



# YEAR OF COASTS AND WATERS 20/21 EVALUATION SUMMARY

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November 2022

# THE YEAR OF COASTS AND WATERS 20/21 IN NUMBERS

Despite the impact of Covid-19, the Year of Coasts and Waters exceeded targets, delivering activity in communities across Scotland and playing an important part in recovery of the events, tourism and associated sectors. Success can be reported against the 5 key objectives:



## Promotion

### 3.7bn Media Reach

3,662 pieces of media coverage generated a reach of c.3.7 billion worldwide

### 196.4m Reach

Core and aligned marketing campaigns reached 196.4 million

### Event Media Coverage

80% of supported events reported increased media coverage

### Increased Awareness

66% of funded event attendees were aware the event was part of YCW

### Award-winning

Water Wellness Campaign won Gold at CIPR Pride Awards 2022



## Celebration

### £868K Events Funding

Total invested by EventScotland in events via Themed Year Open, International and SERF funding programmes

### 110 YCW Events Delivered

28 Funded and 82 Partner Events took place

### Scotland Wide

All 32 Local Authorities hosted YCW events

### Safe Event Delivery

All events delivered successfully within the relevant Covid-19 guidance

### Youth and Community

£390K invested by YouthLink Scotland, NatureScot and HES in programmes to support youth and community engagement



## Participation

### 1.1m attended 28 events

28 funded events attracted 702K in-person and 389K digital attendances

### Broadened Engagement

243K people took part in event activities on, in or by the water

### Increased Appreciation

79% of funded event attendees said they will appreciate Scotland's coasts and waters more

### Increased Interest

67% of funded event attendees said they will get out by, on or in the water more

### Environmental Impact

63% of funded event attendees plan to take a more active role in the preservation of our coasts and waters and/or marine environment



## Collaboration

### Effective Partnerships

30+ Steering and Working Group partners directly involved in shaping the year

### 122K Engagements

Individual uses of hashtags #YCW2020 and #YCW2021

### Future Partnerships

97% of our funded event partners would take part in another Themed Year

### Catalyst for Collaboration

18 DMOs and partners created the West Coast Waters campaign, reaching c.2 million and creating a legacy of partnership working

### Must Sea Scotland

Sail Scotland, Diageo and NTS created eight 360 VR videos generating 524K views



## Industry Engagement

### VS Business Barometer

Pre 2020, 69% of tourism businesses were aware of YCW / 31% were already engaged in activity / 80% of those not already engaged were considering it

### 18,000 Views

Views of the online Industry Toolkit

### 76 Industry Presentations

76 presentations engaged at least 2,000 industry attendees

### 896 Logo Downloads

731 English and 165 Gaelic logos downloaded to support partner activity

### Case Studies

11 case studies and 18 interviews were published on [visitscotland.org](https://visitscotland.org), generating 7K+ page views



## Sustainable Event Delivery

**Positive Impact** - 100% of events said that being part of the year had a positive impact on the way they will work in future

**Higher Priority** - 93% were encouraged to think more about sustainable events management

**New Processes** - 68% implemented a new activity or process in managing their environmental impacts

# INTRODUCTION

2020 was designated as a year in which Scotland's Coasts and Waters would be showcased and celebrated with a programme of activity designed to support the nation's tourism and events sectors. The Year of Coasts and Waters 2020 (YCW) set out to encourage responsible engagement with our coasts and waters as well as participation in the many experiences associated with them. The impact of Covid-19 severely impacted the planned delivery of YCW.

However, given the significant momentum and engagement gained in the planning, promotion, and early delivery stages of the project, the decision was made to roll YCW into and across 2021. This allowed partners to continue to work together and support each other through a global pandemic and (despite many challenges and delays) deliver impressive results. The project exceeded many of its pre-pandemic objectives and targets and delivered activity in communities across all 32 Local Authorities.



Skerryvore at Coastal Connections – part of Celtic Connections 2020 ©Gaelle Beri



Elie Harbour, Leven

# GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

A Steering Group, chaired by VisitScotland, set the strategic plan for YCW, and oversaw its delivery. The strategic plan was approved by the then Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Fiona Hyslop MSP in October 2018. The Steering Group included senior representatives from National Lottery Heritage Fund, Museums Galleries Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Historic Environment Scotland, Marine Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Sail Scotland, Scottish Canals, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Government, Scottish Water, NatureScot, Scottish Tourism Alliance, and VisitScotland/EventScotland.

