

# Beachwatch

## SUFFOLK RESULTS 2018



KEY SUFFOLK FACTS 2018

# 46

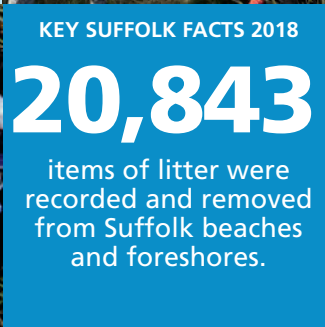
litter surveys were carried out on 32 beaches covering almost 6.5km of the Suffolk coast and estuaries.



KEY SUFFOLK FACTS 2018

# 1,323

volunteers took part in Beachwatch surveys in Suffolk.



KEY SUFFOLK FACTS 2018

# 1,204

plastic caps and lids were collected from Suffolk beaches and foreshores.

KEY SUFFOLK FACTS 2018

# 20,843

items of litter were recorded and removed from Suffolk beaches and foreshores.

KEY SUFFOLK FACTS 2018

# 77%

of litter collected in Suffolk Great British Beach Cleans, was made of plastic or polystyrene.

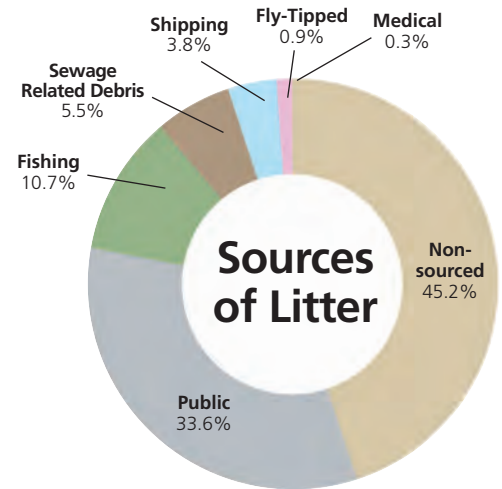


# Beach surveys

**The AONB is proud to present the results of the litter surveys carried out by volunteers in Suffolk as part of the Marine Conservation Society's Beachwatch schemes in 2018. The results are absolutely outstanding!**

The unprecedented level of involvement in Suffolk, helps to illustrate the extent of the problem of rubbish on our beaches and estuaries, and also the fantastic efforts made by Suffolk volunteers to help tackle the problem. Beachwatch is a national scheme organised by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and coordinated in Suffolk by the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Whilst Beachwatch surveys take place at quarterly intervals, the Great British Beach Clean (GBBC) is the annual event taking place on the third weekend of September and is the UK contribution to the International Coastal Clean-Up.



Top 10 Litter Items				
Rank	Litter item (Categories are taken from the MCS Beachwatch Volunteer Survey Sheet)	Total items found	Items/100m	% of total litter
1	Plastic / polystyrene pieces: 0 - 2.5 cm (small)	4660	101	23.5
2	Plastic / polystyrene pieces: 2.5 - 50 cm (large)	2487	54	12.5
3	Packets: crisp / sweet / lolly (inc sticks) / sandwich	1569	34	7.9
4	String / cord / rope: thickness 0-1cm	1270	28	6.4
5	Plastic caps / lids	1204	26	6.1
6	Cotton bud sticks	797	17	4.0
7	Cigarette stubs	477	10	2.4
8	Plastic cutlery / trays / straws	472	10	2.4
9	Fishing line (angling)	363	8	1.8
10	Fishing rope	356	8	1.8
Grand Total		13655	297	68.8

**All 10** of the Top 10 Litter Items in Suffolk in 2018 were of **plastic** composition.

Please see the Marine Conservation Society website, [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org) for the Great British Beach Clean 2018 Final Report.

## Non-sourced 45.2%

We call it non-sourced because it's hard to work out where most of the litter we find comes from. It includes tiny little plastic and polystyrene pieces, bits of rubber, cloth, pieces of metal, wood, paper etc.

## Public 33.6%

Items like plastic bags, drinks bottles, food containers, drinks cans, dog poo bags, glass bottles, cigarette stubs and balloons have all had a helping human hand on their journey to the beach.

## Fishing 10.7%

If it helps you catch fish, we've found it – line, net, crab pots and tops, fish boxes, weights, lures and hooks.

