

Greenprint Forum Beachwatch report 2025

#PlasticAction towards our goal of a Pollution Free Environment

Beachwatch, or “Great British Beach Clean”, is the annual survey of marine litter around the coastline of Britain conducted by teams of volunteers who survey and categorise the marine litter they find on their adopted 100 metres of beach. It helps the [Marine Conservation Society](#) to make the case for positive change and apply pressure in an evidence-based way.

Whilst the evidence gathered has already led to some targeted success, for example, an 80% decrease in the presence of plastic carrier bags found since the introduction of charges, the evidence for further positive change is mounting year on year.

Plastic pollution remains a big problem

The amount of plastics overall found on beaches **increased by 9.5% from 2023 to 2024**, and the continued presence of plastics in the coastal environment highlights the need for a circular economy in which consumers genuinely have more options and meaningful access to refillable, reusable, and repairable products. Currently, the economy of our country still follows the linear model of “make - use once – chuck”.

Whilst every survey reveals its own specific findings, one thing has remained consistent across all of our own surveys – that of plastics being the single largest category we keep finding. This also broadly reflects the national picture (plastics making up **72%** of all litter recorded in 2024).

85% of the items we found in 2025 were plastic or polystyrene

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 **2,000 kg/km²**.

Teaming up for more impact

This year, we collaborated with leading litter action groups [Litter-free Felixstowe](#) and [Suffolk Beach Cleans](#) and ran Beachwatch activities jointly with them in and around **Felixstowe** and **Lowestoft** respectively.

At a glance, this year we:

- completed **4 activities**;
- were helped by **84 volunteers**;
- collected **4.88 kg**;
- counted and categorised **961 items**.



20 September – North Denes, Gunton

For our first activity of 2025, we teamed up with the brilliant **Suffolk Beach Cleans**, who organise regular group litter picks in northern Suffolk. You can read more about them on pages 3 and 4 of the [Greenprint Forum Newsletter autumn 2025](#). They provided the equipment, with McDonalds providing the bags.

We were joined at North Denes by an amazing total of **27 volunteers**, including little ones and several dogs, and a group of colleagues from [EastWind – Offshore Cluster](#) on their corporate volunteering activity.

This was the second time that Greenprint Forum have been involved in a survey at this location, though our partners for this session, Suffolk Beach Cleans, have carried out many beach cleans here. Suffolk Beach Cleans entered and submitted the data.

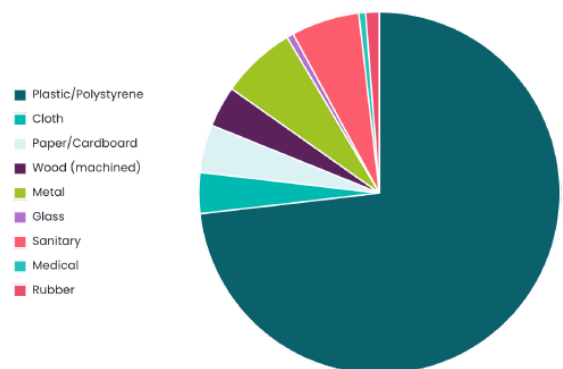
We found **164 items** on this occasion, almost three times the number we found when we last surveyed the same site in 2022, but just under the average of 170 items per 100 m found on UK and Channel Island beaches in 2024. Most of what we found was plastic, with **fragments** (43) and **packets** (16) being the most numerous sub-categories.

After the Beachwatch, we pitched up at [Planet Positive](#) for the rest of the day, alongside Suffolk Beach Cleans and their mascot Womble. This was an event organised by Lowestoft Town Council to showcase community environmental action in the town.

Among the other stallholders, we met local artist [Linda in the Studio](#) with her life-sized creations Plastiman, Poly and baby Styrene (below), all made from rubbish found on the local beaches to help start conversations about the resources we use, the rubbish we generate and the impact it all has on the environment.



Materials collected

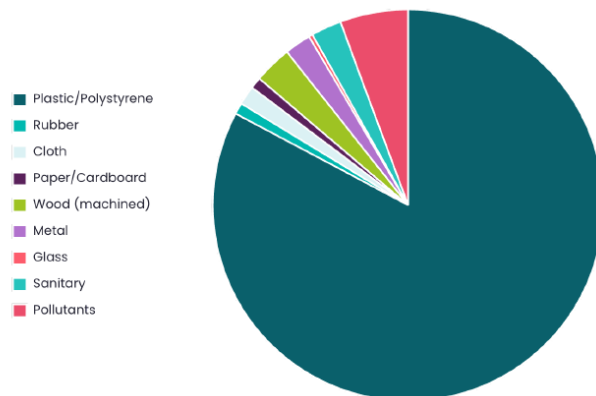


Saturday 27 September – South Beach Lowestoft (north of the pier)

Our second session of 2025 took us to the popular tourist beach of Lowestoft, once again in partnership with **Suffolk Beach Cleans** who, as for the other sessions they partnered with us for, did all of the liaison with the Marine Conservation Society to register the session and enter and submit all of the data afterwards. To help promote these events on social media, Suffolk Beach Cleans created the event listings on Facebook and added Greenprint Forum as co-hosts.

With a team of 15 mobilised in the late September sunshine, **319 items** were catalogued amounting to **1.08 kg**. Over 80% of what we found was of plastic origin, with the most numerous single category found represented by the **73 cigarette butts** found here!

The filters of cigarette butts contain **cellulose acetate**, a form of plastic which is commonly littered into the environment in areas of heavy footfall by people.

