

**Press release, EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

## **Data shows need for Deposit Return Schemes to stop litter on British beaches**

- **Marine Conservation Society reveals results of its 2022 Great British Beach Clean**
- **An average of 103 pieces of plastic or polystyrene were found per 100m of UK beach**
- **Drinks-related litter was found on 93% of surveyed beaches, showing the need for Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) across the UK**

The results are in from the [Marine Conservation Society](#)'s annual Great British Beach Clean, which took place from 16<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2022, and was sponsored by soup brand, Cully & Sully.

Across the UK, **50km of beach were cleared and surveyed by over 5,261 volunteers, who filled over 1,228 bags of litter, weighing in at 3,908kg.** All pollution cleared from beaches protects the ocean and vulnerable wildlife, which can ingest or become entangled in litter and debris.

By taking part in the Great British Beach Clean, volunteers not only clear beaches of litter, but help tackle ocean pollution by gathering vital data used by the charity to lobby governments and create change for cleaner seas and a healthier planet.

### **Top ten most common litter items on UK beaches (average per 100m)**

1. Plastic and polystyrene pieces – 103.1
2. Crisp and sweet packets, lollipop sticks etc. – 27.2
3. Wet wipes – 22.7
4. Cigarette stubs – 20.5
5. Other glass – 19.2
6. Plastic lids and caps – 16.4
7. Plastic cord or string – 8.9
8. Cotton bud sticks – 7.4
9. Paper or cardboard – 6.0
10. Fishing line (recreational angling) – 6.2

Data collected shows a total decrease of 4% in litter levels across the UK in comparison to last year's Great British Beach Clean.

**Dr Laura Foster, Head of Clean Seas at the Marine Conservation Society** said, "It's good news that litter levels are dropping, albeit slowly, and we know that governments' actions have been shown to be highly effective, from introducing carrier bag charges to the banning of certain single-use plastic items.

“These small changes have resulted in notable differences in the amount of these types of litter found on our beaches. However, there is a worrying increase in the amount of glass pieces being found, suggesting that glass is now frequently being littered.”

The Scottish Government is ahead of UK and Welsh Governments, with a long-awaited Deposit Return Scheme to be implemented across the country in August 2023. The Marine Conservation Society is urgently calling for the same from Westminster and the Welsh Senedd, to cover plastic bottles, glass bottles and metal drinks cans.

Glass ‘other’ is in the top five most common items, reflecting the high prevalence of glass pieces with drinks-related litter found on almost all UK beaches (93%). However, plans for a DRS in England currently don’t include glass.

The charity’s data highlights the need for glass to be included in Deposit Return Schemes and the need for these to be implemented as soon as possible. A YouGov survey commissioned by the Marine Conservation Society earlier this year (Feb 22) found that 76% of the GB population support a DRS, and 81% of people think supermarkets should actively support a DRS.

In England, Therese Coffey, now Secretary of State for Defra, played a key role in the development of DRS when she was a Minister in Defra from 2016 to 2019. The charity is calling for Coffey to pick up DRS as a priority in England. Wales has yet to announce a date for implementation of a DRS.

The charity runs beach cleans throughout the year, with survey results contributing to a global database, International Coastal Cleanup.

The charity’s data shows that visible litter on UK beaches is of great concern, but the Marine Conservation Society is also campaigning to tackle invisible chemical pollution which is poisoning marine life across the globe. The #StopOceanPoison campaign is demanding the UK Government turn off the tap on chemical pollution. Find out more and sign the petition, which now has over 10K signatures, [here](#).

For more information on the Marine Conservation Society’s work, please visit the charity’s website: [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org).

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### Images

Please find a selection of infographics and high-res images linked in this [Dropbox folder](#).

### Press Contact

Evie Martin, Media Relations Manager ([evie.martin@mcsuk.org](mailto:evie.martin@mcsuk.org) / 07891 057102)

Notes to Editors

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.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,690 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th - 15th February 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).