

Marine Litter Watch



Newsletter

Issue 16 - Autumn/Winter 2023

Image - Fred Brown



Department of

**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

***Sustainability** at the heart of a living, working,
active landscape valued by everyone.*



Hello and welcome to Autumn/Winter 2023 edition of Marine Litter Watch

by Jenny Benham, Marine and Fisheries Division, DAERA

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2023 Marine Litter Watch Newsletter, where you can expect to find information and updates about what is currently happening in the world of marine litter.

We have focused on the variety of ways citizens are helping to combat litter in the marine environment. Seeing the innovations that volunteers have come up with to tackle marine plastic is truly inspirational.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this edition by providing inspiration, articles, news items and photographs.

We are always happy to receive any updates, suggestions or feedback about what you might like to see in future publications. You can get in touch by emailing the team at: marinelitter@daera-ni.gov.uk

Article Summary

Jon from the River Bann cleanup shares how he and fellow volunteers help prevent litter reaching our seas via the Upper Bann in Portadown.

Next, Claire from Morsbags explains how volunteers reduce plastic in our oceans by breathing new life into old fabrics.

Finally, we share highlights from the hotly anticipated Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Marine Litter Report.



Tall ship Phoenix at Ballycastle - Image Jenny Benham

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Marine Litter Watch

News Round Up!

Have you got 2 minutes?



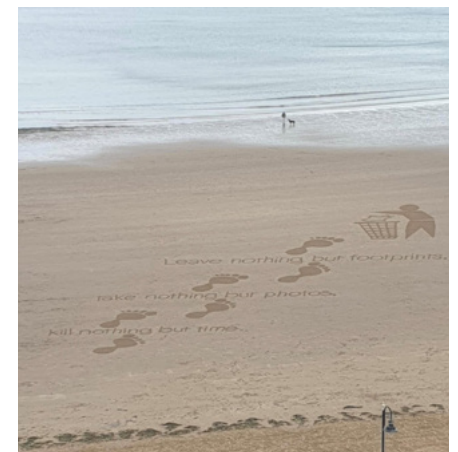
The first #2minutebeachclean started in 2013 following Atlantic storms battering the UK's Cornish coast. The 2 minute foundation was born with the belief that simple acts can add up to make a big difference. They say that every piece of plastic removed from the marine environment protects the animals who live there. In addition, taking some time out to do a beach clean can contribute positively to our own mental and physical wellbeing.

Having over 1000 beach clean-up and litter pick stations in the UK and Ireland, there's bound to be one near you. Check out your nearest station at <https://2minute.org/Locations>

'Grumpy Graham'

Our fantastic cover photo is of Graham - a seal with a message. In May 2023 after speaking with his local litter picking group, Fred Brown took to Saltburn Beach, North Yorkshire.

Fred created a huge piece of environmental artwork on the beach, spanning 197 metres long. The gigantic image shows a seal pup, etched into the sand a few metres from the pier, with text beside the seal reading: "The only cure for litter is you." Sea animals are usually the most vulnerable in an area with prominent litter levels, and seals are among the most frequently harmed by microplastics. Fred says the seal "has been nicknamed grumpy graham, and let's face it, who wouldn't be grumpy if they had to live amongst somebody else's litter?" You can find more of Fred's fantastic beach art on his social media channels.



Images - Fred Brown

Marine Litter Watch



AI helps battle litter

London-based environmental monitoring company *Ellipsis Earth* have been helping the council in charge of Bournemouth Beach to focus their litter prevention efforts. By analysing images, video and drone footage as in the picture below, Ellipsis Earth were able to confirm the different types of rubbish present.

They then used AI to determine weight, volume, environmental impact carbon footprint and recycling value of each piece of litter. The data showed trends in terms of types of litter and when items are dropped. This information was then used to provide targeted interventions.

Where specific actions were introduced a 79 per cent reduction in litter was seen in comparison to similar areas where no actions were introduced.



Image - Ellipsis Earth

Do you pod?

Finding out more about the world of marine litter is educational, informative and often entertaining! With the plethora of information out there it can be hard to know where to look. We've taken the hard work out of it for you and have pulled together some great podcasts with a marine litter theme.

