

Join an MCS beach clean - there are events all through the year including...

→ Big Beach Clean-up 7th to 13th May 2015

→ Great British Beach Clean 18th to 21st September 2015

Find out more and register for events at www.mcsuk.org/beachwatch

Join our online community [f facebook.com/mcsuk](https://www.facebook.com/mcsuk) [t twitter.com/mcsuk](https://twitter.com/mcsuk)



“ It was great to see the effort made by all volunteers during the event and watching people crawling on the sand and sifting through the seaweed clumps for every piece of plastic debris was a fulfilling and indeed entertaining sight! I look forward to the next one.” Tom Shelley - Devon

“ It was a fabulously sunny day on the beach in Plymouth and so many volunteers turned up - I was grateful for the support and stimulated by peoples' enthusiasm for this amazing cause. From plastic fishing wire to beached mattresses, we picked it all up!” Harriet Robins - Plymouth

“ To maintain a quality holiday experience, we all need to keep our beaches clean and tidy, which is why we joined forces with the MCS for the Great British Beach Clean. Not only is this activity important to protect marine life, it is also vital for tourism.” Stephen Griffiths - Regional Director at Parkdean



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Marine Conservation Society

Tel: 01989 566017 Email: info@mcsuk.org Web: www.mcsuk.org

Over Ross House, Ross Park, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7QQ
Scottish office: 11A Chester Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7RF

Registered Charity No (England and Wales): 1004005 Registered Charity No (Scotland): SC037480



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Great British BEACH CLEAN

2014 Report



Welcome to our annual beach litter report!

In 2013 our fantastic volunteers broke a 20 year record when they found 2,309 items of litter on every kilometre of beach cleaned – the highest amount since we started our annual September cleans!

Well, guess what? The 2014 figure is even higher. A whopping 2,457 bits of litter were collected per kilometre of British beaches cleaned last year. It's a depressing figure. But thanks to the hard work of our volunteers, we have irrefutable evidence that beach litter is an ever increasing problem - one that needs to be tackled now.

Last September's Great British Beach Clean broke other records too. There were more volunteers, more bits of plastic found, more volunteer hours spent cleaning, and more pieces of rubbish removed from beaches than ever before.

So a massive thank you to everyone who took part, either as an organiser or a volunteer, for your back breaking and record breaking efforts!

We hope this report will not only have you rushing to sign up for next year's event – details on the back page - but also give you some habit changing ideas so you can be sure you're doing your bit to reduce beach litter.

Thank you,

Charlotte MCS Beachwatch Officer



Scuba diver and TV presenter, **Miranda Krestovnikoff** helped clean up Porthtowan:

“I didn't expect to find much litter as the council had done their daily clean, so I was shocked to see how many plastic bottle tops and tiny plastic pieces we collected. In the end we found over 3000 litter items, including a pair of pants! People of all ages took part – from young children to great-grandmothers. Everyone came away with a new understanding of the scale of the impact of plastic once it gets into the sea – how it breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces that are easily eaten by sea creatures and very hard to remove from the environment.”



21 years of Beachwatch

Since 1994 we've collected...

5.3 million
bits of litter



weighing
over **150**
tons



from nearly
3,000 kilometres of beaches!

Over the last decade almost all the different types of litter found on our beaches have increased...



Plastic pieces



Wet wipes



Fishing line



Wrappers (crisps, sweets, lollies and sandwiches)



Plastic bottle caps and lids



Balloons



Cigarette lighters

Only a few have gone down...



