

CASE STUDY TIMELINE

THE COTTON BUD PROJECT

2013 - 2020

2013 FIDRA STARTED THE COTTON BUD PROJECT

Cotton buds were littering the coasts of south east Scotland and Fidra began researching the scale and impacts of plastic stemmed cotton buds on the environment.

2014 WEBSITE LAUNCHED

Providing a platform for increasing public, industry and government engagement and building awareness of the issue

2014 SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S MARINE LITTER STRATEGY

Marine Litter Strategy underscored the appetite for change at a Scottish Level, with cotton buds being highlighted as a key target within the strategy document

2014 EXTENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW BY DR CLARE CAVERS

By collating all the available scientific evidence on the presence, impact and current and proposed solutions on plastic cotton bud stem pollution, Fidra was able to build a clear picture of the issue.

2014 INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT BEGAN

Industry engagement began with contacting leading retailer Johnson & Johnson, followed by Waitrose and others such as Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Lidl, Morrisons, Aldi, Superdrug and Boots UK

2014 ENGAGED WITH SCOTTISH WATER

Completed site visits and in depth discussions around the issue of plastic cotton buds

2015 WE CREATED THE GOOD BUDDY LIST

This list was created to publicly highlight cotton bud brands and retailers that were committed to changing from plastic to paper and leading the way with biodegradable paper alternatives to plastic. Dates were assigned to the retailer commitments, so it was possible to exert the necessary pressure when following up rather than leaving it open-ended.

2016 MCS BEACHWATCH DATA

For the 2nd year running, plastic cotton bud stems were found to be in the top 10 most commonly found items during the Marine Conservation Society's annual beach clean with 23.7 cotton buds per every 100m of beach surveyed.

2016 MORE INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT AND INCREASED PUBLIC AWARENESS

By the end of 2016, 9 more retailers had joined the Good Buddy List including; Morrisons, Asda, Tesco, Lidl, Aldi, Superdrug and Sainsburys.

2016 OUR FIRST GOOD BUDDIES WERE PUBLISHED

Waitrose and Johnson & Johnson were the first 2 retailers to commit to phasing out plastic stemmed cotton buds following 2 years of collaborative dialogue with Fidra.

2016 38 DEGREES PETITION

150,000 people signed a 38 Degrees petition, which helped push remaining retailers, such as Wilko, to join those who had already committed

2017-2018 MICROBEAD BAN SETS PRECEDENT

Consultation and subsequent ban by UK government set a precedent for legislation controlling unnecessary plastic use, illustrated industry action could only go so far in reducing pollution and aided in clarifying terminology surrounding suitable alternatives to conventional plastics.

2017 JOHNSON AND JOHNSON PAPER COTTON BUDS HIT THE SHELVES

In February, Fidra received their very own package of paper stemmed cotton buds. In March, the product was on the supermarket shelves.

2018 - JANUARY SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PROPOSES LEGISLATION

Fidra's engagement with Scottish Government and Marine Scotland helped lead to the announcement that Scottish Government intend to ban the sale and manufacture of plastic stemmed cotton buds in Scotland.

2018 BEGAN DEVELOPING CASE STUDIES

Case studies were developed with key industry stakeholders to highlight the successful engagement with Fidra and outline the decision making process and logistical steps that were taken to change from paper to plastic.

APRIL - 2018 UK GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCE CONSULTATION

Theresa May announces that UK government intends to consult on a proposed ban of plastic stemmed cotton buds, straws and drink stirrers later in the year.

2018 SUBMITTED EU CONSULTATION RESPONSE

EU Single Use Plastic Directive response submitted, providing information gained through The Cotton Bud Project work and research

2018 - JULY 99.4% IN FAVOUR OF A BAN

Over 830 responses were received for the Scottish Government's public consultation, with 99.4% in favour of banning the sale and manufacture of plastic stemmed cotton buds; including responses from leading cotton bud retailers, Waitrose and Boots UK.

NOVEMBER - 2018 UK GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION LAUNCHED

Consultation to ban the sale and distribution of Plastic Stemmed Cotton Buds, Straws and Drink Stirrers launched by DEFRA. Fidra actively engaged with the UK Government and submitted a response to this consultation using lessons learned and understanding gained from work completed in Scotland.

2019 EU SINGLE USE PLASTICS DIRECTIVE ADOPTED

EU parliament agrees to the adoption of the Single Use Plastic directive in March 2019, including a European wide ban on plastic stemmed cotton buds to be in place in all member states by 2021.

OCTOBER - 2019 SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT BAN

The new legislation banning the sale and manufacture of plastic-stemmed cotton buds in Scotland came into force on the 12th October. A huge success for The Cotton Bud Project.

OCTOBER - 2020 UK GOVERNMENT DELAYED BAN

Legislation originally due in April, came into force on 1st October 2020. This legislation made it illegal to sell or supply plastic cotton buds, straws and drink stirrers in England - preventing the production and use of an estimated 1.8 billion plastic cotton buds.

A final success, marking the end of The Cotton Bud Project!