"Splish Splash, Are We Swimming in Trash" Kids-themed podcast learning about how trash ends up in the ocean.	The Super Secret Hive - KID Save the World - Kids' Podcast
"Fish Out of Hot Water" Hosted by Mary Robinson and Maeve Higgins this podcast talks to lifelong ocean conservationist Ayana Elizabeth Johnson.	Mothers of Invention Fish out of Hot Water
"Lego Overboard" tells the story of why lego has been washing up on Cornish beaches since 1997	BBC Radio 4 - Seriously..., Lego Overboard
"The Harm of Microplastics in the Environment and Fighting for Fewer Single-Use Plastic with Richard Thompson" Plymouth Professor Richard Thompson discusses mitigations to stop microplastics seeping into the marine environment.	The Harm of Microplastics in the Environment and Fighting for Fewer Single-Use Plastic with Richard Thompson Listen Notes
How to protect the Ocean, UN Treaty and the Path Forward in the Battle Against Pollution. Guest Margaret Spring gives an update on a UN treaty to end global plastic pollution.	How To Protect The Ocean: UN Treaty and the Path Forward in the Battle Against Plastic Pollution on Apple Podcasts

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GB Row Challenge



GB Row is the ultimate rowing challenge. Combining sport and science GB Row has partnered with Portsmouth University on a 4-year project.

Circumnavigating GB, teams of rowers will undertake detailed pollution surveys focussing on microplastics, underwater noise, environmental DNA, salinity and temperature.

Daily water samples are returned to the University for processing. Microplastics above 50 microns - the smallest visible to the human eye - are being studied. A specialist microscope is used to identify



Images - GB Row



the different types of plastic found. The aim is to make a 'heatmap' of microplastic pollution around Great Britain, but includes results from the Irish Sea and east coast of Ireland. The 2022 results are displayed below and indicate the highest amount being River Thames followed by west coast of England/east coast of Northern Ireland.

Read the 2022 report produced by Portsmouth University [here](#) and find out more about the challenge at [GB Row](#).

Beach cleans for all

The Probation Service in England has partnered with the Marine Conservation Society's (MCS) annual Great British Beach Clean.

The Great British Beach Clean runs each year and encourages all of us to get involved in our local coastal areas. Tackling beach litter collectively can make a positive difference to the environment, individuals and the wider community.

As part of the community payback scheme, offenders will carry out more than a thousand hours of litter picking along the coast in England.

MCS will use this partnership to analyse the rubbish recovered. Understanding the data gathered will help to focus their future campaigns for change.

"Sharks" eat litter

Well not quite sharks as we know them!

Marine robots dubbed waste sharks are being used to clean plastic waste from waterways throughout the UK.

The sharks are electric-powered vehicles that can essentially suck up plastic waste floating in areas like harbours, preventing it being washed further out to sea.

Swallowing up to 60kg of debris in one trip, the waste shark has an important part to play in cleaning up marine areas.

Here in Northern Ireland, Citizen Sea in partnership with Live Here Love Here have deployed a waste shark called "Max" to clean up several marinas already.

Marine Litter Watch

Dublin teenager Flossie Donnelly was inspired to tackle plastic marine pollution at home in Ireland after a family holiday to Thailand.

Concerned about the impacts of plastic on marine life, Flossie began by setting up a beach cleaning group. With more and more people wanting to contribute 'Flossie and the Beach Cleaners' charity was created.

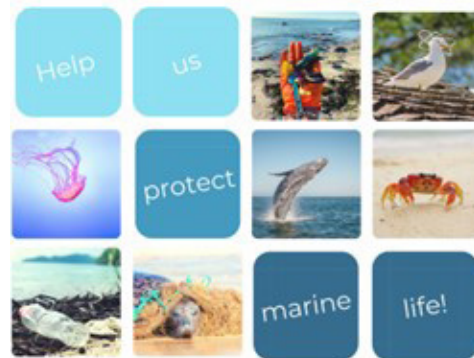
Flossie and the Beach Cleaners also spread their message through giving talks, running workshops, and encouraging DIY recycling creativity.