Cotton bud sticks



Cigarette packets

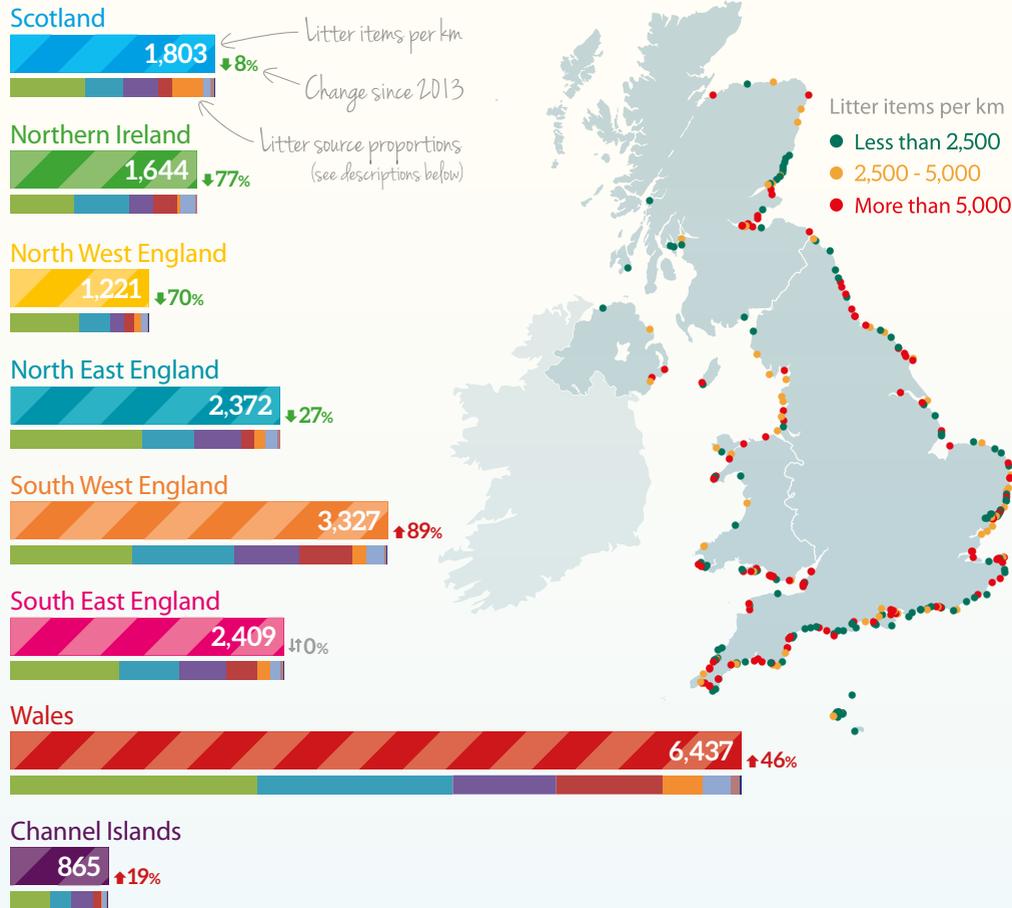
BEACHES



VOLUNTEERS



What's the story around the UK?



The litter our volunteers find is recorded according to what it is and where it's likely to have come from.

As always, most of the litter we found came from the **PUBLIC** - plastic bags, drink bottles, food containers, drinks cans, dog poo bags, glass bottles, party poppers and balloons have all had a helping hand from humans on their journey to the beach.

There are tiny little **PLASTIC PIECES** that can't be identified.

NON SOURCED litter is from sources that are hard to establish - bits of rubber, cloth, pieces of metal, wood, paper, insulation.

FISHING LITTER includes line, net, crab pots and tops, fish boxes, weights, lures and hooks.

