

# Greenprint Forum Beachwatch report 2022

## Part of our Plastic Action campaign towards our goal of a Pollution Free Environment

Beachwatch is the annual survey of marine litter held around the coastline of Britain by teams of volunteers who survey and categorise the marine litter they find on their adopted 100 metres of beach, with all of the data being collated by the Marine Conservation Society to help them understand the current situation with marine litter and apply pressure in an informed way where it is needed to influence positive change.

For example, the 2020 ban on the supply of single use plastic cotton buds, stirrers, and straws was secured thanks to evidence like this, whilst since the 5p charge on single use plastic carrier bags was introduced, the MCS report a 55% decrease in the numbers of these being found on the UK's beaches.

The shoreline is a zone of flux, onto which litter may be both washed up from the sea (potentially having entered the sea from anywhere), and washed onto from inland – but it all entered the marine environment due to human activity in the first place. By removing litter from our beaches, we are preventing it from entering (or returning to) the sea. [Eunomia](#)'s report *Plastics in the Marine Environment* indicates that the coast is the marine environment with the highest concentration of plastic pollution worldwide, with a global average concentration of plastic litter on the world's beaches of 2,000kg/km<sup>2</sup>.

Back here in the UK, the MCS surveys have been finding less litter overall on our beaches recently. In 2021, an average of 385 items were found on each 100m transect, compared to 425 in 2020, and 585 in 2019. On all of the beaches we surveyed locally, we found much less than that.



## What did we do?

To support Beachwatch in 2022 the Greenprint Forum organised three local marine litter surveys combined with beach cleans.

All who attended helped make it fun, we had some good engagement with passersby and it is always encouraging to see that there are those in our communities who understand the issues and are prepared to give up their time to support this form of action.



## 25 September – Felixstowe beach Manor Terrace to Orford Road



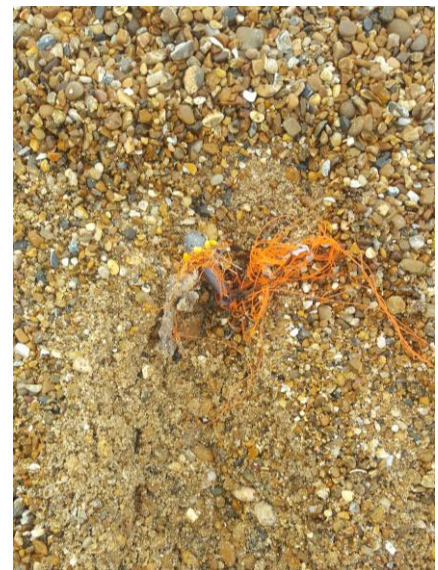
We had a team of 9 for this activity, including some from the fabulous local volunteer group [Litter-free Felixstowe](#).

We found just 9 items of litter totalling just 20g on our survey transect which was the lowest we have ever recorded here; last year we found 55 items here.



Numerically, small fragments of plastic were the commonest items we found. After the survey we continued picking litter from more of the beach, (engaging with some members of the public along the way curious to know what we were up to), Martello Park, and Manor Terrace, clearing a further 1.3kg of litter, mainly cigarette ends, bits of fishing line (including one hook and weight assembly) and food-on-the-go packaging – ensuring that this stuff wouldn't now end up polluting our marine environment.

[Results of survey at Felixstowe](#)





## 26 September – Pakefield below the Jolly Sailors

This Beachwatch activity was arranged as a team-building activity for the new cohort of Graduates who started with councils and other public sector employers across Suffolk this September as part of the Suffolk Graduate Programme, providing the graduates with an opportunity to combine environmental volunteering with citizen science as part of their induction.

It was also a great chance for the Graduates, who are each on a placement with a different employer, to spend a bit of time getting to know one another, whilst learning about the issues and impacts of marine pollution.



Of the three beaches we surveyed this year, this one yielded the most litter numerically, with a total of 176 items recorded, though this is still well below the national average. The most common items of litter we found here were fragments of plastic, bits of foam, cigarette ends, food-on-the-go packaging, and bits of fishing line.

Along with our post-survey pick of more of the beach and dunes, we ended up removing a total of 1.9kg of litter from our environment.

[Results of survey at Pakefield](#)



## 9 October – Gunton Beach

Originally planned for 18 September, this activity was postponed, however the data still counted towards the national picture compiled by the Marine Conservation Society.

This was the first time we had surveyed this particular beach. We found 64 items on our transect, probably reflecting the fact that Gunton beach receives a regular clean by volunteers from adjacent SWT Gunton Warren.

Numerically, most of what we did find here was fragments of plastics, with most of the weight we recorded comprising a number of pieces of scrap metal.



Once we had completed the survey, we continued to pick as we headed back along the beach and through the dunes, where we found lots of expanded polystyrene that had disintegrated and crumbled.

A reminder (should we need it!) of the importance of careful disposal of expanded polystyrene waste, given how a single littered item made of this material can go on to break up and create a mini-pollution spill of tiny pieces that can travel far into the environment and be very difficult to then recover.

Expanded polystyrene should always go in the non-recyclable rubbish bin, destined for the Energy-from-Waste Plant in Great Blakenham.

Eight of us attended on this rescheduled activity, including local MP Peter Aldous. Between us, we removed a total of 3.96kg from the beach and dunes at Gunton.



### [Results of survey at Gunton](#)





## Find out more and get involved:

The Marine Conservation Society is an important national data recording, reporting and campaign organisation incorporating citizen science. If you're organising a beach clean, why not incorporate a Beachwatch survey as part of your activity to help the MCS with their data-driven work, and maybe even consider adopting your stretch of beach to survey annually. (And please remember to also inform Neil Lister at the AONB team so that they can include your results in their local report for Suffolk [neil.lister@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:neil.lister@suffolk.gov.uk).)

Even if you're not near the coast, you can still survey the litter you find in your town, park or other inland environment and submit data to the MCS through their [Source to Sea Litter Quest](#) – this is an important source of survey data too, given that litter escaping from our inland areas to the oceans, for example via natural watercourses and surface water drains, is a considerable contributor to marine pollution.

You can find out how to get involved in Beachwatch surveying and the Source to Sea Litter Quest survey, here: [Marine Conservation Society | Home \(mcsuk.org\)](https://mcsuk.org)



## Thanks to our local event supporters:

- Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB team — who collate and share local results (reports from 2017-2021 available here [Beachwatch – Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB](#)), encouraged participation, coordinated local Beachwatch activities, and provided us with sharps boxes. Last year the team supported 339 Beachwatch volunteers across Suffolk who collectively removed 7762 items of litter from our county's coastline!
- East Suffolk Norse — who provided us with hi-vis coats, litter pick sticks and bags and arranged for the responsible removal and disposal of the litter we'd gathered.
- And of course all those who took part in our activities this autumn.

