

Marine Litter Report 2018

Marine Litter and plastic pollution pose a significant threat to our wildlife and to us.

Plastic is now everywhere – present in the tiniest shrimps to our largest whales. It can impact wildlife in many ways including poisoning, entanglement and intestinal blockages. Even the seafood we eat is no exception – in some recent surveys, 83% of Scampi from the Firth of Clyde and all supermarket Mussel samples tested, were found to contain microplastics. In fact, microplastics have been found in the water we drink and the air we breathe. Ingesting our own plastic is, simply, unavoidable.

Main picture shows a grey seal entangled off Rathlin Island on 4th December 2018. Photo: DAERA – Marine and Fisheries Division.

One million

pieces of litter have now been collected by volunteers since 2012 from our survey beaches, this milestone was reached in December 2018



78%

of all marine litter found in Northern Ireland in 2018 was made of plastic

£36m

estimated yearly loss to NI beach amenity value from marine litter

625

items of litter, on average, per 100m of beach in Northern Ireland

The plastic problem: 2018 Terrible Top Ten

The most common types of items found on the Northern Irish Survey beaches in 2018. Average number of items per 100m (% of total).



Key ■ SINGLE USE PLASTIC ■ FISHING GEAR ■ OTHER

What are single use plastics?

Any plastic item designed to be used once – from plastic bags, bottles, coffee cups and straws to food packaging, disposable nappies and wet wipes.

What are Microplastics?

Any piece of plastic <5mm in diameter. The major sources reaching our ocean from our waterways are from synthetic clothes in the wash and from tyres on our roads. Microplastics can also come from larger plastic items breaking down such as plastic bags, bottles and fishing nets.

Prevention is better than cure.

Here is what you can do to help:

- Use less – refuse what you don't need; reuse wherever possible.
- Councils and businesses should develop a single use plastics (SUPs) policy to reduce and then eliminate all SUPs.
- Organise/take part in **Adopt A Spot** in your local area and apply for a grant from **Live Here Love Here** to prevent waste reaching the sea.
- Reduce microplastic pollution from your clothes by avoiding synthetic fabrics, washing clothes less often, and using a microfibre catcher.



To find out more about our work with marine litter contact:

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