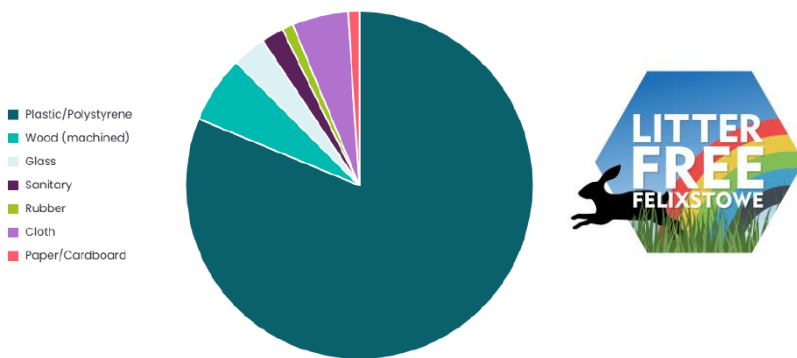


This session also provided an opportunity for a bit of beachcombing, finding a few deceased brittlestars on the beach. Distant relatives of starfish, these creatures use their flexible arms to scuttle along the seabed.

Sunday 28 September – Felixstowe beach below Brackenbury Kiosk

This was the first time we have targeted this specific location. We worked with **Litter-free Felixstowe** to arrange and promote the date, with **17 volunteers** helping with the Beachwatch survey and far more than that mobilised by LFF to maximise the impact of having people equipped to clear litter by heading off to the woods, car parks, beach huts and other areas in the vicinity to give it all a good spruce up.

As well as supplying all of the sticks, hoops, bags, and hi-vis coats, Litter-free Felixstowe provided a mini-marquee to ensure a highly visible presence on the clifftop to highlight the activity. LFF also led on engagement with families who'd come to participate, presenting the youngsters with certificates for their efforts. Before the event, LFF also created an event posting online to promote to their followers.



Litter-free Felixstowe organise several **group litter picks** throughout the year and welcome new members to help support their activities. The easiest way to keep informed and find out when their group activities are is to follow them on Facebook:

[Litter-free Felixstowe | Facebook](#)



Meanwhile down on our survey transect on the beach, we found **96** items totalling **0.64 kg**. **Plastic fragments** comprised 35 of those items, with 11 pieces of **plastic fishing line or net** comprising the next most common category. Nobody knows how long this **toy soldier** we also rescued had been in the marine environment.



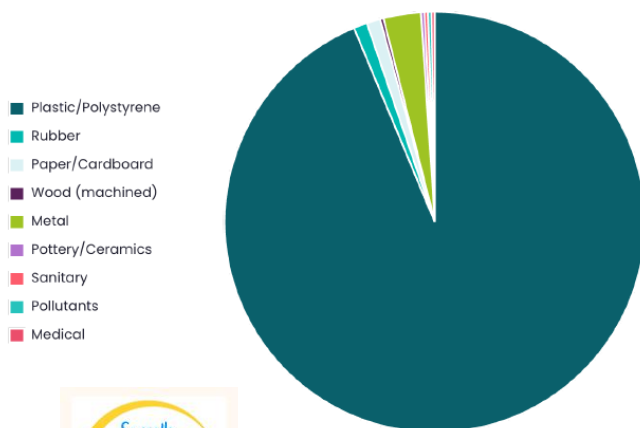
Saturday 25 October – Pakefield below the Jolly Sailors

Our final session of 2025 was originally scheduled for 04 October but was postponed due to the effects of Storm Amy.

Fortunately the date of our postponement brought a bit of sunshine, which in turn brought out yet another excellent turnout of volunteers, once again in partnership with **Suffolk Beach Cleans**.

Accompanied by local beach clean regular Betty the poodle, our group of **15 surveyors**, including one young volunteer on his Duke of Edinburgh Award, found a total of **382 items**, far more than we have found here on previous occasions (176 in 2022, and just 59 in 2024). The number of items found was particularly inflated by the finding on our transect of **121 pieces of foamed polystyrene**.

The most peculiar item found amongst the **1.3 kg of marine litter** surveyed was perhaps this plastic bone, presumably from a toy skeleton – aptly timed in the run up to Halloween!



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.

We usually organise at least two Beachwatch activities under the banner of the Greenprint Forum each September. If you are part of a local litter picking group, or a business looking for a team-building opportunity for your colleagues, and would like to team up with us on one of our future activities and make it a joint event, please let us know.



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)

Could you community host a Clean Up hub?

CleanupUK have launched a national network of community cleanup hubs to empower local groups in tackling litter. Through this network, organisations can host hubs and access free litter-picking equipment to support regular community cleanups. Learn more at [cleanupuk | Community Cleanup Hubs](#)

They've recently recruited a Cleanup Champion for East Suffolk (leader of Suffolk Beach Cleans, Amelia Thorogood) and are now looking for local community organisations — particularly in areas of high need — who are interested in hosting a hub.

To find out more or check if your organisation fits their criteria, get in touch with **Amelia** at amelia.thorogood@cleanupuk.org.uk.





Community Cleanup Hubs store litter picking equipment for local people to use.

You can help bring your community together by hosting equipment and lending it out to people. This promotes volunteering and looking after your environment.

We'll help with equipment and provide info and support to help get people on board!

CleanupUK helps communities to take pride in where they live.

Litter-picking benefits the environment, encourages healthy outdoor activity, improves mental health and brings people together.

**For more details contact:
amelia.thorogood@clenaupuk.org.uk**