The Steering Group was supported by an active Working Group, set up to operate at a delivery level and ensure that programmes,

promotions, and events were delivered. Membership included representatives of the organisations on the Steering Group plus additional members as identified by the Steering or Working Group: ASVA; CalMac; Crown Estates; Cruise Scotland; Festivals Edinburgh; Forestry Land Scotland; Interface; Keep Scotland Beautiful; Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park; Marine Conservation Society; Marine Scotland; Northern Lighthouse Board; Paths for All; RNLI; Royal Navy; RSPB Scotland; Scotland Food and Drink; Seafood Scotland; Society of Antiquaries of Scotland; The Helix/Falkirk Community Trust; West Coast Marine Tourism; Wild Scotland; Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park.



🔍 Pucks Glen, Dunoon



🔍 Loch Etive, Argyll & Bute





## SCOPE OF THE YEAR

Central to the success of any Themed Year is selecting a theme that every part of the country can embrace. YCW celebrated the strength of Scotland's diverse coastal and water-based assets, shining a spotlight on our islands, hugely varied coastline and rich offering of inland waters in both rural and urban settings. YCW was designed to be inclusive, embracing a wide range of activity and content aligned to the theme of the year with a focus on widening awareness, engagement, and participation.

The visitor opportunity in terms of experiences and events was broadly presented across four cross cutting strands:

1. Our Natural Environment and Wildlife
2. Our Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage
3. Activities and Adventure
4. Food and Drink

The remit of YCW encompassed all aspects of our tourism offering and visitor experience in relation to coasts and waters, with a focus on unique, authentic experiences and sustainable tourism.

Whilst a promotional and collaborative platform was created for YCW to facilitate the broadest opportunity for engagement, prioritisation of core YCW resources were directed to activity that was most likely to drive national and international profile, tourism impact and participation (although this was largely focussed domestically from March 2020 in line with wider Covid-19 strategies). The scope of YCW's activities also allowed partners to work in closer collaboration to raise the profile of key topics and sectors that rely on and are associated with our coasts and waters (for example water safety and marine conservation) through an integrated communications approach.

Environmentally sustainable principles and practices underpinned the design and delivery of all aspects of activity, with tangible results in terms of events industry development as well as audience response.

# AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The following Aim and Objectives were set out in the YCW Strategic Plan (October 2018).

## Overarching Aim

The Year of Coasts and Waters 2020 will sustain and build upon the momentum of the preceding Themed Years to spotlight, celebrate and promote opportunities to experience and enjoy Scotland's unrivalled coasts and waters, encouraging responsible engagement and participation from the people of Scotland and our visitors.

## Objectives

**Promotion** - raise the profile of Scotland nationally and internationally, showcasing our coasts and waters with a co-ordinated marketing and communications programme

**Celebration** - encourage and develop opportunities for the celebration of the themes of the year within the tourism and events sectors

**Collaboration** - encourage collaborative working between the sectors represented by YCW themes and wider tourism sector

**Participation** - inspire the people of Scotland and our visitors to participate in activity developed for and in response to YCW, with particular emphasis on attracting new audiences and spreading engagement across the country

**Industry Engagement** - communicate with a wide range of businesses in tourism and other relevant sectors in order to help them recognise the opportunities presented by YCW and capitalise on those opportunities by developing new products and services and growing existing business



The aim, objectives and evaluation framework were not adjusted for the 2021 rollover. **Despite the restricted operating conditions and challenges, YCW still met and surpassed many of its original targets. Summary results are indicated below.**

# SUMMARY RESULTS

## Objective 1: Promotion

The promotional reach of YCW was vast, smashing targets and providing an effective platform for the widest range of partners to utilise to their advantage.

In terms of overall media impact, a total estimated **media reach of 3.778 billion was generated via 3,662 pieces of YCW related media coverage**, with **more than 90% being positive in tone** and spanning **UK, European, US and Chinese press**. In addition, VisitScotland's **YCW Marketing Activity is estimated to have reached a total of 196.4 million across VS markets**.

Campaigns included a partnership with **National Geographic** showcasing YCW across UK and European markets, a Scotland facing **Water Wellness Campaign** during Covid-19 and a partnership campaign with **Northlink** promoting Shetland.

Facilitating collaboration and cross-promotion is a central aspect of the Themed Years approach. The **YCW industry toolkit**

was well used by a diverse range of partners, generating **18,000 page views**. Toolkit resources included advice, key messages, free to use images, campaign logos and case studies. Many partners used and shared the toolkit and messaging. They include HES who created a bespoke YCW landing page featuring all HES visitor sites by region by the water, as well as producing [themed blogs](#), an online '[Scotland's Coasts](#)' exhibition and a YCW retail range.