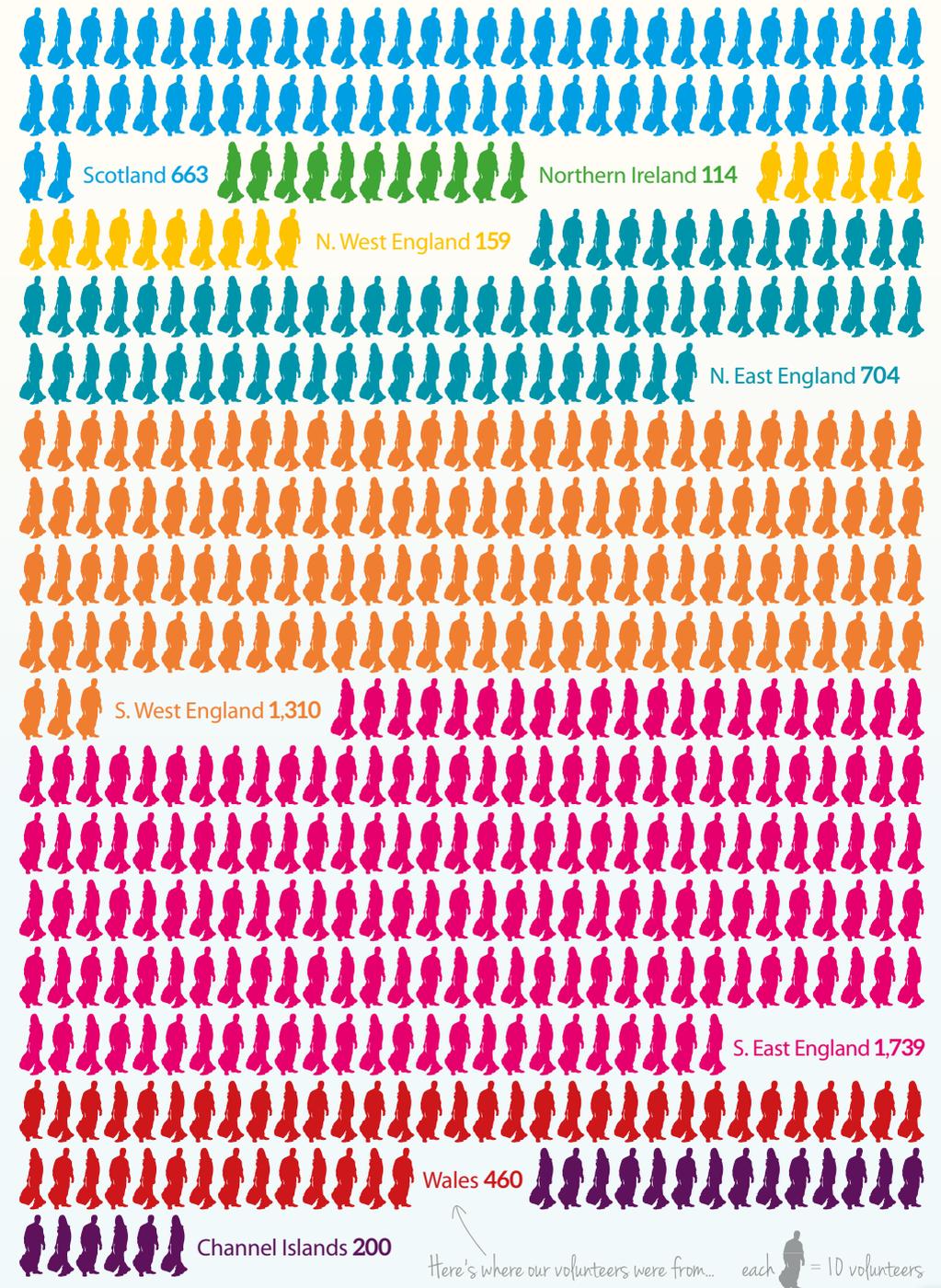
SEWAGE RELATED DEBRIS is made up of wet wipes, cotton bud sticks, condoms, toilet fresheners and nappies - stuff that some people happily stick down the loo when it really belongs in the bin.

Lots of stuff gets dropped, lost or thrown overboard from small craft to massive cargo ships - this is **SHIPPING LITTER** and can include pallets, oil drums and bits of rope.

FLY TIPPED rubbish is stuff that has been dumped on purpose on our beaches. It's generally big stuff like traffic cones, car parts, appliances and paint tins.

Thankfully we don't find much **MEDICAL** stuff, but it does turn up - inhalers, plasters, syringes.