## Sewage Related Debris 5.5%

Stuff people flush down the loo when it should go in the bin like condoms, cotton bud sticks, wet wipes, toilet fresheners etc.

## Shipping 3.8%

Lots of litter 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 0.9%

Illegally disposed of items, usually big items like white goods, TVs, car parts and paint tins.

## Medical 0.3%

Luckily we don't find much medical stuff, but it does turn up – pill packets, plasters, syringes and needles.

**Cover image:** The Felixstowe Society at Felixstowe organised by Keith and Elizabeth Horn and joined by staff from Damco and Nationwide, with Councillor Graham Newman (centre), Felixstowe Mayor 2018/19, and Councillor David Wood (right), Chairman of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.

# The importance of citizen science and people power!

By Lizzie Prior, Beach and River Clean Project Officer, Marine Conservation Society

The status quo can be a hard to thing to shift, where the reason to not change is because “we have been doing it like this for years”. If you ever wish to make a change in the world, evidence or proof of the issue is usually a key foundation to changing people’s minds and encouraging things to be different, to be better. If you then have the power of the people along with the data, well, it is impressive what can happen.

Getting that evidence in the first place can be a difficult one. When you want to get a lot of information from a large geographical area it can be almost impossible to obtain this from a small group of people, especially if you want to look at change’s over time. This is where citizen science is an incredible resource to obtain important scientific data. The more data you have, the more robust it is and helping draw conclusions and what the best steps may be.

Back in the early 1990’s, MCS knew litter was washing up on our beaches but what we didn’t know was the true extent of this issue across the UK and whether the situation was getting better or worse. There was no data out



there that we could use, so we decided to set up our own litter survey. Testing it out in 1993 and rolling it out officially in 1994, we wanted litter data across the whole of the UK, from the Shetland Islands, to Northern Ireland, to the Channel Islands. In order to get this information, we knew we had to call on the passionate volunteers around the UK to run a beach clean and litter survey on their local beaches and send us their litter data.

We are always blown away by the level of enthusiasm from our volunteers up and down the country that are happy to become a citizen scientist and help us collect that all-important litter data so we can collectively push for real change. Whatever the weather, our volunteers are out there removing litter off our beaches and ensuring they record what they find.

We receive surveys throughout the year as well as on our big flagship event in September called the Great British Beach Clean. This event aligns



with the International Coastal Clean-up, set up by an American charity called Ocean Conservancy. Over 100 countries take part in this event each year, running a beach clean and litter survey. It’s great to be a part of this global movement in tackling litter and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB have taken part in this event with us for many years.

Over the last 25 years we have received over 14,000 litter surveys from all corners of the UK. So once this litter data is entered into our database, what happens to it? Well, it can go to lots of different places! We write our own report after our Great British Beach Clean in September and send that data to Ocean Conservancy who run the International Coastal Cleanup. We also send our data to European groups so