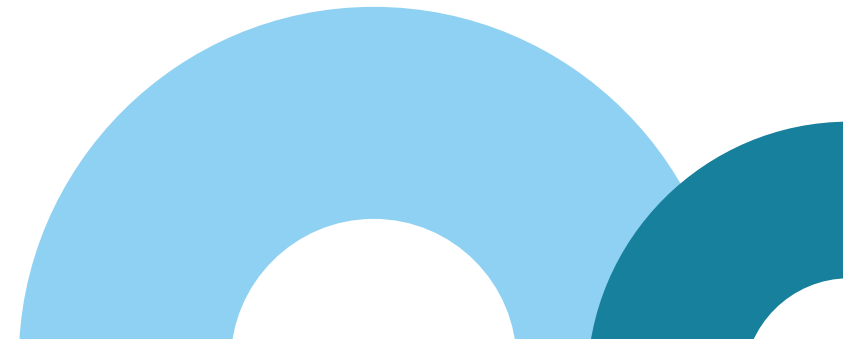
From the perspective of supported events, and further demonstrating the value of the coordinated promotional campaign:

- **80% of supported events** stated that being part of YCW led to **increased media coverage** for their existing events
- **66% of funded event attendees** were aware the event was part of the nationwide YCW campaign

Event organisers highlighted the power of being part of the Themed Year, which allowed them to grab attention and maximise their own promotional potential:

***"It allowed us to confidentially approach, for example, BBC Radio which in turn broadcast 10 (of our) performances as part of a special series of broadcast premiere performances."***

***"Visitors (were) aware of YCW and recognised the 'brand' which increased confidence in visiting the exhibition."***



# SUMMARY RESULTS

## Objective 2: Celebration

Against the odds, and in the context of continually shifting Covid-19 restrictions, a rich and varied celebratory programme was delivered for YCW. The programme of activity included funded and partner events as well as a wider range of projects and campaigns created in celebration of, or aligned to, YCW. These were led by multiple partners across the whole of Scotland. The shared perseverance and determination of partners ensured that the opportunity that YCW presented was maximised.

**Across the YCW Funded and Partner event programmes 110 events were eventually delivered** with activity taking place in all **32 of Scotland's Local Authorities**. Of the 36 events initially awarded funding support through the YCW Open Events Fund, 28 were delivered across 26 local authority regions. A further **174 events registered as Partner Events across 30 local authorities, with 82 events able to go ahead**. All events were run safely with appropriate measures in place to respond to Covid-19 restrictions.

The programme was **diverse and inclusive** launching in January 2020 with a special **Coastal Connections Day at Celtic Connections** and continuing with the successful delivery of YCW programme at **StAnza: Scotland's Poetry Festival** before all events were halted in March 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions. After much work to re-shape and re-plan, the live events programme was able to resume in April 2021, with the concentration of activity taking place from July 2021 onwards. From the spectacle of the 10-metre sea-goddess (**Vision Mechanics' STORM**) who toured across 11 local authorities, to the **Isle Martin Seaweed Festival** showcasing an uninhabited island in the Summer Isles, to **RowAround Scotland** which involved rowers from teenagers to 80+ circumnavigating the Scottish coastline, the events programme engaged communities and visitors across the whole of Scotland.

In addition to the funding opportunities provided by the YCW core budget, a range of additional and aligned funding opportunities were established to support the creation of a rich, celebratory YCW programme.



Q Vision Mechanics Storm



# SUMMARY RESULTS

## Objective 2: Celebration (continued)

Additional and aligned funding opportunities included:

- **YouthLink Scotland's** £45K programme of YCW Micro Local Area Grants
- **NatureScot's** £150K Plunge In! Coasts and Waters Community Fund which funded 25 new projects to help communities mark YCW
- **National Lottery Heritage Fund's** support for five YCW projects, including Dynamic Earth's immersive exhibition about our deep-sea marine life
- **Historic Environment Scotland's** Coasts and Waters Heritage Fund, which awarded £194,349 to 18 projects with the aim of supporting community efforts to protect, promote and engage with Scotland's coastal or waterway heritage
- **Museums Galleries Scotland's** support for several YCW aligned projects, including those led by the Scottish Maritime and Elgin Museums

- **EventScotland's** additional £107K through the International Programme to support some of Scotland's well-established festivals to respond directly to YCW with special events and programming
- **Scotland's Events Recovery Fund**, which provided help with the costs of integrating Covid-19 specific health and safety measures. The majority of YCW Open Fund grantees (19/28 events) utilised this support with investments totalling just over £115K

