

Plastic Free Exmoor

January 2025

Newsletter No 4



Welcome

Welcome to our latest newsletter. 2024 was another incredibly busy year for the Plastic Free Exmoor team as we continued with our efforts to raise awareness of the impact of single-use plastics on our local environment. The aim of this newsletter is to provide an overview of what we have been up to over the past twelve months and to hopefully inspire you to get more involved as we work to turn the tide on single-use plastics.

Community Clear Ups & Beach Cleans

Over the past twelve months we have organised and led several community clear ups and beach cleans along the West Somerset and Exmoor coastline.

On March 23rd we coordinated a Community Clear-Up in the village of Dunster. This event, which was part of the Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean saw twenty five volunteers collecting litter from roads around the village, from the car parks and from along the A39.



On April 12th we met up with some Exmoor National Park Young Rangers for a beach clean along the beach between Dunster and Blue Anchor. Items found included part of a car console, two plastic tree guards, substantial amounts of fishing line, a lobster pot and of course lots of items of single-use plastics.

Saturday May 18th saw our first ever beach clean at Porlock Weir. On a sunny spring morning twenty volunteers cleaned the coast around Gore Point and towards the breach on Porlock Marsh. Over twenty sacks of debris were collected and this included two sacks full of fishing line and net. Thanks to Dan French from Exmoor Adventures for his support for the event and for helping to transfer the rubbish collected back to Minehead for recycling and safe disposal. Thank you also to Porlock Manor Estates for providing free parking for our volunteers.



On Saturday July 6th we returned to Greenaleigh Sand for our most extreme beach clean of the year. Eighteen volunteers joined us to help clean this beautiful stretch of Exmoor coastline. As the photograph shows a huge amount of ocean debris was recovered including blocks of insulation material, a roll of artificial grass, a portable toilet, a pair of wellington boots and a bed headboard. Thank you to Ranger Phil Stuckey from Exmoor National Park for

his help in removing all of the ocean debris that we found. Of the substantial amounts of single use plastic collected...one item deserves a special mention...the plastic packaging from some Tempa frozen peas, which is over fifty years old and shows that once single-use plastic is lost to the environment, it is with us for a long time.



Our final and “wettest” beach clean of 2024 was the Marine Conservation Society Great British Beach Clean event that we led at Dunster Beach on Saturday September 21st. Despite torrential rainfall, forty eight volunteers joined us as we collected 7.5 sacks of ocean debris. The beach clean also included a detailed survey of a 100m stretch of beach, where everything that was found was weighed and recorded. 259 items were found, with the vast majority of the items being made from single-use plastic.

Single-Use Plastic Scavenger Hunt

Together with Keith Hunt from Our Precious Earth in Minehead we developed a Single-Use Plastic Scavenger Hunt activity sheet as a way of trying to raise awareness of the amount and type of single-use plastics that are being littered or lost to the environment. To take part participants are provided with an activity sheet and then tasked to find and collect single-use plastic items ranging from a plastic bottle to a piece of plastic cutlery. The items all have a points value, for example a plastic straw scoring 10 points and a carrier bag scoring 20 points. Once a total of 150 points has been achieved the participant can claim their "Ocean Activist" certificate.

The scavenger hunt proved to be popular with locals and visitors to the area and attracted a lot of interest from other UK Plastic Free Communities. In 2025 we are planning to extend the scheme so that activity sheets will be available all along the West Somerset and Exmoor coast from Watchet to Combe Martin.

PLASTIC FREE -EXMOOR- SURFERS AGAINST SEWAGE

Single-Use Plastic Scavenger Hunt

EVERY day millions of pieces of plastic pollution find their way into our oceans. These slowly break down into tiny pieces called microplastics which can harm or kill animals and fish.

YOU CAN HELP! see how many plastic items you can find. Each item earns you points. Add up your total and return the sheet to where you picked it up.

IMPORTANT! Take care when handling items and please take them away for recycling. Remember to wash your hands afterwards.

150 points - Ocean Activist
200 points - Ocean Champion

Plastic Pick-up Points

| | |
|--|-----|
| Bottle top | 10 |
| Bottle | 10 |
| Fishing line or net | 10 |
| Beach toy | 50 |
| straw or cotton bud | 10 |
| cutlery | 20 |
| Polystyrene | 10 |
| Balloon (helium or normal) | 50 |
| CUP (whole or piece) | 20 |
| FOOD WRAPPER/crisp packet | 10 |
| CARRIER BAG | 20 |
| DISPOSABLE WAPE | 20 |
| cigarette butt | 10 |
| Piece of Plastic smaller than your fingertip | 10 |
| something red | 20 |
| something blue | 20 |
| smarties lid | 100 |
| item or clothing | 50 |
| item with a brand name | 20 |
| Ball | 50 |
| TOY FIGURE | 50 |
| PIECE OF LEGO | 100 |

MY TOTAL

Plastic Free Exmoor Business Champions



In 2024 Seven Fables of Dulverton joined our growing number of Plastic Free Business Champions. There are now twenty-nine businesses across Exmoor who are taking steps to reduce and remove single-use plastics. A special mention for the Cottage Beer Project who in April became the first (and to date only) Exmoor business to achieve the Plastic Free Business Champion Silver Award. If you would like to find out how your business could go for the Silver or Gold award, then contact us at plasticfreeexmoor@gmail.com and we will provide you with help and guidance to take the next step on your plastic free journey.

In the latter part of 2024, we contacted those Exmoor Plastic Free Business Champions who do not have their own online Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Business Dashboard. The online dashboard not only provides businesses with access to online plastic free business resources but also enables them to record their actions as they work towards becoming a Silver or Gold Plastic Free Business Champion. If you are yet to sign up, and would like some help to do so, then please contact us using the above email address.

Plastic Free Schools

In July of last year Exford First School became the first school on Exmoor to gain Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free School status. To attain the award, the children in Kingfisher Class and their teacher, Miss Cavanagh:

- Took part in two beach cleans
- Undertook a brand audit of the items found on the beach cleans.
- Wrote to the companies who produced the litter that they had found asking them to reduce their use of single-use plastics.
- Wrote to their MP to tell them about what they had found out and asking for their support in tackling the problem of plastic pollution.
- Reduced the use of single-use plastics within their school. This included making their own plastic free glitter for their Christmas decorations.



Huge congratulations and thank you to everyone who worked so hard to attain this award. It was wonderful to see how the children's knowledge of the impact of single-use plastics on the environment developed over the twelve months that they worked towards the award.

Plastic Free Exmoor Community Allies



In 2024 we were delighted when Dunster Women's Institute joined us as one of our Plastic Free Community Allies. Following a talk to the group in April they were keen to sign up as an ally and to find out what they could do to help with our work. It was wonderful to see some of their members at this year's beach cleans.

Plastic Free Exmoor now has 30 Community Allies, all of whom have pledged to support us in our efforts to reduce and remove single-use plastics from our everyday lives.

Plastic Tree Guard Clearance

In December we led a plastic tree guard clearance in Moor Wood, North Hill, Minehead.

We were joined by some of our regular volunteers as well as thirty cubs and scouts from the Exmoor 1st Scout Group. Over the course of a morning, we cleared around eight hundred tree guards from several areas of the woodland. The majority of tree guards were from a planting scheme that took place in the 1990s.

As we have found on previous tree guard clearances, the tree guards that were removed were in perfect condition and if any of them were biodegradable they showed no signs of breaking down.

It was also the case that a number of the trees that had been planted had died leaving just a wooden stake, the plastic tree guard, and some plastic cable ties. Other trees had grown but this growth had been inhibited by the tree guards that were meant to protect them.

Do get in touch if you know a woodland near you where old plastic tree guards need removing!

In the meantime, we will continue to campaign for tree planting schemes to be better managed.



Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme Pipes

2024 saw the addition of an extra Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme collection pipe for fishing line and fishing net. The new pipe, which has



been sponsored by Exmoor Adventures is located at Porlock Weir.

There are now Anglers National Line Recycling

Collection recycling pipes at Watchet, Blue Anchor, Dunster, Minehead and Porlock Weir providing plenty of opportunities to ensure that any fishing line and pieces of net found on our beaches can be recycled.



Litter Picking Equipment Available To Borrow

If you are thinking of organising a community clean-up for your village or town and would like to borrow some equipment... then do get in touch.



Plastic Free Communities In West Somerset and Exmoor have everything that you need for a community litter pick, including litter pickers, reusable collecting sacks and plastic trugs for sorting the litter. We are also able to help with risk assessments for your event and help you register for the Surfers Against Sewage Million Mile Clean campaign, which will help you make your litter pick really have an impact by contributing to a database of the top brands found in our environment. Contact plasticfreeexmoor@gmail.com if you would like to borrow some litter picking equipment.

Talks and Shows

The past twelve months has also seen us spread the plastic free message by providing talks to a variety of groups and organisations including, Porlock Mothers Union, Minehead Men's Fellowship Group, Dunster WI, Minehead Townswomen's Guild and the Alcombe Friendship Centre. If you know of a group on Exmoor that would like to find out more about Plastic Free Exmoor, then contact us at plasticfreeexmoor@gmail.com

We were also delighted to have a stand at the Exmoor Society's Festival of Nature in May and at the Porlock Late Night shopping event in December.



... and finally

We would like to thank all of our Plastic Free Business Champions, Community Allies and Water Refill Stations as well as all those people who have helped with and supported our events and campaigns. Together you have all helped us to make a difference and to turn the tide on plastic pollution!

In 2025 we will continue to....

- Organise community beach cleans, community clear ups and tree guard clearances
- Continue to build the Exmoor network of water refill stations
- Recruit more Business Champions and encourage existing Business Champions to go for the Silver or Gold award!
- Recruit more Community Allies
- Support Surfers Against Sewage campaigns such as the call for a Deposit Return Scheme.
- Support and work with other local plastic free communities and environmental groups

Plastic Free Exmoor Steering Group

Volunteers Needed!

We are looking for people for a Plastic Free Exmoor Steering Group...particularly representatives from communities across Exmoor, our Business Champions and Community Allies and anyone else who would like to help bring about positive change!

If you would like to find out more, contact us at plasticfreexmoor@gmail.com

Plastic Free Exmoor

Contact Details

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