

State of our beaches

Annual Beachwatch report



2022

A massive thanks to everyone who took part in a beach clean and litter survey throughout 2022.

From Shetland to Guernsey and Bridgend to Belfast, volunteers cleaned over **150,000 metres** of beach, collecting **17,772kgs** of litter – that's heavier than a double-decker bus!

Over the course of the year, **13,615** of you rolled up your sleeves and safely removed litter from your local beach, preventing it from causing further harm to precious marine life.

In 2022, we received over **1,000 litter surveys** from around the UK and Channel Islands. This vital information allows us to understand which types of beach litter are on the rise so we can call on decision makers to take action to reduce the amount of harmful plastic and other pollution on UK and Channel Islands beaches.

We've used your findings to call for the introduction of carrier bag charges, Deposit Return Schemes, and for bans on single-use plastic items like cotton bud sticks. Together, we've helped inspire change and will continue to do so for a cleaner, healthier ocean.

Lizzie Price
Beachwatch Programme Manager



For a further breakdown of our litter data, what it tells us and how we're using it for change across the UK and Channel Islands, scan the QR code

mcsuk.org/beachwatch-report



In 2022...

Together, we cleared our beaches of **393,150 litter items**

13,615 volunteers helped clean up beaches across the UK and Channel Islands – **42% more than 2021**

We received **1,159 litter surveys** – an increase of **11%** from 2021

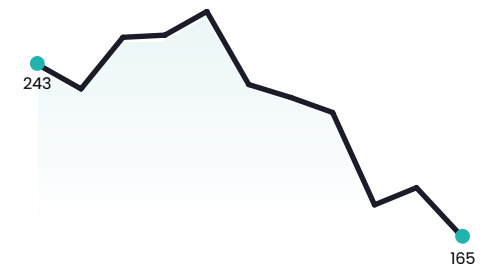
Volunteers cleaned over **97 miles of beach**

58,030 sewage-related debris items were found, making up **15%** of all litter recorded on our surveys



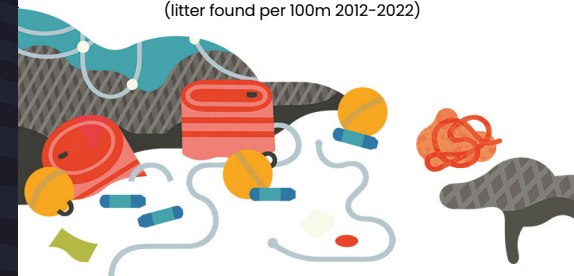
Overall litter levels going down

It's encouraging to see that the amount of litter found on beaches has **decreased by 11%** across the UK and Channel Islands since 2021. This shows that policies, which we campaigned for with the help of data you've collected, are working. We hope to see this trend continue, and accelerate, with the recent bans on single-use plastics and forthcoming Deposit Return Schemes across the UK, with Scotland's set to begin in August 2023.



Litter abundance in the UK and Channel Islands

(litter found per 100m 2012-2022)





The UK and Channel Islands' 2022 beach litter story

What did we find?

We found 165 litter items per 100m, a **↓ decrease of 38%** when compared to 2016 when litter levels peaked



1. Plastic pieces (2.5–50cm)



2. Plastic packets



3. Plastic caps/lids



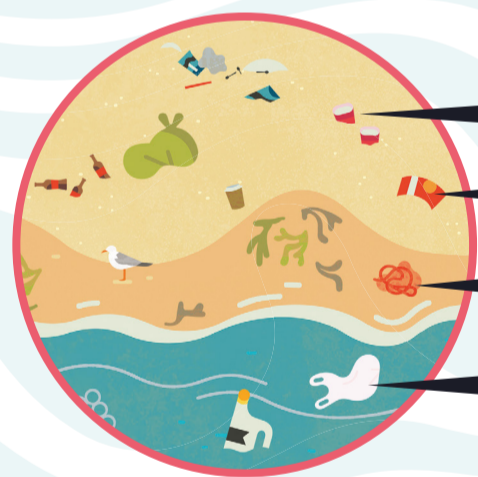
4. Plastic string/cord (0–1cm)



5. Wet wipes

The plastic problem

Your findings show that plastic is continuing to pollute our beaches. By continuing to monitor items such as single-use plastic bags and wet wipes, we can keep an eye on trends and continue to tackle the plastic problem.



9 of the top 10 litter items in the UK and Channel Islands were plastic or polystyrene

Plastic or polystyrene packets were found on **85%** of beaches

Plastic or polystyrene was the top litter material, accounting for **81.5%** of litter

Plastic bags were found on **65%** of cleans

Drinks-related litter

Drinks containers are consistently found on our beaches (95% in 2022), and we've used your survey data to call for **Deposit Return Schemes (DRS)** to be urgently introduced across the UK. With DRS to be introduced in all UK nations, we hope to see a decrease in plastic, metal, and glass drinks containers on beaches.



Plastic/polystyrene drinks containers were found on **70%** of surveyed beaches



64% of cleans found metal drinks cans



Glass bottles were found on **53%** of cleans

Source to Sea Litter Quest

Although living inland, 460 of you did something amazing for our ocean by taking part in our Source to Sea Litter Quest.