In developing the YCW celebratory events programme, **wider events industry development priorities were also advanced.** YCW brought together funded events into an effective cohort; sharing knowledge, skills and experience, particularly around sustainable event delivery. Sustainable principles were embedded within all funded events contracts and in how the programme

was designed and managed. Formal feedback from event partners demonstrated that being part of YCW inspired positive legacies in terms of responsible events delivery:

- **100%** said that being part of YCW will have a positive impact on the way they will work in future
- **93%** reported that YCW encouraged them to think more about sustainable events management
- **68%** implemented a new activity or process in managing environmental impacts as a result of YCW
- **97%** of our funded events partners said they would take part in another Themed Year



# SUMMARY RESULTS

## Objective 3: Participation

**The YCW Open Fund programme more than met expectations in terms of attendances and participation** with almost 1.1m people (1,091,182) attending a funded event in-person or online. This is a significant achievement, particularly given the changing and restricted context that events were planned, re-planned and delivered within. There was a total of 702,215 in-person and 388,967 digital attendances across the 28 YCW funded events (with a number of events pivoting to online and hybrid delivery formats in response to the challenges of Covid-19).

One of the objectives shared by YCW partners was to encourage more people to get involved with activities and experiences directly on, in or by the water. Of the 702,215 in-person attendances, a huge 243,072 (35%) took part in events on, in or by the water.

In addition to excellent engagement and promotional results, the **YCW events also delivered well against our key priorities for the year in terms of promoting responsible engagement with our coasts and waters to the public.**

After attending supported events:

- **79%** of attendees said that they will appreciate Scotland's coasts and waters more
- **67%** said they will go on to find more opportunities to get out by, on or in the water
- **63%** said they will take a more active role in the preservation of our coasts and waters and/or marine environment

Events organisers also reported that they expanded and diversified their audiences:

***“Being part of the (YCW) brand gave the project kudos, increasing (our) profile within the industry and helped us reach a more diverse audience”***

***“Higher profile, association with a recognised and credible brand/organisation/campaign and hashtags etc. gave the event further marketing and audience reach”***



# SUMMARY RESULTS

## Objective 4: Collaboration

The Steering and Working Group membership represented more than 30 organisations. The groups brought together interests across tourism, events, heritage and the environment resulting in a valuable exchange of knowledge and a widening of networks which benefited participants, the delivery of the Themed Year and provided a legacy for future working.

Below are some examples to demonstrate the range of partners involved in the delivery of collaborative work as part of the Themed Year:

- VisitScotland teamed up with **Scottish Water** to promote the Your Water Your Life campaign, encouraging less plastic bottle use. Co-branded reusable water bottles were also created for gifting to event attendees
- **NatureScot** and **Fèis Rois** devised the In Tune with Nature competition to inspire people to connect with nature through music. 12 winners received a £500 cash prize along with the opportunity to collaborate with a professional filmmaker to make a film on the National Nature Reserve which inspired their music
- **HES** developed a partnership with the **Northern Lighthouse Board** to update existing listed building records for lighthouses and explore unlisted lighthouses to determine if they meet the criteria to become listed
- **RSPB Scotland** included a 'Coasts and Waters' category in its Nature of Scotland Awards, which celebrated those working hard to maintain Scotland's unique wildlife and natural environment
- **Keep Scotland Beautiful's** YCW activities included the Pocket Garden competition with a YCW theme, as well as YCW theming of their Beach Awards
- **The Marine Conservation Society** teamed up with **BBC Springwatch** to promote YCW
- **National Theatre of Scotland** worked with **CalMac** for the first time as staging partners for the award-winning Carry Me Home: A Ferry Tale
- Launch! on the Sea with Scotland's Lifeboats saw filmmakers from **Screen Argyll** bring film from the archives of the **RNLI** to life
- YCW was the catalyst for two successful collaborative marketing campaigns supported by VisitScotland Growth Fund: **West Coast Waters bought together 18 DMO's and partners** promoting the west coast collaboratively and creating a legacy of partnership working; **Sail Scotland's** campaign – **Must Sea Scotland** - was delivered in partnership with **Diageo** and the **National Trust for Scotland**
- Demonstrating the strength of cross-promotion, there were over **122K individual uses of the hashtags #YCW2020 and #YCW2021**



## SUMMARY RESULTS

### Objective 4: Collaboration (continued)

Alongside the Steering and Working Groups, the cohort of funded events was brought together in person and online for discussion, workshops and seminars. Feedback underlined how valuable this collaborative approach was for participants:

***“Being part of a Themed Year offered our project a variety of benefits. Through the YCW development events hosted by EventScotland we were able to meet additional partners who wanted to work together to deliver activities.”***