*Continued on page 8*



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# Summary of results 2018

Beach No.	Beach Name	Organisation/Company	Number of surveys	Total volunteers	Length surveyed (m)	Total bags collected	Total weight (kg)	Total litter items	Average Items / 100m
1	Gunton: North Beach	SWT Waveney Valley Wildlife Group	1	41	100	2	5	546	546
2	Lowestoft, North	Local Group	1	2	100	1	5	134	134
3	Pakefield Beach: below Jolly Sailors pub	Sealite	1	11	100	1	7	161	161
3	Pakefield Beach: below Jolly Sailors pub	Local Group	1	45	100	1	2.7	371	371
4	Kessingland Beach	Parkdean Resorts	1	11	200	3	5	248	124
4	Kessingland Beach	ScottishPower Renewables	1	12	100	7	?	264	264
5	Covehithe, North	Avocet Academy Trust	1	15	150	2.5	19	456	304
6	Southwold: The Denes	Adnams	3	333	300	16	48	1374	458
7	Minsmere Haven	National Trust	1	21	100	2.5	6	239	239
8	Minsmere beach	RSPB Minsmere	1	8	200	5	?	237	119
9	Sizewell	Suffolk Wildlife Trust	1	45	100	2.5	8.2	202	202
10	Aldeburgh: Moot Hall to Lifeboat Station	Suffolk Wildlife Trust	2	72	200	7.5	15.75	773	387
11	Aldeburgh: Fort Green Car Park 1	MCS	1	25	100	1	9.5	523	523
11	Aldeburgh: Fort Green Car Park 1	Old Buckenham Hall School	2	35	200	6	4.5	464	232
11	Aldeburgh: Fort Green Car Park 2	Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB	1	7	100	1	1	137	137
12	Aldeburgh Martello Tower, south	Willis Towers Watson	1	9	200	3	16.5	229	115
13	Simpson's Saltings, North & South, River Ore	Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB	2	39	200	9	18.9	1654	827
14	Shingle Street: Coastguard Cottages to The Beacon	Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB	1	24	100	2	6.1	963	963
15	Shingle Street	Shingle Street Residents Association	1	26	100	5	?	175	175
16	Bawdsey Quay	Local Group	1	13	100	2	16	1092	1092
17	Felixstowe: 13th hole to The Dip	Felixstowe Landguard Rotary Club	1	13	100	0.25	0	30	30
18	Felixstowe: Cobbolds Point to Spa Pavilion	The Felixstowe Society	3	40	300	3	2.25	251	84
19	Felixstowe Pier, North	1st Felixstowe Sea Scouts	1	17	100	4	7.82	513	513
19	Felixstowe Pier, North	MCS	1	60	100	0.5	1.8	259	259
20	Felixstowe Beach: Pier to Orford Road	Skanska	1	8	1397	4	10	504	36
21	Felixstowe Beach: Manor Road Car Park to Orford Road	Plastic Action Champions, East Suffolk Greenprint Forum	1	39	100	0.25	0	65	65
22	Felixstowe: Manor Terrace	Beach Bonkers	1	32	100	0.5	1.5	263	263
23	Felixstowe: Port to Landguard Fort, ie. John Bradfield Viewing Area	Hutchison Ports (UK) Limited	1	48	100	8	15	144	144
24	Trimley Marshes, River Orwell	Galaxsea Divers, Ipswich	1	22	100	10	18.2	4051	4051
24	Trimley Marshes, River Orwell	Suffolk Wildlife Trust	1	141	100	5.5	4	2083	2083
25	Levington Foreshore, River Orwell	Levington Parish Council	1	12	100	0.5	?	47	47
26	Gun Towers to Mansbrook Grove, River Orwell	Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines	1	16	100	14	73	614	614
26	Gun Towers to Mansbrook Grove, River Orwell	Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB	1	10	100	13	75.75	447	447
27	South of Orwell Bridge, River Orwell	Transition Ipswich	1	16	40	2	15	168	420
28	Pipers Vale, River Orwell	The Insolvency Service	1	18	100	9	27	434	434
29	Woolverstone Marina, River Orwell	Waste Team, Suffolk County Council	1	5	100	4	32.32	301	301
30	Shotley: West from Sailing Club pier	British Divers Marine Life Rescue	1	13	400	6	37	344	86
31	Erwarton foreshore, River Stour	Erwarton Parish Council	1	9	100	1	6	58	58
32	Stutton Ness, River Stour	Stutton Parish Council	1	10	100	2	4.75	25	25
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>46</b>	<b>1323</b>	<b>6487</b>	<b>167.5</b>	<b>525.54</b>	<b>20843</b>	<b>432</b>

**Additional Commitment** In addition to the four seasonal Beachwatch surveys, many of our teams carry out beach cleaning more frequently, collecting beach litter on a monthly, weekly or even daily basis. Many local communities and individuals undertake independent beach cleans and we are very grateful to everyone for their valuable contribution in helping to look after the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and wider marine environment.

**Missing Data** Beachwatch events were also undertaken in 2018 by Hutchison Ports UK Safety, Health & Environment Department and Dedham Vale AONB. For various reasons, such as not submitting data to MCS or missing the deadline, the results from these events were unable to be included in the analysis of the Suffolk Results, but we would like to thank all of those involved for their efforts.

NB. In order for a beach clean to become an official Beachwatch survey, the event must be registered with MCS, the litter collected from a 100m section must be recorded and that data must be submitted to MCS within a specified timeframe.



**13**  
**Simpsons Saltings, North & South, River Ore**  
Organised by Lynn Allen, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.



**17**  
**Felixstowe: 13th hole to The Dip**  
Organised by Tim Pearse, Rotary Club of Felixstowe, Landguard.  
Photo courtesy of Rotary Club of Felixstowe, Landguard.



