



Marine Litter Issues Overview

WFO tracks the latest news and developments on marine litter to bring you its new monthly Marine Litter Issues Overview. Working on the issue? Send us your story to be in next month's overview!



2015 Great British Beach Clean



Seabed pollution

Marine Conservation Society reports record-breaking figures

The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) recently released their report on the 2015 Great British Beach Clean, announcing record-breaking figures on volunteers and litter – the highest in over 20 years. Throughout 2015, over 6 000 volunteers came together to collect litter along 340 UK beaches. The MSC recorded an average of almost 3 300 pieces of trash per kilometer, filling over 2 500 bin bags and totaling an overall 34% increase in litter compared to 2014. Common items include bottle caps and lids, string and rope, cotton bud sticks, cutlery, trays and straws, as well as fishing nets and cigarette stubs.

With over 8 000 bottles picked up along beaches in 2015, the MCS calls for deposit return schemes to be put in place. MCS Beachwatch Officer Lauren Eyles states: "studies have shown that a [deposit] scheme can reduce the amount of littered drink containers, lead to more recycling and contribute to the circular economy – where resources are used again and again to extract maximum value."

Read the report [here](#)

Sources: [BBC](#), [MCS](#)

PET degradation brought to light in new study

A scientific report was recently published and provides a first insight into the degradation process of PET in marine environments. For the study, bottles made of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) were collected from the submarine environment of the Ionian waters in Greece and analyzed for their level of degradation using infrared spectroscopy.

The findings of the study show that plastics follow a different degradation pattern on the sea floor compared to those in laboratory studies. Indeed, in laboratories, hydrolysis appears to cause the most important degradation, in which a chemical breakdown of the material is due to its reaction with water. However, this study shows that the initial stage for degradation could have been brought on by the absorption of UV radiation. UV light would alternate the surface of the PET and bottles would then sink to the bottom of the sea. The study concludes that the degradation of plastics is very subjective to its local environment, creating conditions difficult to reproduce in laboratories.

Read the report [here](#)



Georgetown, Guyana



Guyana ban on Styrofoam

The Caribbean takes action against marine litter

Countries in the Caribbean are taking initiatives to tackle the problem of marine litter. From April 1st onwards, it will become illegal to import and use Styrofoam as the Expanded Polystyrene Ban Regulation will come into force. Polystyrene is not recyclable in Guyana and improper disposal has cost the country millions to clear from drains, alleyways and roadways. Styrofoam makes up about two to five percent of the waste stream in Guyana, mainly used as containers in the food industry.

Dominica is also working on banning Styrofoam in 2016. Antigua and Barbuda are hoping to phase out plastic bags by July. Though experts applaud the efforts, they also warn not to rush into banning plastics without considering the consequences and considering alternatives.

Sources: [Barbados Today](#), [Caribbean 360](#)

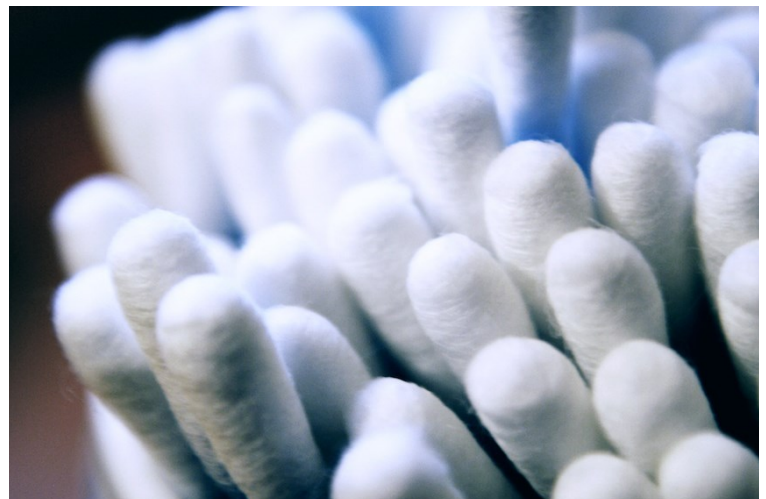
The switch to paper cotton bud stems

Victory was recently achieved for the campaign against plastic cotton bud sticks when two large companies pledged to switch to paper – an initiative that could reduce plastic sticks littering waterways and washing up on beaches. The UK supermarket Waitrose and Johnson & Johnson will transition from plastic to paper sticks for cotton buds by 2017.

