

Tobacco and the Environment

We all know that smoking tobacco isn't good for our health but have you ever thought about the impact of smoking and tobacco on the environment? Let's look at this in more detail.



Trees

Cigarettes are made from dried leaves of the tobacco plant. Wood is burnt to dry the leaves. For everyone one hectare of tobacco that is dried, one hectare of forest is burned.

It is estimated that 200,000 hectares of forest are destroyed each year to provide wood to burn to dry tobacco leaves. This is similar in size to the Isles of Skye and Jura combined.

Packaging & Litter

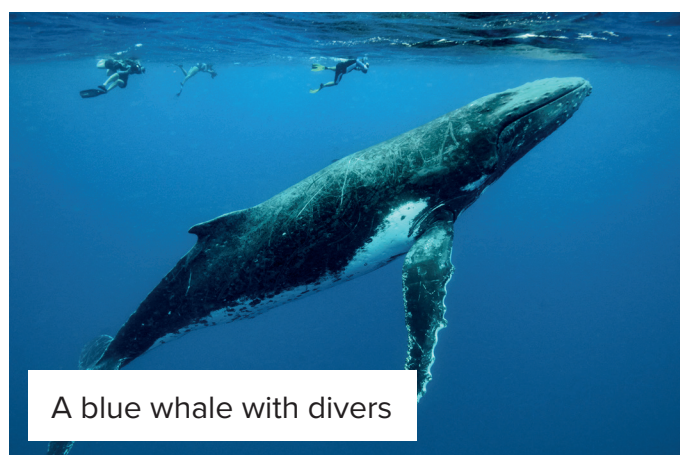
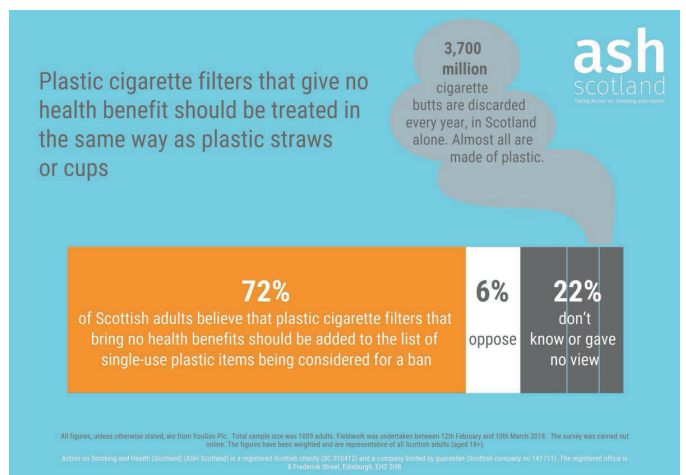
Cigarettes are wrapped in paper and sold in packets made from paper and plastics. Cigarette filters are made from plastic, and don't provide any health benefit; but make smoking easier. They are one of the major components of single-use plastic waste. In Scotland, 3,700 million cigarette butts are discarded every year. That's over 10 million every day. Each butt takes 12 years to decompose. As they degrade, they release toxins into the environment.

Discarded cigarettes butts, packets and other related litter creates 122 tons of rubbish in the UK every day – that's almost as heavy as a blue whale.

There are 7,000 thousand chemicals in tobacco, and in cigarettes butts, which can pollute the environment.

Soil & Water

Growing tobacco damages the soil, and tobacco plants use more nutrients than lots of other crops. This reduces the life of the soil. Tobacco plants are also treated with lots of fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides, which can leach into the soil and pollute water. There is a knock on effect for wildlife and people.



This resource has been created to support the use of the *Tobacco and the Environment* Display, available to borrow from the Health Information Resource Service (HIRS) - healthyhighlanders.co.uk

Farming

Tobacco companies encourage farmers in poorer countries to grow tobacco instead of food. In 2008 they provided 90% of the world's tobacco leaf. Instead, the land used could be used to grow crops that could feed 10-20 million people. This means there is even less food availability. This is a hard working environment for children and adults.

Air

When cigarettes are smoked, the 7,000 chemicals are released into the air, polluting the environment and creating second hand smoke.

Fires

Discarded lit cigarettes can cause fires in the home and in public areas.



A farmer carrying tobacco leaves



A fire starts from a discarded cigarette

References and further information:

GASP –

Tobacco and the Environment Resource and info sheet.

ASH Scotland blog –

[Plastic cigarette butts should be binned like plastic cups and straws](#) [Accessed 24/09/2019]

ASH Scotland Update –

[1st August](#) [Accessed 24/09/2019]

ASH Scotland –

[The impact of tobacco farming](#) [Accessed 14/10/2019]

ASH Scotland –

[Cigarette filters do not provide health benefits](#) [Accessed 18/10/2019]