5,349 volunteers cleaned and surveyed 301 beaches



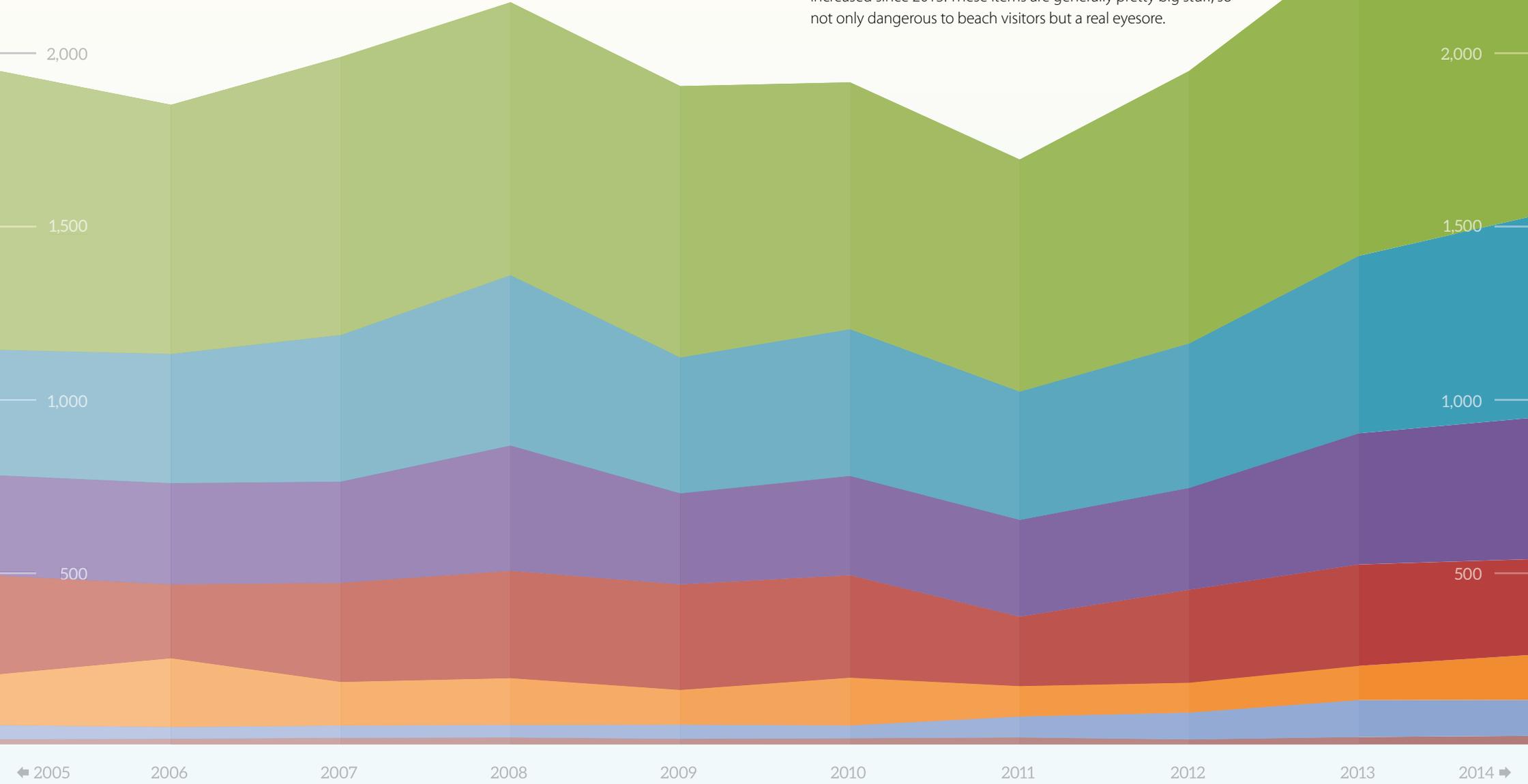
A decade of dirtiness

In the last ten years there's been a huge hike in the amount of litter found on UK beaches – it's gone up over 20%.

Our graph clearly shows the ten year trend.

We love our plastic stuff – it's tough, comes in all different shapes and sizes and when it's not needed anymore we just chuck it away. What's not to like? Trouble is it gets smaller and smaller and ends up on our beaches and the more we love plastic – the more we find. We need to change our behaviour – find out how overleaf.

- PUBLIC
- PLASTIC PIECES
- NON SOURCED
- FISHING LITTER
- SEWAGE RELATED DEBRIS
- SHIPPING LITTER
- FLY TIPPED



Sadly most of the litter we find on beaches can be traced back to the general public. But there is good news – compared to other sources of litter – the percentage of public litter has gone down over the last two years. However the volume has increased – so we're finding more items in every kilometre cleaned.

Fishing litter is a regular find on our beaches. Anglers love the coast and although some deliberately ditch line and hooks, most will accidentally lose their kit or leave it behind. Thanks to our 'Hang on to your Tackle' campaign there's been an increased awareness of the need to dispose of fishing litter safely.

Our beaches are a magnet for fly-tipping – in fact fly tipped items have increased since 2013. These items are generally pretty big stuff, so not only dangerous to beach visitors but a real eyesore.

the plastic challenge!



We just don't need all the plastic bags and bottles that pass through our hands every day

Join the hundreds of people saying "no" to single use plastics, whilst raising money to fight plastic litter.

From
1st – 30th June 2015
we're challenging you
to give up plastic!

But how long can you last? A day? A week? A month? Longer?

