

Subject: Let's make Scotland's seas litter free

Dear Nikki

I'm writing to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on a draft Scottish marine litter strategy. I wish to see a marine litter strategy introduced in Scotland as I believe that it is an important step in reducing pollution in our seas.

Last year I spent a week taking part in a British Conservation Trust Volunteers' beach sweep week. I was horrified by the amount of litter we pick up, counted, categorised and weighed litter, collecting an whopping 2,007 items for every kilometre of beach surveyed. The litter is unsightly, some of it is dangerous for people (particularly children) and it is killing birds and sea mammals who ingest pieces of plastic and prevent them from feeding.

Question 26: I agree with the Marine Conservation Society's proposal that Option 3 would best deliver a marine litter strategy. If a strategy is to make a real difference to this problem the Scottish Government must accept that money will have to be spent. Option 4 focuses on delivering some elements of the strategy using the resources that already exist. If the problem has not been tackled sufficiently already with resources / funding / staff that currently exist (and these are mostly within the charity sector), it is unlikely that simply grouping these resources together under a strategy will make a significant difference to future progress. Funding, staff and resources will have to be provided to make the strategy work effectively, and this will only be done through Option 3.

I believe that essential elements for Option 3 should include: a lead authority identified and funding provided for a dedicated policy officer; funding for high profile campaigns that would have a direct impact on reducing litter from source, e.g. Bag it and Bin it; Scotland-wide co-ordinated campaigns, rather than the many and varied localised campaigns that exist at the moment; baseline data will be essential to monitoring future progress of the strategy, and a Government-led data collection strategy would be required. Successfully tackling our marine litter problem through a strategy would demonstrate best practise and show what was possible to the UK and other EU countries, and influence further action.

Questions 7-9: I further believe that the marine litter strategy and the national litter strategy must link together to ensure a comprehensive approach to tackling the litter problem, on land and at sea, and the two strategies together must ensure there are no gaps in responsibility or action.

Questions 10-13: I understand that MCS has identified a possible error in the consultation document with regard to Strategic Direction 2. I agree with MCS' assertion that all the Existing Actions listed under Strategic Direction 2 (p17) should in fact be listed under Possible Actions. When such a correction has been made, the actions should then be considered important enough to be put in place.

Questions 14-17: Similarly, I agree that under Strategic Direction 3, points 2 and 3 in the list of Existing Actions (p18) should also in fact be listed under Possible Actions. Again, when such a correction has been made, these actions should then be considered important enough to be put in place.

I also suggest the government puts pressure on cotton wool bud manufacturers to switch to using paper sticks instead of plastic. We were finding up to 400 cotton wool buds in a 100-metre stretch of beach which had been flushed down toilets and then get washed out to sea with the sewage.

Many thanks

Helen McInnes