



Upstream[®]

Battle

Citizen Science Report

20
YEARS



Keep Scotland
Beautiful

Your charity for Scotland's environment

Upstream Battle®

Upstream Battle is our ambitious, award winning marine litter campaign that we launched in 2018. With 80% of marine litter originating from land, the campaign draws attention to the journey of litter from source to sea, focusing on the iconic River Clyde and its 38 tributaries.

We have successfully brought together public, private and third sector organisations with communities, schools and residents to raise awareness of the problem, gather data on the issue and inspire people to take action in their community.

Over the last 18 months, we have built local capacity for community action by recruiting and training 16 'Anchor Groups' (a new network of supporters).

Each Anchor Group adopted a stretch of waterway and the members of the group become local ambassadors for the campaign. We supported the groups to use our citizen science approach to survey and litter pick up and down the Clyde.



Scottish Resources
AWARDS
WINNER



Citizen Science

We used a citizen science approach to gather data on the scale of the problem at a community level. Our aim was to capture a snapshot of litter in the Clyde, on its banks and along its tributaries to help understand complex littering behaviours.

We provided each Anchor Group with free specialist training, equipping them with the skills to undertake an in-depth litter survey, explore the behaviours underpinning littering and understand how to create their own local litter prevention project.



By providing the tools and support to complete surveys we have empowered communities, schools and individuals to take ownership of their local issues. These surveys have helped individuals recognise and understand their local littering problem, enabled them to engage with relevant stakeholders and provided specific information to enable bespoke campaigns to be created which deal with the specific behaviours.



A snapshot of litter on the Clyde



The top five in: River Clyde (South bank)

1. Cigarettes
2. Wet wipes
3. Other paper items
4. Fishing line
5. Plastic pieces

The top five in: White Cart

1. Plastic snack packets
2. Unbagged faeces
3. Plastic pieces
4. Drink cans
5. Cigarettes

The top five in: River Clyde (upstream)

1. Plastic bottles
2. Drink cans
3. Plastic snack packets
4. Glass bottles
5. Plastic containers

The top five in: Lady Burn

1. Plastic snack packets
2. Other plastic
3. Plastic shopping bags
4. Drinks cans
5. Plastic bottles

The top five in: Allander water

1. Glass fragments
2. Plastic snack packets
3. Plastic pieces
4. Foil wrappers
5. Clothing

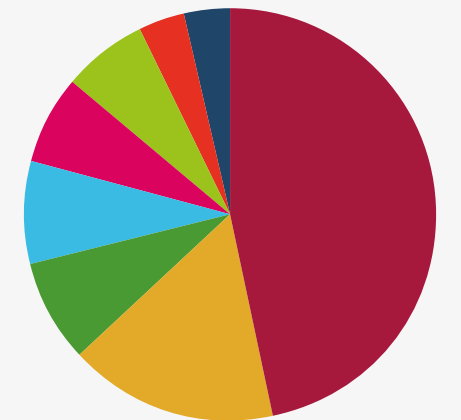
The top five in: River Avon

1. Plastic snack packets
2. Drink cans
3. Plastic bottles
4. Plastic pieces
5. Plastic food containers

What was involved?

- 11 rivers and tributaries
- 8 local authorities
- 50 surveys
- 16 Anchor Groups











Material types found



Key findings

- Plastic wrappers were the most common type of litter found in each survey. These lighter plastic items are more likely to be blown into our rivers than other types of litter.
- Cigarette litter was a reoccurring problem. It was the 4th most common type of litter found and made up 8% of all litter recorded.
- Flytipping was another problem. Items including wood boards, tyres and construction material were frequently noted, highlighting another challenging behaviour.
- More than 60% of sites had an issue with dog fouling. Bagged dog poo was more common than unbagged – something we also found in our recent #TurdTag campaign.
- Sewage related debris was an issue in some areas. A survey at Dumbarton Foreshore found over 700 cotton buds whilst along the Kelvin one survey found almost 400 wet wipes.
- Finally, the surveys found more than twice the number of littered items downstream compared to upstream. This would indicate that litter is travelling down our rivers and therefore inevitably ending up in our seas.

Top 10 littered items

-  Plastic snack packets
-  Plastic pieces
-  Cotton buds
-  Cigarettes
-  Wet wipes
-  Plastic caps
-  Glass fragments
-  Plastic cutlery
-  Plastic bottles
-  Drink cans



In September we organised a 'Week of Action' and encouraged everyone to take part in a litter pick and complete our surveys. We also hosted a 'weird and wonderful' competition asking individuals to send in their odd littered finds, our winner was Friends of the Calder that found old cassette tapes.

What happens next?

We are committed to tackling marine litter at source and will 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.

To do this we will:

- Continue to work with our incredible Anchor Groups and other partners in the Clyde Valley to challenge littering behaviours and work towards preventing litter ending up in the sea.
- Share this report and findings with local authorities and relevant stakeholders to encourage continued collaborative action to tackle this issue generally, as well as specific local issues.
- Work collaboratively across all sectors to drive innovative approaches to tackling marine litter, and through local and national campaigns try and change behaviours and protect the coasts and waters around Scotland for good.

Get in touch

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We support the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keep Scotland Beautiful is the charity that campaigns, acts and educates on a range of local, national and global environmental 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 sustainable.



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