Despite water companies pleading consumers not to, cotton buds are consistently flushed down the lavatory after usage. Cotton buds are small enough to slip through sewage treatments and end up polluting all waterways.

The environmental charity Fidra launched [The Cotton Bud Project](#) which is a new campaign that advocates for retailers to switch to paper cotton bud sticks. It is also urged for consumers to dispose of their household waste properly and responsibly.

Sources: [Telegraph](#), [Salt](#)



Cotton buds



Pollution from cotton bud sticks



Keep Wales Tidy



Pembrokeshire

Urging for the proper disposal of collected litter

Beach cleanup organizers are being urged to coordinate the proper disposal of the litter they collect. At two locations along the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park of Wales, piles of collected litter were incinerated instead of going to recycling. Due to these recent events, local authorities and Keep Wales Tidy are requesting that measures be taken ahead of time to ensure the disposal of any collected waste on site in order to avoid situations that could endanger people, wildlife and the environment. National Park Authority Ranger Manager Libby Taylor said: "We are lucky that so many people volunteer to help keep our beautiful beaches clean, but it's sad to think that this hard work can be undone by someone needlessly setting fire to litter that it has taken volunteers hours to collect."

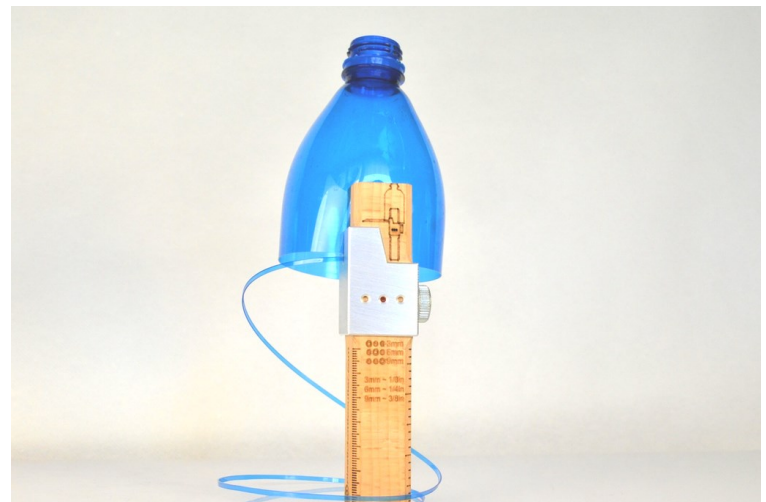
Source: [Pembrokeshire Coast National Park](#)

Turning plastic bottles into rope

Two French inventors have created a device that allows anyone to instantly turn plastic bottles into rope. This Plastic Bottle Cutter is pocket-sized and simply consists of a wooden handle, a razor blade and a cutting guide. The inventors of the gadget, Pavel and Ian, guarantee that the tool can easily slice any plastic bottle into one long and thin strand of plastic once the bottom of the bottle has been cut off. Pavel and Ian hope their invention is also a solution to reduce plastic bottle waste in the environment and minimize the volume plastic bottles take up when transported and sent to recycling facilities.

The strand of plastic can be used instead of a cord with an ordinary bottle creating string capable of withstanding a load of seven kilograms. They state: "Our first sample was kept in the sun and on the street for two years now and it still holds the load." At the time of writing, the project has received over € 300 000 in funding on [Kickstarter](#).

Watch the short video [here](#)



The Plastic Bottle Cutter



The Plastic Bottle Cutter

When words aren't enough



A local resident dries her clothes by a polluted river filled with plastic waste in Beijing, China, on March 19, 2016. [View the story](#)



Indonesian boys play swings on a polluted area at a slum in Jakarta, Indonesia, on March 16, 2016. [View the story](#)