaning up litter was really important it was equally important to try and prevent it.

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What was the outcome?

We have had lots of success stories over years and are very proud that our efforts have really reduced the amount of litter found in East Haven.

Generally, the public are now much more respectful and people know that if you visit East Haven, you really have to leave nothing but footprints.

We have been particularly encouraged over the last two years to notice an increase in visitors over the summer who not only bring a bag to take their waste home but bring a separate bag for items which can be recycled.

It is clear that many people now take as much pride as we do in looking after the area and really value the time they spend in East Haven. Children love the litter share station and can't wait to get hold of a litter picker to see what they can find on the beach!

Were there any other benefits to your action?

The village charity East Haven Together has received several awards in recognition of the work undertaken to look after the local environment. This helps the charity to evidence that we are achieving on our charitable purpose and aims. It has also helped when applying for grant funding to purchase litter picking equipment. We have hosted a Keep Scotland Beautiful litter hub and also obtained funding from Sustrans and local businesses in support of our work. In 2019 we obtained a large grant to purchase an All-Terrain-Vehicle to lift heavy marine litter from the beach.

Do you have any advice to others in a similar situation?

The main thing to remember is that 'every action counts and makes a difference'. If you want to maintain a clean-up initiative in the long term though you may wish to explore some additional strategies to try and reduce littering and maintain volunteer motivation.

If you have any questions, require any more information or need any assistance regarding communications for the Community Litter Hub, please email:

press@keepscotlandbeautiful.org.

If you have any questions or would like more information on the Community Litter Hub itself, please email:

NLFS@keepscotlandbeautiful.org.