You can check out their fantastic video on how to make your own litter pickers from wood and elastic bands here:

<https://vimeo.com/871391239>



Images - Flossie and the Beach Cleaners



Have your say on wet wipes

A UK-wide consultation on wet wipes containing plastic has just been launched as part of our commitment to tackling plastic pollution.

The consultation is focused on wet wipes containing plastic and addressing their impact on the environment. The UK Government and Devolved Administrations are seeking your views.

The consultation is open until 25th November and you can have your say via the online survey linked here.

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Jon from River Bann cleanup shares how he and fellow volunteers are cleaning up the River Bann



River Bann Cleanup Portadown began in 2019 when a lone kayaker decided to tackle litter in and around the river.

An abundance of nature including Herons, Kingfishers, Swans, Cormorants, Grebes, Mallards, Moorhens and Otters can be found using the river.

The Bann also plays host to Portadown Boat Club and the C3 Paddlers kayaking club.

While the primary aim is to highlight the issue of litter pollution in the waterways, we also look out for, and highlight other forms of pollution that may affect the flora and fauna.

Rivers can act as conduits for litter ending up in the marine environment. By removing a whole variety of litter, we can have a positive impact on wildlife, the river and our coast.



Volunteer Action



Year-round litter picks are organised and attended by volunteers from all over the country and beyond.

Each litter pick lasts 2-4 hours with volunteers using sit-on-top kayaks to reach and remove the litter.

For some volunteers it is their first time using a kayak, and so while helping the environment, they gain basic knowledge of a new skill and enjoy getting out and about on our waterways.

Equipment and clothing is provided free of charge, thanks to the generosity of the local community, individuals, charities, businesses and the DAERA/Live Here Love Here Marine Litter Capital Grant.

Check out our new video, find out more or get involved, at our [River Bann Cleanup Portadown Facebook page](#).

Marine

Litter Watch

Claire from Morsbags.org explains how old curtains can help protect our oceans

Morsbags are reusable, recycled, washable, strong bags made from fabrics such as old curtains, duvet covers, tea towels and offcuts otherwise destined for landfill.

Over half a million have been made by wonderful people all over the world in nearly 3000 pods (groups) and given away for free, potentially replacing almost 300 million plastic bags.

Single use plastic bags are known to contribute to litter in our oceans and harm the turtles, fish, birds and whales that ingest them, when they are mistaken for food.

The label attached to every morsbag means that recipients can go to our website, find out why they've been given a free bag, nab the free pattern, and continue the cycle. It's a 'random act of kindness' idea that involves



creativity, recycling and is very community minded. Morsbags are given away to shoppers, strangers, friends, foodbanks, libraries and community centres.

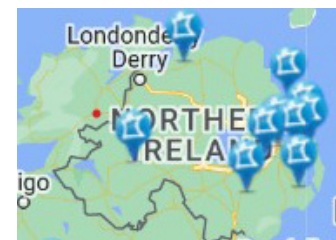
'Morsbagging' brings many benefits including:

- bringing local people together
- giving people new skills
- creating new friendships
- providing a form of rehabilitation
- recycling textile waste
- reducing local litter and, most importantly,
- helps prevent marine wildlife from being harmed by plastic bags.

The morsbags community is based on cake, kindness, creating and a conviction that we can make a difference. There are 10 pods making morsbags in Northern Ireland, check our map to see if there's one near you.

We would love to get more people involved, so if you have a sewing machine, some old fabric or gift of the gab, please join us at [Morsbags.org](https://morsbags.org)

Images - Morsbags.org



Marine Litter Watch

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful share the results of the 2022 Marine Litter Report

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful's Chief Executive, Dr Ian Humphreys shares his thoughts on the latest Marine Litter Report.

"10 years ago, we set off on a journey with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs: to record the amount of Marine Litter that is plaguing our beaches and waterways in Northern Ireland.

[This] report shows in some ways that we have come far in advancing the debate around our waste problem, but sadly, they also show we have some distance to travel in preventing littering"

The 2022 Marine Litter Report shows some improvement. The overall number of items decreased however, a record 90% of litter found was made from plastic.

The overall number of litter items recorded in 2022, whilst lower when compared to the previous year, remain higher than those reported in 2020 and 2019.

