

# Beachwatch

## Briefing to volunteers

### Introductions

Hello, my name is [xxxx], I'm a volunteer for the Marine Conservation Society. Thank you for coming today. Before we get started, I need to run through a few things.

For more than 30 years, the Marine Conservation Society has been the voice of the sea, defending our coastal habitats and species. We work towards a cleaner, better-protected, healthier ocean. One we can all enjoy.

**Below are some more details to include if you have time:**

- For a cleaner ocean, we find ways to prevent and clean up marine litter and pollution. And we use science to track the health of our waters.
- For a better-protected ocean, we secure spaces where species and habitats can recover. Only a sea full of life can absorb carbon and tackle climate change.
- For a healthier ocean, we promote sustainable fishing to minimise harm caused by harvesting resources. And we educate people so they can make informed decisions about the seafood they buy.

### The issues

Beach litter is unsightly, bad for tourism, damaging to fishing gear and dangerous for marine creatures which can eat it or get tangled in it.



Plastics are a particular problem and consistently make up over 60% of what's found on beaches.

Plastic never disappears, it just gets smaller and smaller – and enters into our food chain.



### About Beachwatch

Beachwatch is a beach cleaning and litter recording programme coordinated by the Marine Conservation Society to address this problem. It's been running for over 25 years and there are over 300 events all around the UK. Beach cleans and litter survey events take place all year round, but especially around the third weekend of September as part of the Great British Beach Clean.

The Great British Beach Clean is part of the International Coastal Cleanup and the data we collect represents the UK's entry to the Global Trash Tally. Litter knows no boundaries and we're proud to be part of global action to address the issue.

Our litter survey data goes into our national database, and we use it to raise awareness and run campaigns. We also use it to talk to manufacturers and governments to change policies and practices and stop litter from reaching the ocean.

## Health and safety bits

It's important we all keep safe when litter picking so here are a few things to note for health and safety.

You must all be wearing strong sturdy gloves, remember to not touch your face during the clean and don't forget to wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds after the clean or use a hand sanitizer until you can get to soap and water.

Since the Covid pandemic, please respect the decision of anyone who wishes to wear a face mask.

I have undertaken a risk assessment and I'd like to point out the following hazards [**refer to risk assessment**]. Please don't touch anything that looks like it might be dangerous or full of something nasty (containers, drums, unexploded shells or syringes). If you're unsure, ask me. Be careful about lifting heavy or semi-buried objects that could cause a strain injury - if in doubt don't lift!

Sharp items like metal or glass must not go in bin bags as they can rip the bags and cut your legs. Use a bucket if available or leave them until the end.

If you find needles and syringes - leave the item(s) where they are, notify myself and I will contact the landowner to remove.

## Explain the survey

There are two methods of collecting litter data: a paper form (which is available to download on our website) or our Beachwatch App which you can access here: [mcsuk.org/beachwatch-app](https://mcsuk.org/beachwatch-app).

### Do:

- Pick up every piece of litter you can find over 100m between the strandline (seaweed / high tide mark) and the back of the beach [**indicate the survey area**].
- Record every bit of litter on your survey form using a tally system or by using our Beachwatch App.
- Record each item based on what it is mostly made of.
- Ask for help if you're unsure how to record an item, or list it under 'other'. Be sure to include as much detail as possible about the item, and (if more than one) how many you have found.
- Note items which are from outside the UK and any unusual items, and take photos if possible.
- Ensure that you total up your item tally marks (if using a paper form) and complete the total column for each item.

### Don't:

- Pick up any litter you're unsure of - please point it out to me so I am aware of the item.
- Pick up anything natural - wood is fine to leave if not covered in resins or paints.



### Some slightly trickier items to identify:

- Cotton buds vs. lolly sticks: cotton bud sticks are thinner with notches at the ends.
- String vs. fishing net: net is usually green.

If available: The toilets can be located at [xxxx]. There will also be refreshments at [xxxx].

Does anyone have any questions?

Now, get into groups. Ideally, it's best to keep within members of your household but if this is not possible, please respect social distancing.

Each group needs one person to be logged into today's event on the app, or equipped with a paper survey form and a pen, and a bag.

In your groups, designate one person to add items to the app, or to add items to the paper form, one to hold the bag and the others to collect the litter – rotate tasks if you want to.

Everyone needs a pair of gloves – don't pick up anything with bare hands. **[if you have litter pickers mention these too]**.

We'll plan to finish at [state time] so meet back here by then. We can then weigh our litter and collect any paper forms.

If you need to leave sooner, just let me know and bring me your bag and the paper form (if you're using it). If you're using the Beachwatch App you can simply submit your data when you're done.

**You might want to run a competition e.g. for the most items collected, or the weirdest thing found – if so don't forget to mention it at your briefing.**

## Post clean debrief

**Once everyone has finished cleaning, collecting and recording their litter you might want to share some key information from the clean, such as:**

- Weight of rubbish collected.
- Who got the most / weirdest items.
- Key messages:
  - This is a great time to talk to people about how they can reduce single-use plastic in their day-to-day lives; from buying fewer plastic bottles, bags, coffee cups and straws, to choosing loose fruit and veg where they can.
  - Thank your volunteers for coming today. Let them know they can also support us financially by becoming a member of the Marine Conservation Society. Together we can make a difference.
  - There are also many other volunteering opportunities; from surveying seaweed to recording marine habitats. Everything they need to know is in the volunteering section of our website, where they can also register to become a volunteer if they haven't already done so.
  - Remind people that they can also check out our website and sign up to our e-newsletter to keep up-to-date on our campaigns and how they can get involved.