9,297 items were removed from our towns, parks and rivers

239 bags of litter were collected



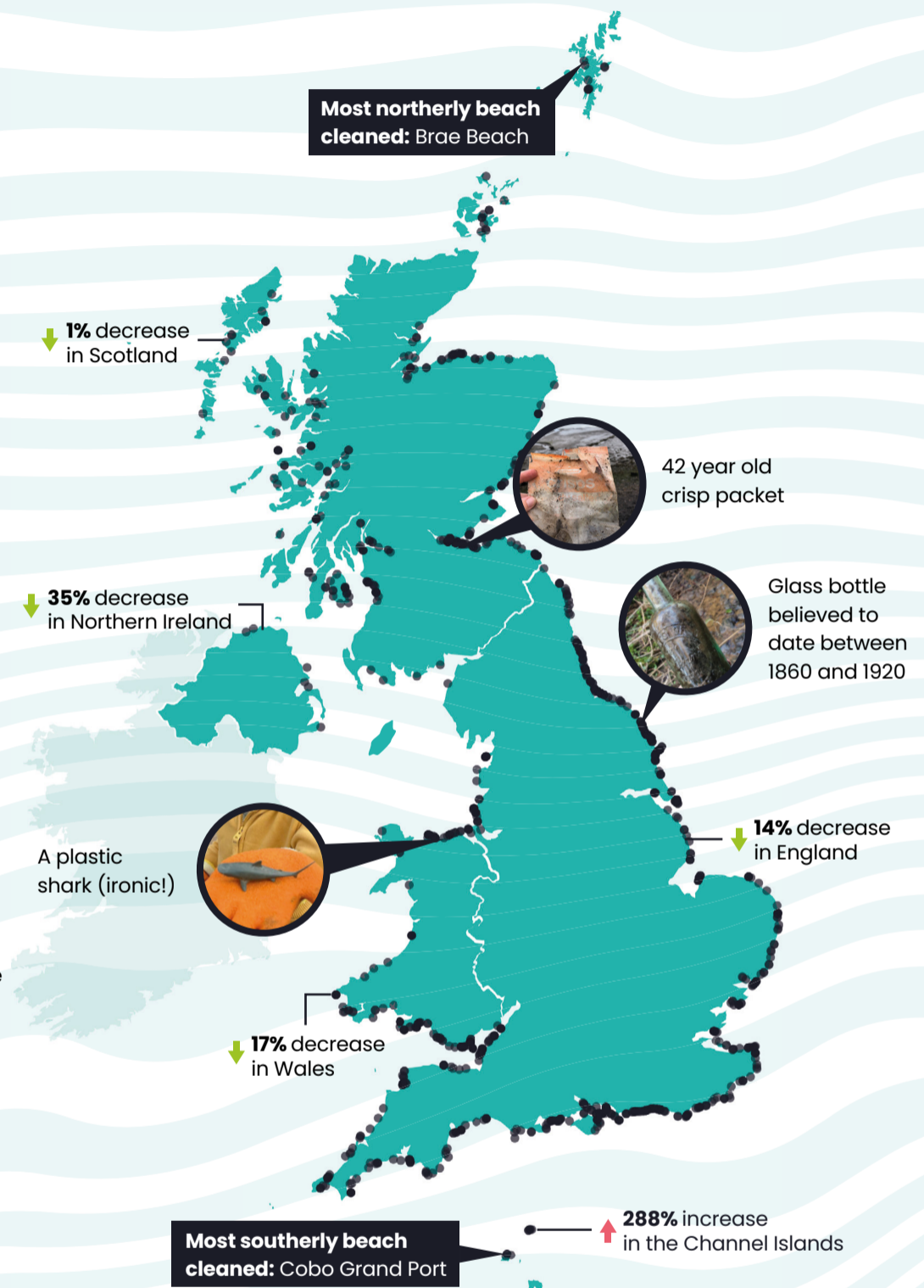
94% of inland cleans found plastic bottles



93% of inland cleans found metal drinks cans



78% of inland cleans found glass bottles



Join us today and together we can do even more to help fight pollution - www.mcsuk.org/join

MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Get involved!

There are lots of ways that you can get involved and help tackle marine pollution. Why not send a copy of this report to your local politician and ask them what action they're taking to reduce beach pollution? Or you can check out other ways to get involved below.



Join or organise a beach clean

Our beach cleans and litter surveys happen all year round. Check if there's one happening near you at mcsuk.org/beachwatch. If not, why not organise your own? We have all the resources you need to get started.



Source to Sea Litter Quest

By taking part in Source to Sea, you help track pollution and clear litter from our streets, preventing it from ending up on our beaches. Find out more about inland litter picks at mcsuk.org/source-to-sea



Team beach cleans

If you're looking for a team building or volunteering day for your company, why not join our experts on a beach clean for a day of fun, whilst doing something worthwhile for the environment? Find out more at mcsuk.org/team-beach-cleans



Become a member of the Marine Conservation Society

Become a member and pledge your support to make our hands-on conservation work possible. Join a community of ocean enthusiasts and receive updates and opportunities from as little as £5 per month – £6 could support a beach cleaning volunteer. Get involved at mcsuk.org/become-a-member

Registered with



FUNDRAISING
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The Marine Conservation Society's beach litter work is supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery

Awarded funds from



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Registered charity in England and Wales 1004005 and in Scotland SC037480.

Beach cleans Billy Barraclough; Seals Mark Kirkland; Illustration Jack Tite

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