

**PRESS RELEASE, EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01, 21<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2023**

## **Odd finds and retro rubbish – what’s washed up on our beaches**

The [Marine Conservation Society](#), the UK’s leading ocean charity, has been running its Beachwatch litter survey programme for almost 30 years. The charity’s year-round beach cleaning programme asks volunteers to record all litter that they find within a 100m stretch of beach. By gathering vital data, the charity can create change for cleaner seas and a healthier planet.

Over the last 30 years, data has been used to shape and influence many policy decisions in all home nations, such as the introduction of carrier bag charges and bans on many single-use plastic items. The Marine Conservation Society’s beach clean survey results also contribute to a global database, tracking pollution trends around the world.

Amongst some of the commonly found items, such as plastic bottles and wet wipes, the charity has compiled some of their volunteers’ more unusual finds that have been retrieved from our beaches.

### **A 54321 chocolate bar wrapper**



This 54321 chocolate bar was discontinued in 1989 making this plastic wrapper at least 34 years old.

### Woolworths wrapper – save 4p!



Not only did Woolworth stores close in the UK in February 2009, offers of saving 4p potentially date this plastic wrapper as much older.

### St Michaels labels



The UK shop *St Michael* rebranded to *Marks & Spencer* in the year 2000.

### 1997 Mars bar wrapper



This wrapper dates from the *Batman & Robin* 1997 film starring George Clooney. An unlucky *Mars bar* eater didn't win the competition.

### Preserved glass bottle





It's not just plastic that persists in the environment, glass can last for decades too. This well-preserved glass bottle and vulcanite stopper is from spirit merchants *Henry Wilson and Son* who were based in Hull, and dates from sometime between 1894 and 1969.

### Plastic toys



Childrens toys are not an uncommon find for volunteers, but whether they were left behind on a beach trip or made a trip down our sewer systems is often unknown.

## Vapes



The rise in popularity of disposable vapes, since they became available in the UK in around 2009, has unfortunately resulted in reports of them being littered from volunteers at the Marine Conservation Society.

Sadly, this odd find is becoming a lot more common. Vapes contain several different materials including plastic, copper, lithium, and chemicals that can leak out into the environment and be harmful to marine life.

The charity is supporting [Youth Ocean Network](#) member, Laura Young ([@LessWasteLaura](#)), with her campaign to ban disposable vapes. They're asking anyone who finds a littered vape, whether on beaches or inland, to take a picture and share on social media, tagging [@mcs\\_uk](#) and [@lesswastelaura](#) and use the hashtag #BanDisposableVapes.

The Marine Conservation Society's Beachwatch report 2022 shows that 9 out of 10 littered items across UK beaches were made of plastic, showing how commonly littered this material is.

**Clare Trotman, Beachwatch Officer at the Marine Conservation Society**, said, "Unfortunately the most common, and many of the oldest, items that we find washed up on our beaches are made from plastic. This is because it takes

such a long time to break down, and when it does it often breaks down into small pieces of plastic which can be harmful to marine life. For the sake of people and planet, we're urging decision makers to work towards a circular economy where focus is to refuse, reduce, repair, reuse and recycle."

*To find out more about the Marine Conservation Society's Beachwatch programme, please visit [www.mcsuk.org/what-you-can-do/join-a-beach-clean](http://www.mcsuk.org/what-you-can-do/join-a-beach-clean).*

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### **Notes to Editors**

For more press releases and up-to-date information visit the charity's [Media Centre](#).

### **Press Contact**

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The [Marine Conservation Society](#) is the UK's leading ocean charity, fighting for cleaner, better-protected, healthier seas. The charity works to highlight the importance of our ocean, and the life within it, through working with government, industry and education, to take action to restore and protect the marine environment.