

# Beachwatch

The biggest volunteer beach clean-up and litter survey in the UK!

Dr. Laura Foster, Head of Pollution, Marine Conservation Society



## MCS on Marine Litter

- MCS has been monitoring marine litter over 20 years
- Data from the UK is used in many international reports as it is one of the longest running programmes
- MCS provides technical input to a number of technical working groups (e.g. TG10, OSPAR)
- Holds OSPAR database on marine litter
- Runs campaigns on litter items

## Organising a clean up

- Practicalities of clean-up
  - Rubbish disposal
  - Health and safety
  - Insurance
  - Getting volunteer organisers, getting volunteers
  - Support volunteer
- Survey with beach clean up provides added value





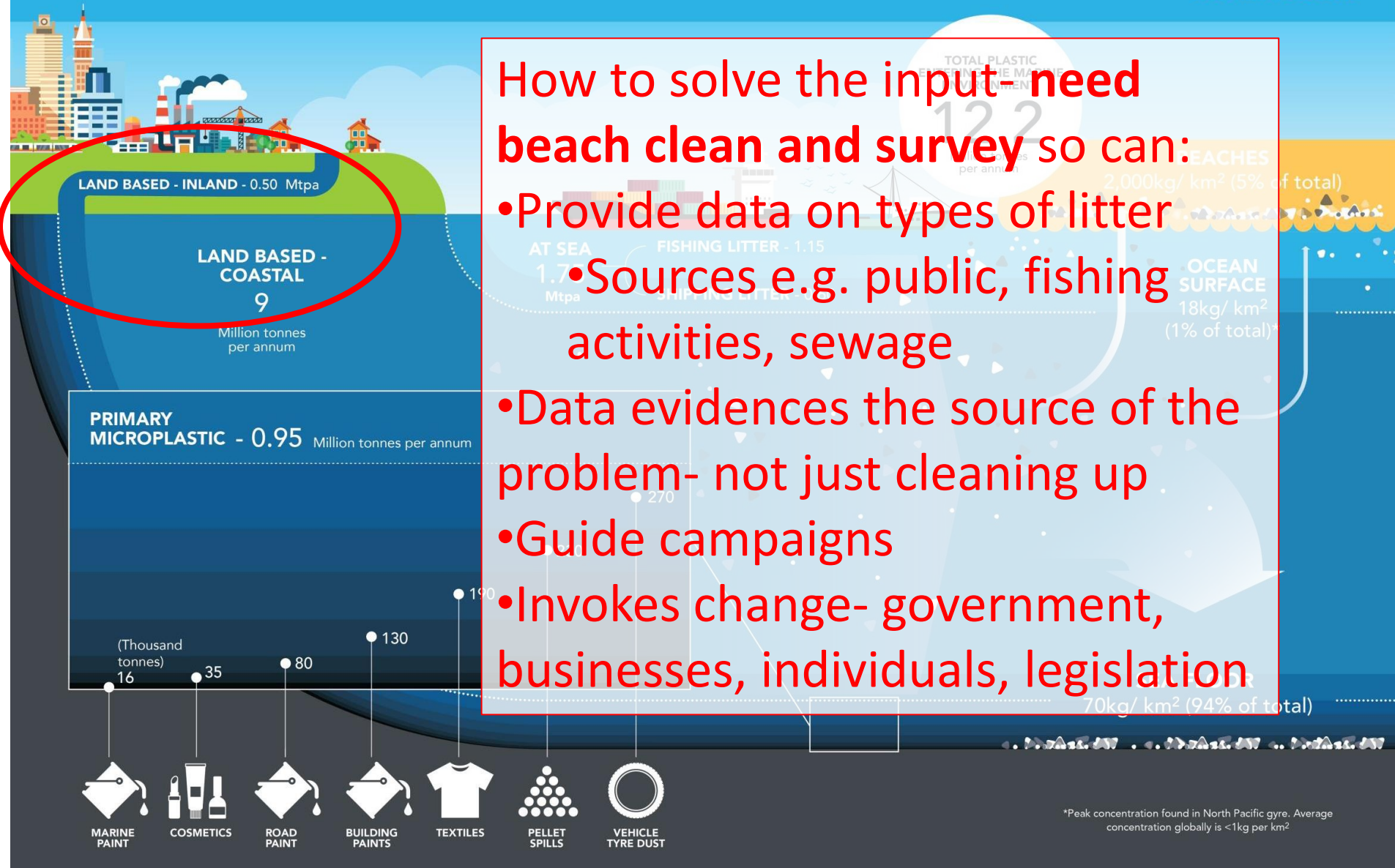
## You need volunteers

- Build a network of volunteers- make them fun and enjoyable- help build a sense of community
- Understand differing motivations
- Value your volunteers- advocates in the community
- Join up with other organisations
- More data- more powerful and more robust- and what level does the issue need addressing at (local, national, international?)