However, Dr Humphreys believes that the rising awareness of the issue among dedicated volunteers gives us hope for the future.

KNIB have highlighted what the past ten years of volunteer support has achieved and how we can all make a difference in the future.

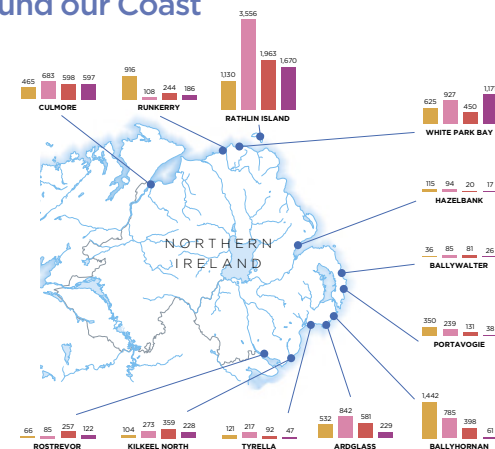
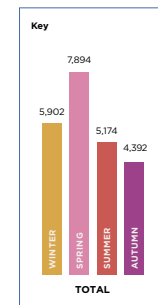


Images - Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful



Plastic Around our Coast

These mini graphs depict the seasonal variation in total number of plastic items found around our coast. These include both Single Use Plastic items and also items of fishing gear.



Marine Litter Watch

Ten Years of Volunteer Support

Over the past ten years, the marine litter survey has been supported by amazing volunteers.



Top: Volunteers collect the millionth piece of litter from our survey beaches, on Rathfriland beach in 2018.

Bottom left: Surveyors Connor, Jess & Paul on Rathfriland, January 2019.

Bottom right: Volunteer surveyor, Paul Moore.



Individuals and groups have dedicated their time to both carrying out surveys and clearing up beaches after surveys have taken place. We couldn't complete this important work without their efforts.

Paul Moore, local wildlife expert and retired entomologist is one such volunteer. Paul began giving his time to the surveys nine years ago and has been involved in many of the marine litter reports to date (although did not carry out surveys for this year's report).

Why volunteer?

For Paul, volunteering was borne out of a genuine interest in marine litter. "It started from going down to the beaches to walk, I'd see the litter and start picking it up. I was naturally curious to see what was being littered."

Although he has also taken part in clean ups, Paul has primarily volunteered his time to conducting beach surveys. This involves recording litter found on beach samples, following the OSPAR guidelines.

Over the years he's been involved in the surveys, Paul has noticed some trends:

"Plastic bags have gone down considerably. Disposable BBQs were getting quite common for

a while but have been going down in numbers again. Novel things- mobile phones are starting to turn up now, and I've even had one solar panel. Cotton buds seem to have decreased. You get some things from Scotland and England. I have had things off boats, from Indonesia and France. Haven't had anything from America, but you would get stuff from the continent."

Although witnessing the level of marine litter can be "frustrating", Paul says volunteering is good fun, nonetheless. "It's good exercise, you're walking up and down the beach continually, good physical exercise. It's nice to get out in the fresh air. Volunteers try it once, and then are queuing up to do it. You have good craic with other people. There's no point complaining about litter, until you get out and see how bad it is for yourself."

If you'd like to volunteer your time to the marine litter survey, please email enquiries@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org

And finally...

As our amazing volunteers have shown their dedication in combating marine litter, we have some tips for how we can all play our part at Christmas.



The Christmas season is a time where many of us see our plastic use increase - think shiny wrapping paper, glitter, tinsel, baubles, nets of satsumas and chestnuts - and the list goes on.

Here are some ideas to help you reduce plastic waste but still have fun this Christmas:

1. Give your wrapping skills a makeover

There are many ways to wrap without using plastic-backed wrapping paper. Fabrics tied with ribbons or string, brown paper that the kids can decorate and reusable gift boxes are just a few options. Or you can even try the ultimate challenge of Furoshiki or Fukusa - a technique which uses traditional Japanese gift-wrapping cloths.

2. Go retro with the decorations

Decorations containing foil, fake snow, glitter can all contribute to plastic waste, creating microplastics and polluting the oceans.