***“The support we received at the start of the Themed Year was a great grounding for our planning: attending the workshop at the National Museum of Scotland and the Scottish Parliament reception helped us to make long-lasting connections that continued throughout the project... And the further support during the pandemic offered through the Themed Years was also helpful and clarifying. I attended the Themed Year workshop online and listening to the experience of others, I felt very emotional about the fact that we weren’t alone. We of course were in close contact with the EventScotland team, but to hear from others in similar positions who had perhaps gone through so much to make their project happen or had taken a difficult decision not to continue, it was so useful.”***



🔍 Paddle boarding at Ganavan Bay

***“It has been fantastic for the organisation to feel connected to a wider programme of events... We explored new ideas such as more outdoor events, that will benefit us next year and developed new skills within our team. It also helped us to leverage funding from other sources – e.g., from companies that wanted the association or were attracted by the increased media potential.”***



# SUMMARY RESULTS

## Objective 5: Industry Engagement

YCW communicated with a wide range of businesses in tourism and other relevant sectors in order to help them recognise and capitalise the opportunities presented by YCW. Prior to the start of YCW VisitScotland's Business Barometer from Q4 2019 showed very positive indicators: **69% of tourism businesses were aware of YCW / 31% were already engaged in activity / 80% of those not already engaged were considering it.** (The Business Barometer was not repeated in 20/21 as a result of Covid-19).

The YCW team delivered **76 industry presentations, reaching more than 2,000** industry colleagues between September 2018 and March 2020. This activity included the full programme launch which took place at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh in Nov 2019 with over 250 industry colleagues attending. The call to action at all industry events was for attendees to explore the industry

toolkit and by the end of 2021, there had been **18K toolkit views, generating 896 logo downloads (731 in English and 165 in Gaelic)** demonstrating active industry engagement with the collateral and assets.

**11 case studies** were created in 2021 to showcase the ways in which stakeholders and the wider industry engaged with and benefited from YCW, achieving more than 2K page views on visitscotland.org. A further **18 'Day in the Life' interviews** were published across 2020 and 2021 to highlight those who work, live and have a passion for our coasts and waters, attracting 5K page views. These profiled industry partners ranging from **The Coig** and **Moffat SUP Hire** to **Jacobite Cruises** and **Clydeside Distillery**.

The impact of the Themed Year does not end when the year finishes. VisitScotland's Marine and Coastal Tourism Lead, David Adams McGilp highlights the ongoing impacts that YCW has generated in terms of

Marine tourism:

***"There can be no doubt that YCW20/21 influenced economic development strategy and activity across Scotland. Maritime resources have been significant elements in local development plans for some decades, but the market appeal and environmentally sensitive nature of sea-borne, freshwater and shore-based activities have been brought into sharp focus by two years of community engagement and media exposure.... Capital investments are in the pipeline across Scotland. Harbour extensions, community-scale marina developments, step-ashore facilities in town centres and remote settlements; recreation routes and itinerary planning aids; and event and festival venues are being developed to meet the demands of consumers motivated by the extended YCW20/21 programme."***

## KEY LEARNINGS

### **Impact of Themed Years for industry development priorities**

Promoting sustainability was at the heart of YCW. It was woven into every part of the campaign from the development of the theme, core messaging, funding criteria and campaign activity. Activity that was delivered encouraged visitors and industry alike to think more about sustainability and encouraged many to make positive changes.

### **Importance of collective action to aid recovery**

The basic premise of Themed Years is about harnessing the power of partnerships and collaboration for mutual benefit. The decision to roll YCW from 2020 into 2021 ensured that collective action was harnessed as a positive response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Importance of effective planning and preparation**

YCW2020 was to be the first Themed Year produced under the new three-year delivery model. The work undertaken across 2018 and 2019 ensured that industry engagement was optimised and YCW was off to a strong start in 2020. This same strong engagement ensured that by rolling YCW into 2021, the opportunity was maximised as a tool for recovery.

### **Importance of bringing together partners across sectors**

YCW brought together interests across tourism, events, heritage, the environment and more. It provided the impetus for many new creative ideas and products, aiding collaboration and providing direction both in terms of creative programming and branding.



### **Impact of Themed Years in contributing to wider Scottish Government strategies**

YCW has contributed to Scotland's vision to create a 'wellbeing economy'. It has encouraged innovation, collaboration, skills development and knowledge sharing. It has spread the benefit to communities across the whole of Scotland, supporting activity that is accessible to all and encouraging responsible tourism and events delivery.