



PRESS RELEASE UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 WEDNESDAY 29th OCTOBER 2025

Retro rubbish exposes the lasting legacy of plastic pollution

Nearly six and a half thousand volunteers (6,482) joined the [Marine Conservation Society's](#) Great British Beach Clean this year, uncovering crisp packets, sweet wrappers and bottles dating back over 40 years, showing the lasting impact of single-use plastic.

Running from 19th – 28th September 2025, and supported by [holidaycottages.co.uk](#), the annual event saw thousands of volunteers head to beaches across the UK and Channel Islands. Together, they collected a staggering 3,516 kilograms of litter – roughly the weight of 18 adult bottlenose dolphins.

Cleaning almost 100 miles of coastline (97 miles), volunteers removed and recorded 232,229 pieces of litter, data which will help the charity influence policy and campaign for cleaner seas.

This year, a haul of retro rubbish made headlines among volunteers, including a 3p Golden Wonder crisp packet dating back to the 1970s, a late 1990s McDonalds BBQ dip packet, part of a McCowan's sweet wrapper from the 2000s, part of an old brand Abbey National bank card, and a running race number from 2012.

Clare Trotman, Beachwatch Officer at the Marine Conservation Society, said, "It's easy to feel nostalgic about old brands and logos, but these items should never have lasted this long. Finding packaging from decades ago shows why tackling single-use plastic at the source is vital. Plastic breaks down into microplastics threatening marine life which can ingest or become entangled in them, so every piece of data our volunteers collect helps us not only clear litter from the beach, but push for a cleaner, healthier ocean."

The Marine Conservation Society will reveal results of the types of rubbish collected in its annual *State of our Beaches* report in March 2026, reporting on trends and the most frequently found litter items from the last year. It is plastic, however, that has been consistently high in beach cleans over the charity's 31-year-old data log. The *2024 State of our Beaches* report showed that nine of the top ten litter items were made of plastic.

Catherine Gemmell, Policy and Advocacy Manager at the Marine Conservation Society, said, "It's both fascinating and deeply concerning to see how long our litter lasts. A crisp packet from the 1980s looks almost as fresh as if it had been dropped

yesterday. These finds are a time capsule of our throwaway culture and a clear reminder that single-use plastics don't just disappear. We must see commitment and action from the governments of the UK to reduce single-use plastics, and we're looking forward to the Deposit Return Schemes for drinks cans and bottles coming into force in 2027."

Data from the Great British Beach Clean has helped secure major policy changes, from the carrier bag charges, which reduced plastic bags on surveyed beaches by 80%, to the bans on plastic-stemmed cotton buds, and the forthcoming Deposit Return Schemes set to launch across the UK in October 2027.

Kieran Keohane, Head of Sustainability at holidaycottages.co.uk, said, "We're thrilled to continue our partnership with the Marine Conservation Society and to support their flagship event. The coast and the ocean hold a special place in the hearts of so many of our guests, and with over half of our cottages located by the coast, we're naturally passionate about protecting UK coastlines and spotlighting the need for collective action. We know how important the data is for affecting policy change, and therefore, we'll always assist in any way we can."

Volunteers from this year's Great British Beach Clean also reported some unexpected items: a hook-a-duck toy, a paddling pool, a gold wedding ring, a roll of vinyl wallpaper, in total 37 plastic flowers, and most disturbingly, a preserved crab in a jar.

Clare Trotman, Beachwatch Officer at the Marine Conservation Society, said, "Our volunteers never know what they'll uncover. From crisp packets reminiscent of childhood to the downright bizarre, it's a reminder of how much of our waste can end up in the ocean - and stay there for decades."

Retro rubbish finds from the Great British Beach Clean 2025:

McDonalds BBQ Dip packet - around the late 1990s



Running number – 2012



McCowan's sweet wrapper – around 2000



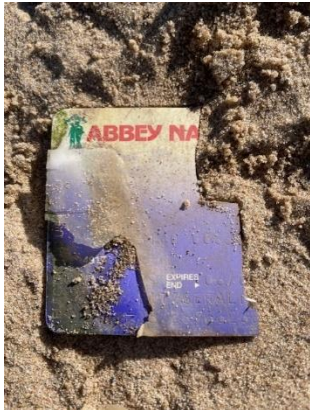
Walkers Salt & Vinegar crisps – 1996



Golden Wonder crisps – 3p price mark from early 1970s



Old brand **Abbey National** bank card, which changed to Santander in 2010 – from between 1997 – 2001



Please find [full res images here](#).

The Marine Conservation Society's volunteers run beach cleans year-round. To find out more visit: www.mcsuk.org/what-you-can-do/join-a-beach-clean

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Images

Please find high-res photographs of the weird items, along with images from this year's Great British Beach Clean [here](#).

Notes to editors

2025 Great British Beach Clean engagement results by country

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	Channel Islands
Number of beach cleans	301	99	56	4	9
Number of volunteers	4,598	1171	545	59	97
Amount of litter in kilograms	2,000	839	525	112	41
Length surveyed in metres	42,990	10,395	9,530	400	1,200

Full details of the litter found by volunteers from the Marine Conservation Society across 2025 will be published in March 2026 in the charity’s State of Our Beaches report.

Marine Conservation Society

The Marine Conservation Society is a leading UK environmental charity dedicated to protecting our ocean - defending crucial habitats, regenerating vital ecosystems and inspiring volunteers. The organisation unites communities, governments, and industry to champion science-based solutions for cleaner, healthier seas to tackle the climate and nature emergency.