Plastic Challengers will try to reduce their plastic usage in all sorts of ways - giving up single use plastic products, like plastic bottles, plastic bags or ready meals.

Getting past the first hurdle of the weekly shop is a challenge in itself. Just about everything is covered in plastic which then goes straight in the bin!

Join the **Plastic Challenge** community on www.mcsuk.org/plasticchallenge and [#plasticchallenge](https://twitter.com/plasticchallenge)

Plastic in your shower gel, particles in your toothpaste – why we all need to

Giving your body a good buff, scrub or wash may make you feel fabulous all over, but what you're swilling down the plughole is making our oceans sick.

Tiny plastic particles are lurking in hundreds of personal care products currently on sale in the UK.

We're flushing plastics into the sea – contributing to a growing 'plastic soup'.

Thank you if you've pledged to 'Scrub it Out' and only use products that don't contain the following – polyethylene/polythene (PE), polypropylene (PP), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA), nylon.

Yet all those tiny plastic beads could be replaced by environmentally alternatives such as anise seeds, sand, salt or coconut – the very materials that were used before plastics!

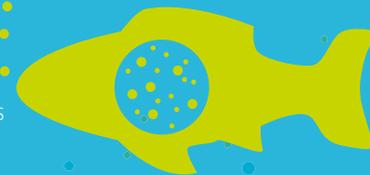
If you haven't taken the pledge – please do so here:



Scrub it out!

Scrubbed out!

Well done to manufacturers including Lush who have removed all plastic pieces from their products already, and Green People and Neal's Yard- who have never used microplastics in their products. Johnson & Johnson, L'Oreal and Unilever have stopped putting plastic pieces into any of their new products and hope to find substitutes for microbeads in their existing products by the end of this year. IKEA has pledged not to sell any products with microbeads.



There's good news from around the globe too. In Illinois, a manufacturing ban on the production of personal care products containing microbeads will be in place by the end of 2018. And in New Jersey a bill to ban all microbeads in toothpastes was passed by the state Assembly and now waits Senate action.

Bathroom Blitz

What are you putting down the pan?

Much of the litter we find on our beaches starts off in our bathrooms – it's a disgusting thought, but it's true.



In 2014 the number of wet wipes found on UK beaches increased by more than 50% compared to 2013 – 35 of them in every kilometre cleaned!

Wet wipes include moist toilet tissue – there's been an annual growth in sales in recent years - face wipes and make-up removal wipes.

There's a common misconception that they're all flushable – but wet wipes don't break down like toilet tissue because they are made of tougher fibres. Some even contain plastic such as polyester.



A sheet of toilet paper disintegrates in seconds, while a so-called flushable wipe can remain intact for more than half an hour!



Other things we use in the bathroom that should go into the bin but instead go down the pan, rose by **more than 20%** – sanitary towels, panty liners, backing strips and the like.

Cotton bud stick finds have increased by **just under 20%** on their 2013 levels – and although that's disappointing, they've been steadily decreasing since a peak in 2006. Our lobbying of manufacturers has paid off – but we need more of them to replace plastic sticks with cardboard ones.



What can we all do?

Literally don't put anything down the loo that isn't pee, poo or paper! If we all kept to that simple rule our beaches would be a whole lot cleaner.



NOTHING BUT THE 3 Ps PEE, POO OR PAPER

MCS is working with industry

We've been working with water companies to find ways of helping customers understand why baby and face wipes should not be put down the toilet.

Water companies estimate that about **70% of blockages are avoidable**, and disposing of wipes in the bin and not the loo could make a real difference in keeping drains clear.

Marine Conservation Society and **Keep Scotland Beautiful** have received funding from **Zero Waste Scotland** to run a pilot project in Fife to tackle Sewage Related Debris (SRD) through education in schools. Sex education rarely focuses on how to dispose of sanitary items so we'll be running workshops to encourage behaviour change and reduce SRD at Scottish beaches.



All of the above has been made possible through the MCS-led Marine Litter Action Network, which has seen conservationists and industry working together over a year to make real difference to how we deal with marine litter – its issues and solutions.

What's up with Wales?

We think it's fair to say that Wales has a rough deal when it comes to beach litter.

In 2014 the amount of litter per kilometre in Wales was almost 6,500 – more than two and half times that of the UK as a whole! Litter density in the country has been increasing annually since 2011 but a 46% increase between 2013 and 2014 is a record.