**18**  
**Felixstowe: Cobbolds Point to Spa Pavilion**  
Organised by Keith Horn, The Felixstowe Society, with Nationwide and Damco



**21**  
**Felixstowe: Manor Road car park to Orford Road**  
Organised by Debbie Wargate, Plastic Action Champions, East Suffolk Greenprint Forum.  
Photo courtesy of Debbie Wargate.



**23**  
**Felixstowe: John Bradfield Viewing Area**  
Organised by Rags Hope, Hutchison Ports UK.  
Photo courtesy of Hutchison Ports UK.

**1**  
**2** Lowestoft

**3**  
**4**

Kessingland  
**5** Wrentham

Southwold

Blythburgh  
**6** River Blyth  
Walberswick

Dunwich

**7**  
**8**



**24**  
**Trimley Marshes, River Orwell**  
Organised by Andrew Excell, SWT; Martin Agar, Suffolk Scouts and Steve Mitchell, BT.

Leiston **9**

Snape  
**10** Aldeburgh  
**11** River Alde  
**12**



**24**  
**Trimley Marshes, River Orwell**  
Organised by Naina Mistry, Galaxsea Divers, Ipswich.  
Photo courtesy of Galaxsea Divers, Ipswich.

Rendlesham

Orford

River Ore

Woodbridge

Rendlesham Forest

Waldringfield

Hollesley **13**  
**14**  
**15**

Bawdsey **16**

River Deben



**27**  
**South of Orwell Bridge, River Orwell**  
Organised by Charles Croydon, Transition Ipswich.  
Photo courtesy of Transition Ipswich.



**26**  
**Gun Towers to Mansbrook Grove, River Orwell**  
Organised by Will Eden, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.

Ipswich

Alton Water

River Stour

**28**  
**27**  
**26**  
**29**

River Orwell

Shotley **25**  
**24**  
**30**  
**31**  
**32**

Holbrook

Harwich



**32**  
**Stutton Ness, River Stour**  
Organised by Chris Leach, Stutton Parish Council.  
Photo courtesy of Stutton Parish Council.

# Comparing 14 years of outstanding results

By Steph Poole, Volunteer Student Placement Officer, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

Since 2005, the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB has produced an annual report in conjunction with the Marine Conservation Society (who collate the data) summarising the fantastic volunteer effort in the Suffolk Beachwatch programme. With 14 years-worth of results and increased public awareness and concern about marine litter, we thought it timely to produce a comparison of some of the findings since 2005. As well as organising Beachwatch events – amongst many other things during her time with us – Volunteer Student Placement Officer, Steph Poole, has been looking at the data collected in Suffolk over the years.

## Top 5 Litter Items, 2005 – 2018:

Whilst giving recognition to the teams involved and focussing on successes, fascinating finds and issues of concern, the annual summary highlights the Top 10 litter items found in Suffolk each year. Sadly, though unsurprisingly, the recurring component material is plastic. However, the same 10 items do not feature each year, so we have just focussed on the Top 5. Plastic/Polystyrene pieces less than 5cm,

have consistently taken the top spot. It is noticeable that year on year, we are recording an increasing number of these plastic pieces, and there could be various reasons for this. It could simply mean that there are more smaller pieces of plastic on our beaches, arising from the breakdown of more plastics in our oceans. Or it could mean that with more volunteers participating, there are more pairs of eyes looking harder at what is beneath our feet. Another possibility is that where the same sections have been repeatedly surveyed and cleaned, the accumulated and

larger items have been removed, and so volunteers can focus on the smaller items. As with all of the analysis included here, it is crucial to remember there are many factors affecting the results which must be taken into consideration. Worryingly, these small pieces of plastic enter the food chain more easily, and at a much lower level, which is a real cause for concern for all consumers including ourselves.

As expected, 'on the go' items feature strongly in the Top 5, comprising 1) crisp, sweet and lolly wrappers, 2) plastic caps and lids and 3) plastic cups and cutlery. This is an aspect that MCS are working really hard to address through the increased promotion of reusable items, so hopefully we will see a fall in these figures in the coming years. The final slot is taken by plastic rope and string, which comes from various sources including the fishing industry.

