

Lower Rock House
Kingsand
Torpoint
Cornwall PL10 1NG
21 April 2015

Dear Marine Strategy Framework Directive Implementation team

This open letter, from the organisations and marine science experts named below, is our joint response to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive consultation.

Between us, we represent tens of thousands of people across Cornwall and beyond, who are very concerned that the UK's only proposed MSFD action on marine litter is to incorporate education on this issue in eco-schools.

Education is of course important. However we do not believe this goes far enough. Targeted action is needed now to stem the relentless flood of plastic entering our seas.

In a few weeks we will be coming to London with a 1.1km chain made of over 65,000 bottle tops collected over this winter from just some of Cornwall's beaches. We would like to bring it to Defra to give you a sense of the scale of the marine litter crisis, embodied through just one item, and to further discuss how to address it.

Why have we made this chain?

The recently-released 2014 Marine Conservation Society marine litter survey showed an 89% increase in litter found on South West beaches compared with the year before.

A three-hour University of Exeter survey in 2014 removed almost **600,000 individual pieces of plastic** from a 25 metre-wide stretch of Cornish beach (see the short film here: <https://vimeo.com/98018405>)

In Cornwall, more than 250 seals have been observed with plastic entangled around their necks. Every dead northern fulmar from the English Channel area is now found to have plastic in its gut.

The amount of plastic waste on our beaches and in the sea is unacceptable

For Cornwall, the growing amount of marine plastic on our beaches has a negative effect on our tourist industry, of huge importance to the county's economy and in many areas the biggest source of employment.

Marine litter also impacts the fishing industry through fouled propellers and contaminated catches. Meanwhile, plastic items flushed down toilets and litter washed down storm drains (heading for the sea) block and damage water infrastructure, causing leaks, flooding, and increasing our water bills.

Why bottle tops?

In the UK we discard at least 15 million plastic bottles per day. At least half of these either go to landfill or are littered.

Less than 50 years after they first became available, disposable plastic bottle tops and pieces are now the commonest identifiable item of marine litter on our beaches.

What can be done?

A large amount of marine litter is made up of disposable food packaging and bottles dropped as litter or lost in the waste collection/ management process – so greater efforts in both these areas would have a significant impact on this totally avoidable component of the problem.

We believe the manufacturers of disposable plastics must take greater responsibility for the waste created by their products. Why should local authorities (i.e. taxpayers) and good-hearted community volunteers be left to clean up the mess?

We are calling for the introduction of a bottle deposit or reverse-vending system in the UK. These schemes have been proven to cost-effectively reduce litter and increase recycling rates in countries where they are in place, also reducing the burden on landfill sites (see the Eunomia report for the CPRE *Have We Got The Bottle? Implementing a Bottle Deposit Scheme in the UK* <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/energy-and-waste/litter-and-fly-tipping/item/download/427>)

We would also like to see a small levy on plastic packaging. A 1p surcharge on plastic drinks bottles alone could raise over £1 million per week.

This could be used, for example, to fund: (i) a high-profile nationwide media and online campaign to clearly illustrate the anti-social and environmental impact of plastic litter, (ii) prominent environmental warning labels on plastic bottles and packaging, (iii) an eco-redesign of disposable plastic bottles and packaging to ensure 100% recyclability.

Surfers Against Sewage recently published its *Marine Litter Report* highlighting the true scale of the marine litter crisis, the underlying causes of the issue and the threats marine litter poses to ecosystems, marine organisms and communities. The report also maps out practical and achievable solutions across industry, government and communities to increase action for much cleaner and safer beaches by 2020. (This can be downloaded here -

<http://www.sas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SAS-Marine-Litter-Report-Med.pdf>). This has already been presented to Defra Ministers to consider as part of the MSFD consultation.

We hope you will appreciate the strength of feeling on this issue in Cornwall and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Claire Wallerstein (Rame Peninsula Beach Care) on behalf of the organisations and individuals listed below.



South West Fish Producers Organisation





Cornwall Bird Watching & Preservation Society



Friends of the Fowey Estuary



Cornwall
SEAL
Group



#2MINUTE
**BEACH
CLEAN**



Polzeath
Voluntary Marine Conservation Area

**CLEANER
SEAS
PROJECT**



Friends of Portherras Cove



St Agnes Marine Conservation Group



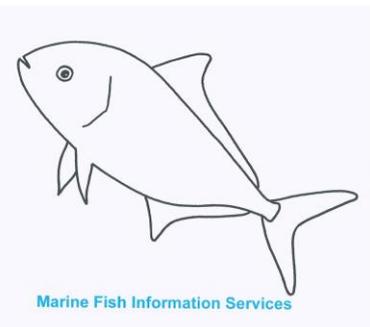
Widemouth Task Force



Wembury
Marine Centre



South West Inshore Fishermen's Association



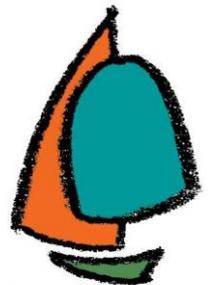
Marine Fish Information Services



South West Fulmar Project



Climate
VISION



Transition
Falmouth

STOP DUMPING IN WHITSAND BAY

Individuals

Professor Richard Thompson, Plymouth University (leading UK marine plastics researcher)

Dr Matthew Cole, NERC Associate Research Fellow: University of Exeter and Plymouth Marine Laboratory

Dr Keith Hiscock, Marine Conservation Scientist (author of 'Marine Biodiversity Conservation: a Practical Approach')

Jason Hall-Spencer, Professor of Marine Biology, Plymouth University

Craig G. Baldwin, course manager in Marine Science, Cornwall College

Marianne Wootton, deputy senior analyst at the Sir Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science

Martin Dorey, Director of The Beach Clean Network Ltd and founder of the #2minutebeachclean

Nick Pickles (Polzeath BeachCare)

Craig G. Baldwin, course manager in Marine Science, Cornwall College

Other organisations

North Hill Litter Free Project

Untrashed Cornwall

Green Street Volunteers

Newquay Beachcombing