Where's it all from?

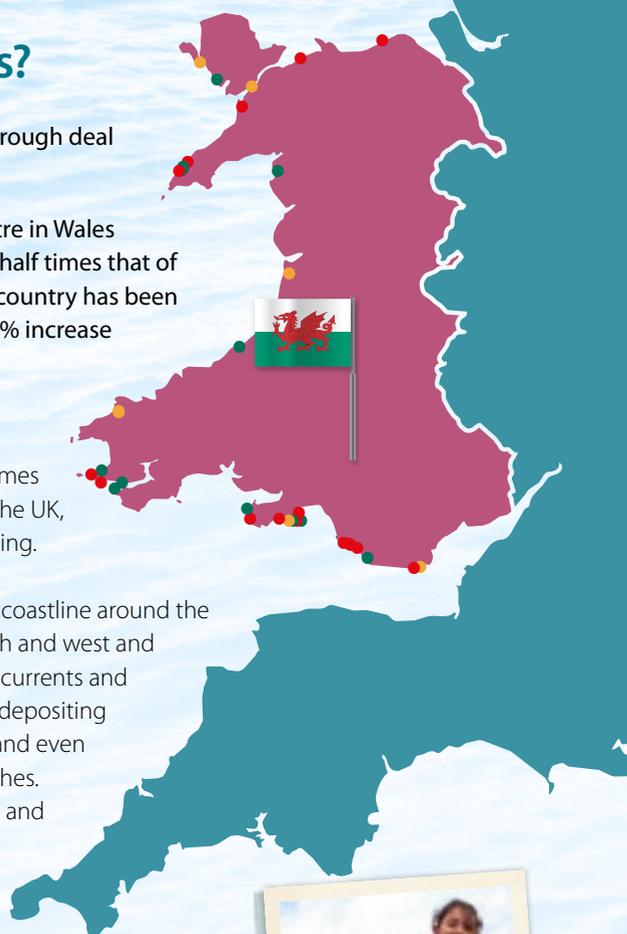
A smaller percentage of litter in Wales comes from the public than most of the rest of the UK, but a higher percentage comes from fishing.

Wales has some of the most picturesque coastline around the UK. It juts out into the Irish Sea to its north and west and the Bristol Channel to the south, so both currents and prevailing winds may be instrumental in depositing marine litter from many other countries and even from across the Atlantic onto Welsh beaches. Wales' estuaries are busy shipping routes, and the Irish Sea has lots of ferry and fishing boat traffic which could account for certain types of litter washing up on Welsh shores.

We want to find out more about litter patterns on Wales' beaches and hope to do more research in the future.

Does this mean the picture in Wales is never likely to improve?

No... We can all do our bit to help stop Wales being so littered. Different beaches have their own problems – at some it's fly tipping (report it to the police), at others it's stuff from our bathrooms (think about what you put down the toilet - remember the 3 Ps: pee, poo and paper only), elsewhere it's fishing litter (ask about the port waste reception facilities for shipping and anglers or try to install **Hang on to your Tackle** waste bins - see our website for details).



Foreign invasion

Litter knows no boundaries and some of what we find on the beaches of the UK comes from the near continent, whilst other bits arrive from much further afield.



Last September we picked up litter from Japan, Holland, Spain, Belgium, China, Russia and Ireland.

We think far more than what we recorded as foreign litter is actually coming from abroad. The only way to identify foreign litter is by labels, and they tend to come off quite quickly in the sea.



It's tricky to work out how all this stuff arrives on UK beaches – it could have been thrown overboard from foreign vessels or it may have bobbed here on the currents. We find it odd that with all the messages put in bottles over the years, more don't end up on our beaches – we can only assume that they're still out there in the sea or washed up on some far flung beach – never to be read!



The MCS September event feeds into Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup® – so whilst you were cleaning up in Hayling Island and Portstewart, people were doing the same in Hong Kong and Peru. You were part of a truly global event!

OCEAN CONSERVANCY'S
International
Coastal Cleanup®

Ocean Conservancy gather all the data from global cleans on exactly the same weekend every autumn and have been doing so since 1986 – it's called the Ocean Trash Index. Our data represents what's found in the UK. All this evidence of the stuff that's clogging up our oceans means organisations like MCS can effectively work towards stopping it getting there in the first place.



Marine litter is a *global* issue...
...which needs *global* action.