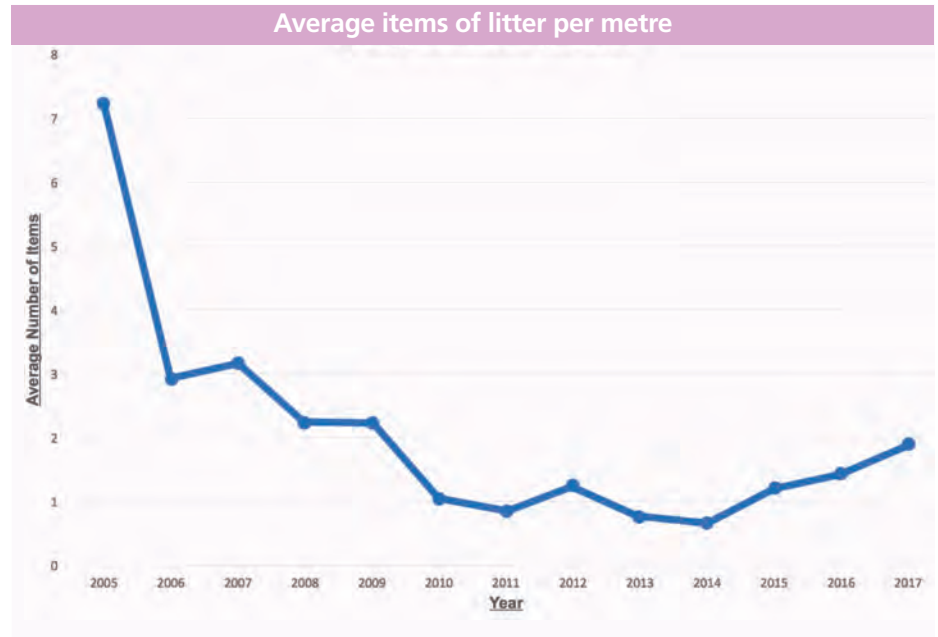
Top 5 litter items 2005 – 2018



## Number of Volunteers, Surveys and Bags of Rubbish, 2005-2018:

The number of Beachwatch volunteers involved in Suffolk cannot be disputed! This has risen enormously, not only since our involvement began in 2003 when 138 volunteers took part in the annual Great British Beach Clean in September, but even between 2017 and 2018 which saw an increase of over 500 more volunteers taking part across both schemes. To provide a direct comparison, in 2018 there were 664 volunteers taking part in the annual event alone, which exceeds the national average! This was a fantastic achievement in the events 25th anniversary year! Nationally, over 15,000 volunteers took part in the September event, which was double the number in 2017, making it the biggest mass participation beach clean and survey the UK has ever witnessed! The BBC Blue Planet II series played a huge part in this – picking up beach litter is finally mainstream, and we hope this upward trend continues.

Whilst volunteer involvement has rocketed, the weight of rubbish collected (and number of bags) has fallen, and there are several factors to consider. Smaller items of litter obviously weigh much less and take



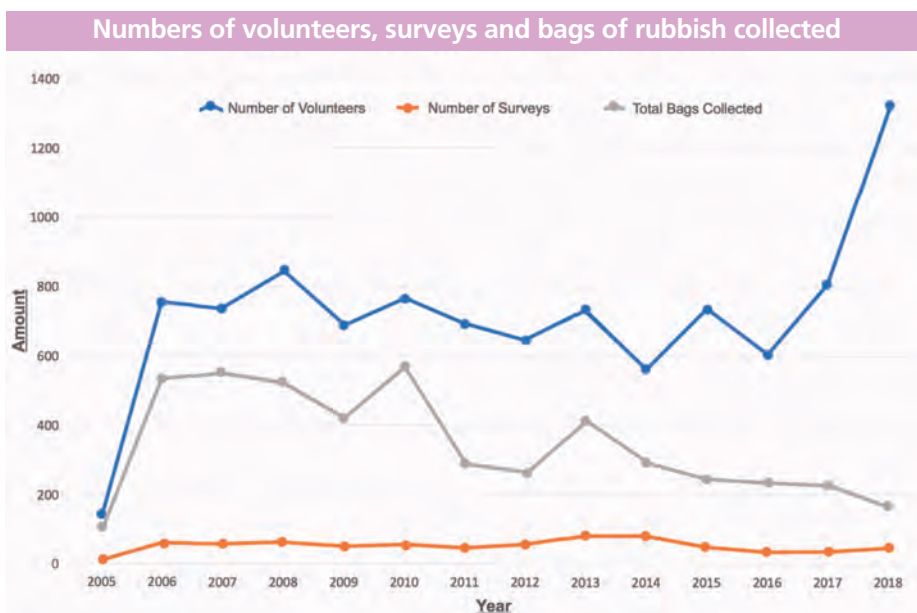
up less space than larger items. Beaches that have been surveyed for many years will have had accumulated rubbish removed early on. MCS have changed the survey format, and we now only record litter from a 100m section at each survey – in the past teams could survey as far as enthusiasm allowed! This also helps to explain why the least distance was surveyed in 2018. Referring to the growing trend of litter picking, so many people carry out independent litter picks now, leaving less for us to collect and record through our surveys. Whilst we want to encourage such responsible behaviour, gathering data is still crucial in the fight against litter.