Try using decorations à la the 1980's by making paper chains, using cut-outs from old cards or creating a home-made wreath from fruits, flowers, greenery.



What Can You do to Make a Difference?

You can make a difference in your local maritime environment in many ways. Live Here Love Here and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful offer something for everyone who has a passion for making a difference.



Healthy Oceans, Healthy Minds

Healthy Oceans, Healthy Minds is an annual invitation for communities and individuals to come together and reconnect with the full array of our waterways. This programme takes place every summer and Autumn each year with the aim of achieving five goals:

- 1) Inspiring and re-establishing people's connection with our seas and oceans.
- 2) Raising awareness of the benefits a healthy marine environment can make to our physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- 3) Educating people on alternative choices/habits they can adopt that help protect our oceans from further damage and pollution.
- 4) Motivating and empowering people to take individual positive actions to protect our seas and oceans.
- 5) Celebrating and showcasing groups connecting people to blue spaces.

If you have an idea for an event email: enquiries@liveherelovehere.org



Adopt A Spot

Adopt A Spot is a community-based volunteer programme focused on minimising litter and promoting civic pride. Families, community groups, youth groups, schools, businesses and sporting associations are all encouraged to help foster a healthier, greener and cleaner Northern Ireland by adopting and caring for a neglected area. By helping improve just one spot at a time, we can help tackle litter that ends up in our waterways and beaches. Your adopted Spot should be safe and accessible for conducting clean-up activities and within a reasonable distance from you.

It is so easy to take part and we have a dedicated team to help you on your journey towards making our environment better. If you want to find out more information about how you could Adopt A Spot email adoptaspot@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org



Big Spring Clean & Grant Support

Live Here Love Here regularly runs grant support programmes to help support groups and communities in their fight against our litter problem. Make sure to check out Live Here Love Here's social media channels and website to see what support you or your group could get to help you on your journey.

Live Here Love Here also runs the Big Spring Clean annually, which is open to individuals, schools, groups and businesses from all communities who want to rid their local environment of litter and discarded rubbish. This is a great way to connect with other like-minded groups who want to do little actions that can make a big difference.

Visit www.liveherelovehere.org

You can read the report in full [here](#)

Images - Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful

Marine Litter Watch

3. Grow your own tree

If you are looking for a tree this Christmas, you could check out the growing trend for potted Christmas trees. These can be used indoors then, moved outside and used year after year.



4. Give the gift of time

Instead of a material gift, consider organising a fun activity, day out or experience with your loved ones.

You could even combine this time with volunteering and fresh air by partaking in a beach or river clean in your area or wherever you might be staying over the festive period.

Across

3. A material found commonly in litter.
6. A vessel that travels on water, frequently creating litter.
7. An area beside the ocean, usually covered in sand.
8. Water flows through a _____ towards the ocean.

Down

1. An area where animals live, that is harmed by littering.
2. A way to sustainably dispose of litter.
4. Trash/garbage, left where it shouldn't be.
5. A large body of water, affected by Marine litter.
6. A place where you should put your litter.

Across 3 Plastic, 6 Boat, 7 Beach, 8 River
Down 1 Habitat, 2 Recycle, 4 Litter, 5 Ocean, 6 Bin



Marine Litter Watch



Photo Gallery

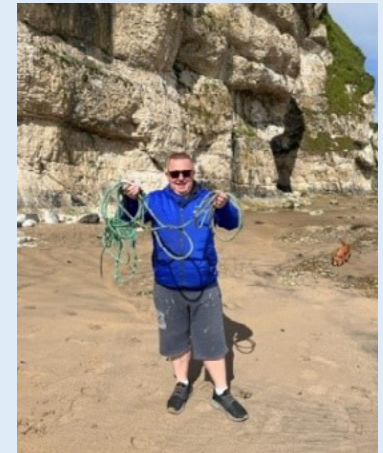
MFD staff, friends and family showcase their litter-clearing efforts



MFD's Annika Clements and family, Downhill



MFD's Brendan O'Kane,
Loughshore



Darran Benham,
White Park Bay



MFD'S David Thompson & daughters Alyvia-Beth (6) & Arabella (4),
Killyleagh



Marine

Litter Watch



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For further information on the work of the DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division,
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