

New marine strategy launched on Portobello Beach



Plans to tackle the problem of marine litter were launched on Portobello Beach yesterday by Scotland's Environment Secretary Richard Lochhead.

Costing Scotland £16.8 million every year, marine litter impacts on our environment, wildlife, industry and tourism. A *Marine Litter Strategy for Scotland* details the scale of the problem and almost 40 new actions to minimise coastal and marine litter.

It reveals:

- The majority of litter found on Scotland's beaches and seas is made up of plastics, which present a significant risk for marine wildlife
- Marine litter is a significant issue for the fishing industry – vessels participating in the Fishing for Litter initiative landed over 374 tonnes of litter between 2011-14 and it is estimated that the problem costs every vessel in the Scottish fleet as much as £17,000 annually
- We are already doing a lot in partnership with stakeholders including KIMO, Marine Conservation Society and Keep Scotland Beautiful but are seeking to do more and improve co-ordination of projects
- Efforts will be focussed not only on clearing up litter that has already entered the marine environment but also on preventing it from ending up there in the first place – 80 per cent of marine litter is thought to have been dropped on land



Launching the strategy Environment Secretary Richard Lochhead said:

“Scotland’s marine environment is one of our greatest assets and it is in everyone’s interests to preserve it. Marine litter is a significant problem and a staggering amount of discarded materials – particularly plastics – wash up on our beaches every single day.

“I want this to change. It is dangerous for our marine wildlife, is damaging and costly for our fishing fleet and is an unnecessary blight on our wonderful beaches, which are enjoyed by thousands of visitors from home and abroad. Great work is being done by initiatives like Fishing for Litter and beach clean ups – but we can all do so much more. I hope that everyone sits up and listens to these startling statistics on the marine litter problem and takes responsibility for disposing of litter in the proper way to prevent its negative impact on our seas and coastlines.”

Scotland Programme Manager for the Marine Conservation Society Calum Duncan said:

“Through our Beachwatch project, the biggest of its kind in Europe and now in its 21st year, thousands of Marine Conservation Society citizen scientists have not only been cleaning their beaches but also gathering proof of the increasing trend in marine litter, bringing into stark focus the scale of the problem. We are therefore pleased to see the Scottish Government’s proactive approach to strategically tackle marine litter. The strategy incorporates some MCS recommendations such as extending Port Waste Reception Facilities to include fishing vessels, expansion of the KIMO Fishing for Litter initiative, encouraging alternatives to plastic micro beads in personal care products and highlighting

the need to tackle sources of sewage related debris. The Scottish marine litter strategy provides a great opportunity to enhance education and awareness, as well as providing the tools and input to facilitate change. Marine litter is a wasted resource, and we can all play a part in reducing it.”

Keep Scotland Beautiful Chief Executive Derek Robertson said:

“For too long, we as a nation have turned a blind eye to our litter problems, both inland and in the marine and coastal environment, the Marine Litter Strategy is a significant milestone in our fight-back against the problem. Keep Scotland Beautiful has been instrumental in co-ordinating the battle against litter for 50 years, and most recently through its Clean Up Scotland campaign, in which over 250,000 volunteer actions have been taken to tackle litter since 2013.

“The charity believes the Strategy has a major role to play in bringing Government, businesses, charities and individuals together to build a greater sense of pride in our coastal communities through education, enforcement and improved litter prevention activities and innovative infrastructure. We look forward to working co-operatively to ensure the implementation of the Strategy is successful – helping us make Scotland the cleanest country in Europe”.

Photos courtesy of The Scottish Government