The number of Suffolk surveys rose significantly about 5 years ago, due to one extremely enthusiastic individual! The annual number of surveys now averages around 40, which is still a significant increase on our initial Suffolk contribution.

## Total Number of Items per Metre, 2005-2018:

The items of litter per metre, has always been below the national average, and 2018 was no exception, with 432 items/m in Suffolk compared to 601 items/m nationally. It is noticeable that this figure has been increasing since 2014, and volunteer numbers have generally been increasing over this period as well.

The achievements in Suffolk are simply amazing, with 742 Beachwatch surveys submitted in the last 14 years, and over 598,000 items of litter recorded and removed from our beaches and foreshores! The support, enthusiasm and dedication for these schemes in our protected landscape is quite simply outstanding! Rightly so – the Suffolk coast and estuaries are beautiful and precious, and of significant wildlife importance, and valued by us all. Here's to continued success in the next 14 years!



we can compare each other's litter data. That's right, our survey form and methodology has been adopted by other countries in Europe too, and even the EU! The great thing about that is that we can compare results and get an overview of litter on beaches across our continent. If another country implements a policy to reduce litter, we can compare data to see if that has had a positive impact. If so, then these countries can provide great case studies for us to implement a similar thing here in the UK.

The data collected by volunteers has been used as supportive evidence for the 5p bag charge, and since the first charge was introduced in 2011 plastic bags have gone down by almost 50%! This really shows that power of citizen science. Collecting this data has directly helped reduce the litter on our beaches and in our oceans.

Our data on wet wipes has shown the extent of the problem and encouraged retailers to put clearer labelling on packs as well as removing plastic from flushable wipes. Alongside this, water companies have produced a new flushability standard to make it clearer to consumers.

Our data shows the extent of plastics in the oceans, and our campaign on microplastics has led to them being banned in rinse off cosmetic products such as toothpaste, shower gel and other scrubs. Data on drinks containers found on beaches is currently being



used as supportive evidence for deposit return systems (DRS) across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. DRS has been shown in other countries to increase recycling of bottles and drinks cans to over 90%. If this can be implemented in the UK, then we should see a decrease of bottles and drinks cans in our environment. The power of our litter data is endless and none of it would be possible without the hard work of our volunteers.

You can see from the AONBs Suffolk report alone the amazing community work that has been achieved. In Suffolk, for many years, volunteers have been doing incredible work on tackling the issue of litter and of course collecting, year on year, that invaluable data! It really does show the power in community.

These last 12 months have seen a real shift in everyone's awareness of the issue of litter, particularly plastic. It now means businesses and Governments are receiving pressure from the public to do what they can to stem the tide of plastic.

With people power at its highest, and our Beachwatch data ready to be used as evidence, I am hopeful for the future and shifting the status quo, for the norm in our society to not produce or use single-use products and no longer produce any plastic that cannot be recycled.

**Data is power, and thanks to our volunteers, we will continue to use this data to stop the plastic tide and protect our incredible marine life here in the UK.**

2018 was a record-breaking year in terms of the number of volunteers involved! We are so grateful to everyone who has taken part and in doing so, ensured the momentum and support in Suffolk continues to grow. With over 76km of coast and 187km of estuary foreshore, there is plenty of opportunity for people to participate.

For more information about becoming involved in Beachwatch in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, please contact Lynn Allen, Countryside Projects Officer, **01394 445223**, [lynn.allen@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:lynn.allen@suffolk.gov.uk) or go to [www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org](http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org)

For more information about the work of the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) contact **01989 566017** or go to [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org)



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Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty