



# *Great British* **BEACH CLEAN**

2019 Report



Includes the Great Channel Islands and Great Northern Irish **BEACH CLEAN**

## THE RESULTS ARE IN AFTER ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR OF BEACH CLEANS AND LITTER SURVEYING ACROSS THE UK, FROM SHETLAND TO LAND'S END AND FROM NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE CHANNEL ISLANDS.

We've been running the Great British Beach Clean for 26 years now, joined by so many passionate and dedicated organisers and volunteers who descend onto the coast year in, year out. It's fantastic to have the support of so many of you, without whom the Great British Beach Clean wouldn't be quite so great!

At every Great British Beach Clean our dedicated volunteers take on the role of citizen scientists and record the litter that they find over 100 metres. This data is submitted as the UK's entry to the International Coastal Clean-up, alongside those of beach cleans globally, contributing to a worldwide report on litter levels and helping to turn the tide on pollution in our ocean for good. For example, Great British Beach Clean data was used to campaign for the introduction of the 5p plastic bag charge, and in the years since the implementation of the levy we've seen numbers of bags on beaches drastically decline.

As more of us become acutely aware of the need to reduce, reuse and recycle single-use plastic items, we've seen a shift in the types of litter which are polluting our beaches. Plastic pieces broken off of larger items are the most prolific type of beach litter we found this year.

But it's not just plastic polluting our beaches, we've seen a 36% increase in drinks containers of all forms over the last 26 years. Whether that's plastic, glass or cans, all containers can potentially harm wildlife and beach visitors.

As the New Year approaches, we'd love to see governments across the UK commit to all-inclusive Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) which would reduce the ever-increasing volume of drinks containers we're seeing on our beaches. In 1994, when our records began, we collected an average of 28 drinks containers per 100m of UK beach, this year we collected an average of 38!

This data shows how vital it is that governments implement an all-inclusive DRS which would reduce the volume of all types of drinks containers on our beaches.

Per 100m of UK beach, an average of 558 litter items were found in 2019. Every piece of litter you clear from the beach and record means we can campaign to push for more urgent policy change to really stem the tide of litter and we're sure that the year ahead will be no exception.

Once again, thank you for your support, dedication and passion for keeping our beaches beautiful. See you again next year!

**Lizzie Prior** Beachwatch Officer

## WALES

Beach clean data gathered at the 2018 Great British Beach Clean has been invaluable in helping us put pressure on decision-makers in Wales to speed up legislation which could reduce litter at source. We've provided data and background for a plastics debate in Senedd and given evidence to the National Assembly's review on plastics; all made possible by the data gathered by our fantastic volunteers. Looking forward, we hope to see Wales be ambitious by putting a comprehensive, countrywide single-use plastics directive in place, to help to reduce the litter which pollutes our seas.

But it's not just single-use plastic on our radar! This year in Wales an average of 29 drinks containers of all forms were found for every 100m of beach surveyed. Over the last 26 years of data, we've seen a drastic increase in the number of glass bottles on Welsh beaches; in 1994 an average of 2 glass bottles were found per 100m of beach, this year we found an average of 8. Whilst it is still paramount that we #StopthePlasticTide, we must not lose sight of other litter items which can be just as harmful to marine life and beach visitors.

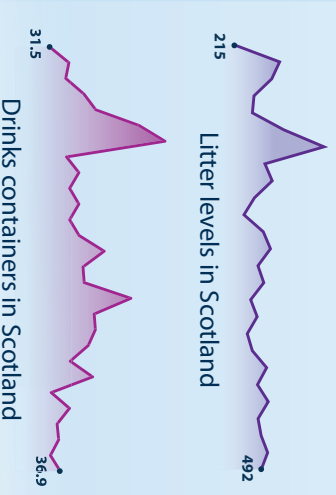
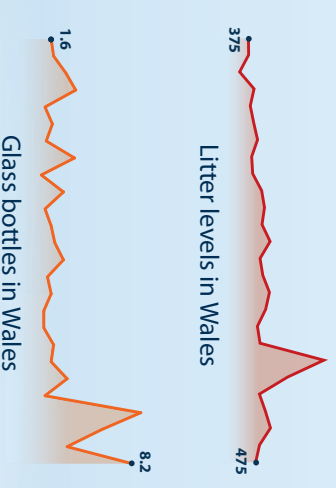
**Gill Bell** Head of Conservation Wales

## SCOTLAND

Another record breaking year for Scotland both in surveys, volunteers and government action! Thanks to all our amazing volunteers, data from our beach clean surveys in Scotland has helped provide the evidence we needed to secure the ban on plastic-stemmed cotton buds in collaboration with our friends at Frida. Plastic stems were the ninth most common litter item found this year. Over the next few years, we hope to see this figure drop.

We're so excited to be making further waves in Government and policy; the Scottish Government is designing a Deposit Return Scheme to be implemented in April 2021 which we hope will include all types of drinks containers including glass, metal and plastic bottles and cans. Our 26 years of data mirrors the upward trend across the UK of drinks containers being increasingly prevalent. At this year's beach cleans on Scottish shores we found an average of 37 drinks containers per 100m, compared to an average of 31 in 1994. With 2020 being the Year of Coasts and Waters in Scotland we look forward to seeing you all back on the beach and will continue to use your data to stop the plastic tide once and for all!

**Calum Duncan** Head of Conservation Scotland



**Glass bottles in Wales**

**Drinks containers in Scotland**



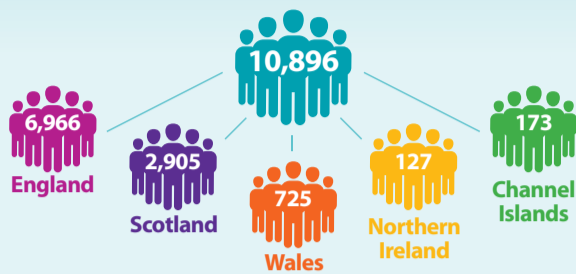
Sand Bay, North Somerset, England



Camnoid, Edinburgh, Scotland

# Great British BEACH CLEAN 2019 Report

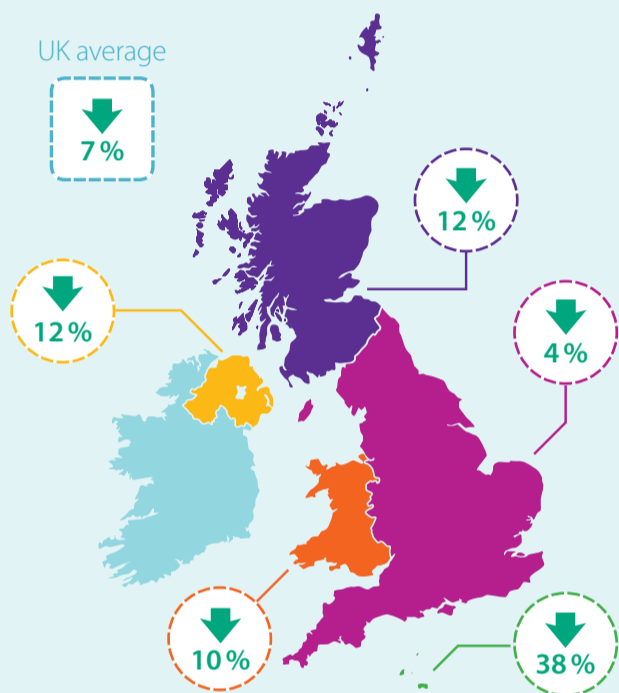
## How many volunteers took part?



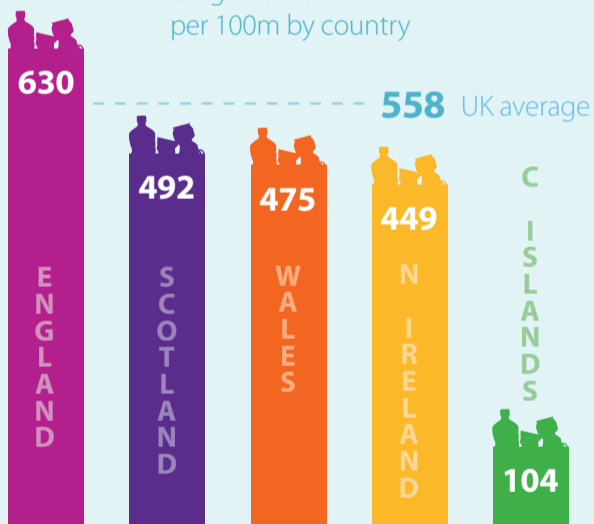
## How much litter did we find?

% increase or decrease since 2018

UK average



Average number of items per 100m by country



## Where did it come from?

Average number of items per 100m



**44.6%**  
Non-sourced

Hard to know where it's from – mainly because it's too tiny to identify



**30.4%**  
Public

Litter that the public has not disposed of correctly – usually left on beaches, blown in off the street, or carried by waterways



**14.7%**  
Fishing

All the things from lobster pots to fishing nets, that help anglers and commercial fishermen catch seafood



**5.9%**  
Sewage Related Debris

Sanitary products and other household items that are flushed down the loo but should go in the bin



**3.3%**  
Shipping

Objects lost, or thrown overboard from small craft or massive ships



**1.0%**  
Fly-tipped

Illegally dumped items like TVs, mattresses and tyres



**0.2%**  
Medical

Pill packets to syringes

## What did we find?

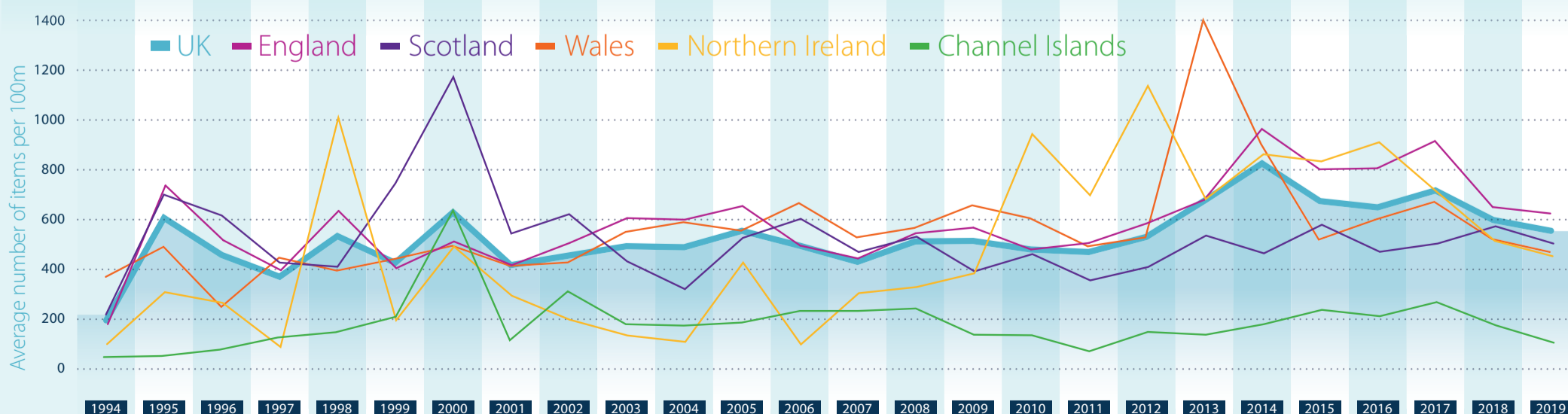
Average number of items per 100m



## How many beaches were cleaned?



## UK litter trend 1994 – 2019



# You don't have to wait until September to clean a beach!

Get involved all year round at  
[www.mcsuk.org/beachwatch](http://www.mcsuk.org/beachwatch)



Join MCS as a member today! [www.mcsuk.org/join](http://www.mcsuk.org/join)

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📍 Marine Conservation Society, Overcross House, Ross Park, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 7US

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