Beachwatch Big Weekend

Third weekend in  
September

# PLASTICS IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT: WHERE DO THEY COME FROM? WHERE DO THEY GO?







As a charity  
your gener

[Beachwatch home](#)[Organisers](#)[Volunteers](#)[Beach map](#)[Beach search](#)[Beach clean eve](#)

## Beachwatch

### The UK's biggest beach clean up and survey

Beachwatch is our national beach cleaning and litter surveying programme - helping people all around the UK to care for their coastline. Some of our best-loved marine wildlife is under threat from the waste and litter in our seas, with hundreds of species accidentally eating or becoming entangled in litter. It's

also dangerous for people and damaging to our tourism and fishing industries. We all have a part to play in turning the tide on litter. Join an event or organise your own and be part of the most influential fight against marine litter in the UK!



>> *Volunteer* - Join an existing beach clean event

[Login/Register](#)[Log in](#)[Register with](#)[Request new](#)[Join the](#)

We need  
support

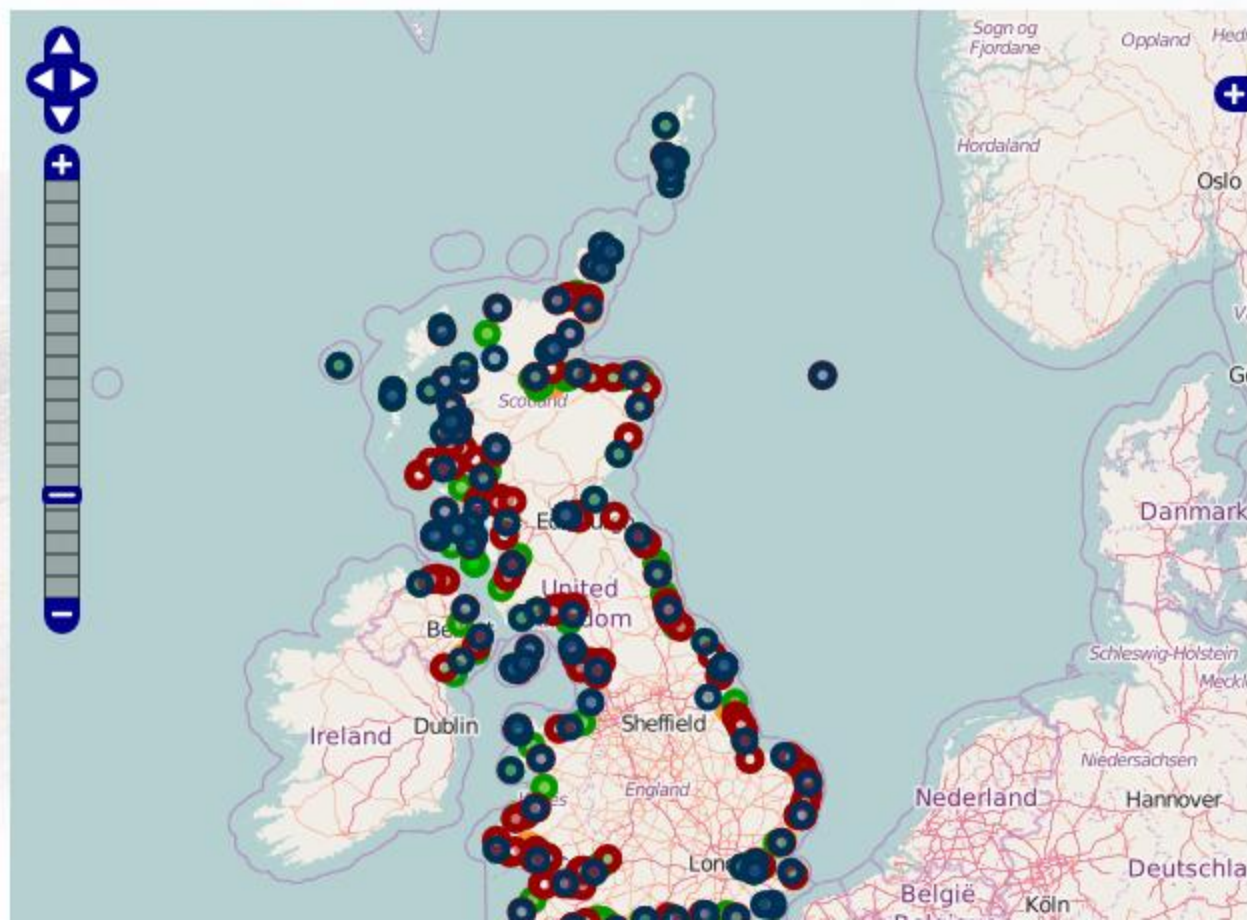
You can help  
MCS meet its  
little as £

MCS beach litter  
by players

## Beachwatch beaches

Please **register** to become a Beachwatch organiser or to volunteer for beach clean events.

Click on the markers to view a list of the beaches in that area. Use the +- zoom control to view the detailed locations of each beach. Click the beach name links for all the information about a particular beach.

[Login/Register](#)[Log in](#)

**Register with**  
Request new

[Join the](#)

We need  
support

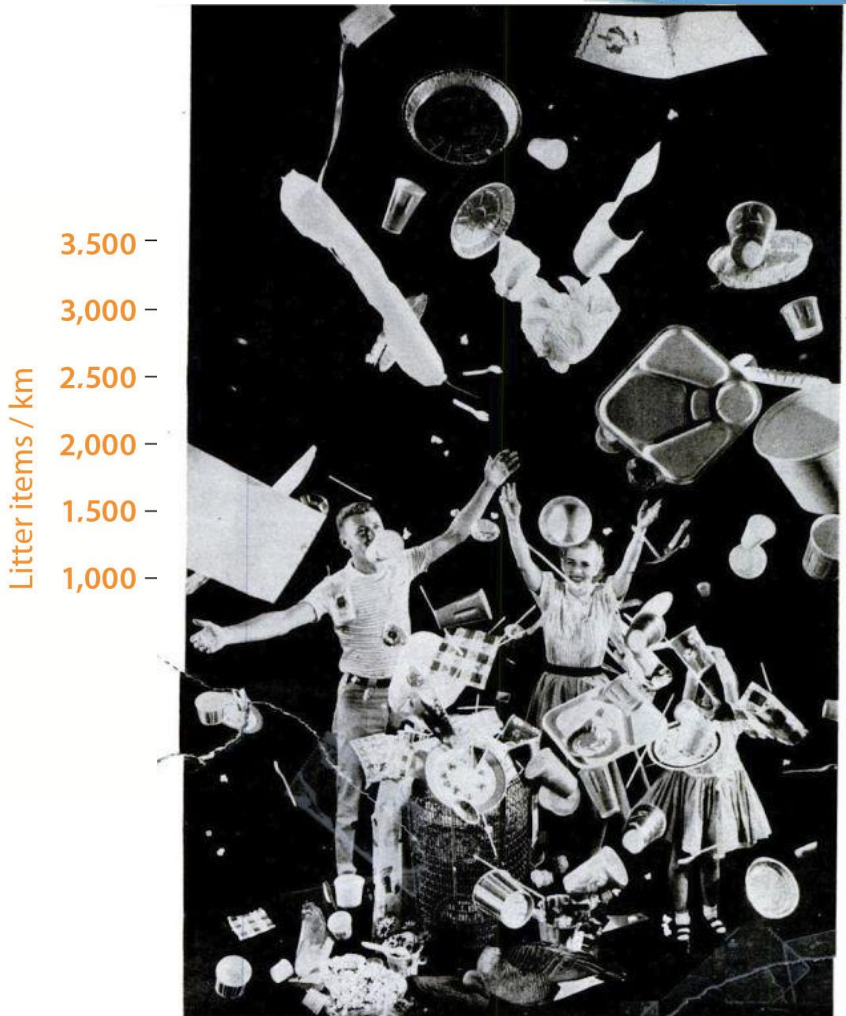
You can help  
MCS meet  
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MCS beach  
by players

[POST](#)



# Monitoring beach litter levels- UK example



Litter items / km

3,500 -

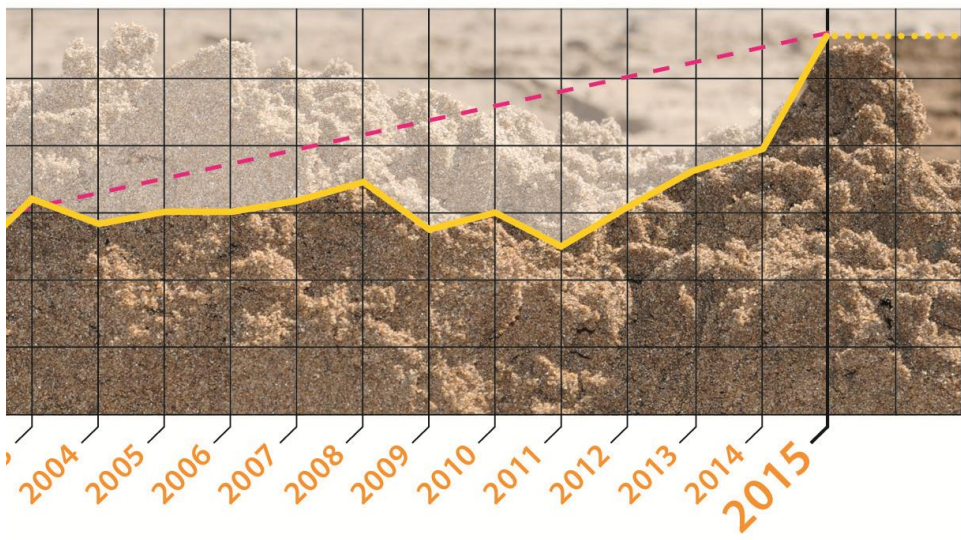
3,000 -

2,500 -

2,000 -

1,500 -

1,000 -

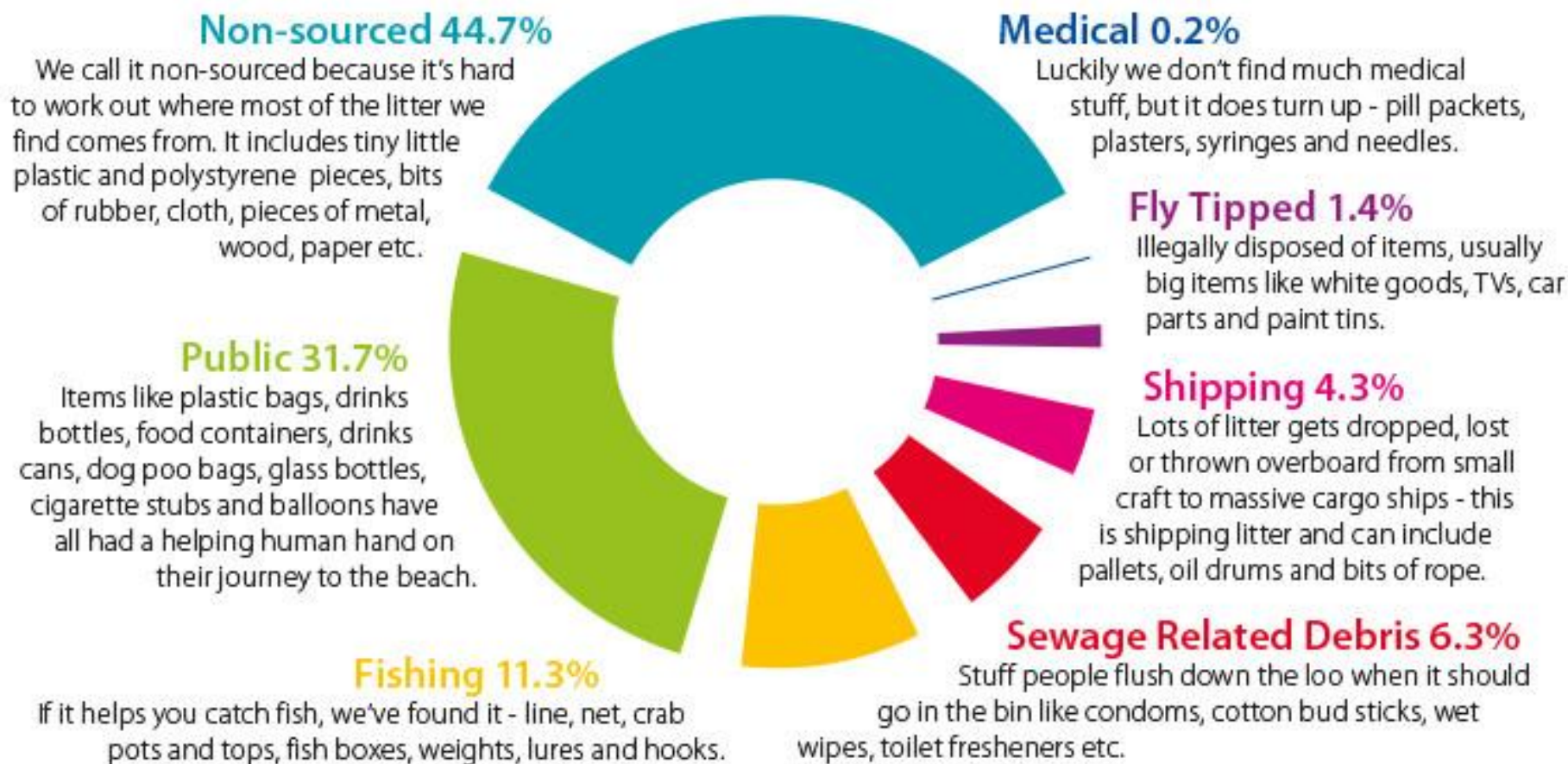


© Marine Conservation Society

**Throwaway Living**  
DISPOSABLE ITEMS CUT DOWN HOUSEHOLD CHORES



# UK example continued

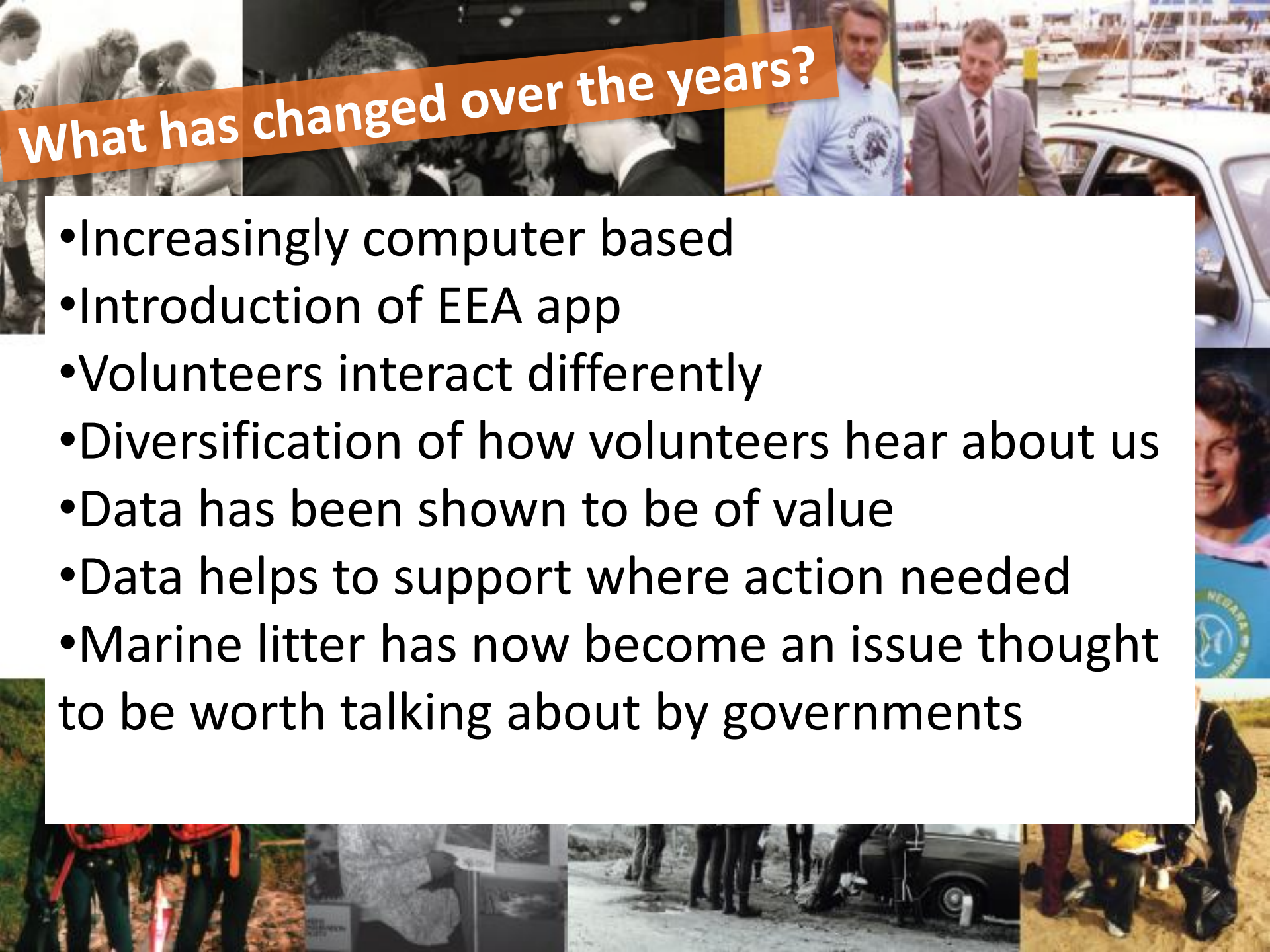


# What impact does a beach clean and survey have?



- Beach cleans: great for community engagement- local people seeing and crystallising local problems
- Local networks are going to be more effective for some issues
- Some issues cant be solved locally- need national or even international intervention e.g. port waste- to change policy- data becomes extremely important
- Give a national or international voice to the issue





# What has changed over the years?

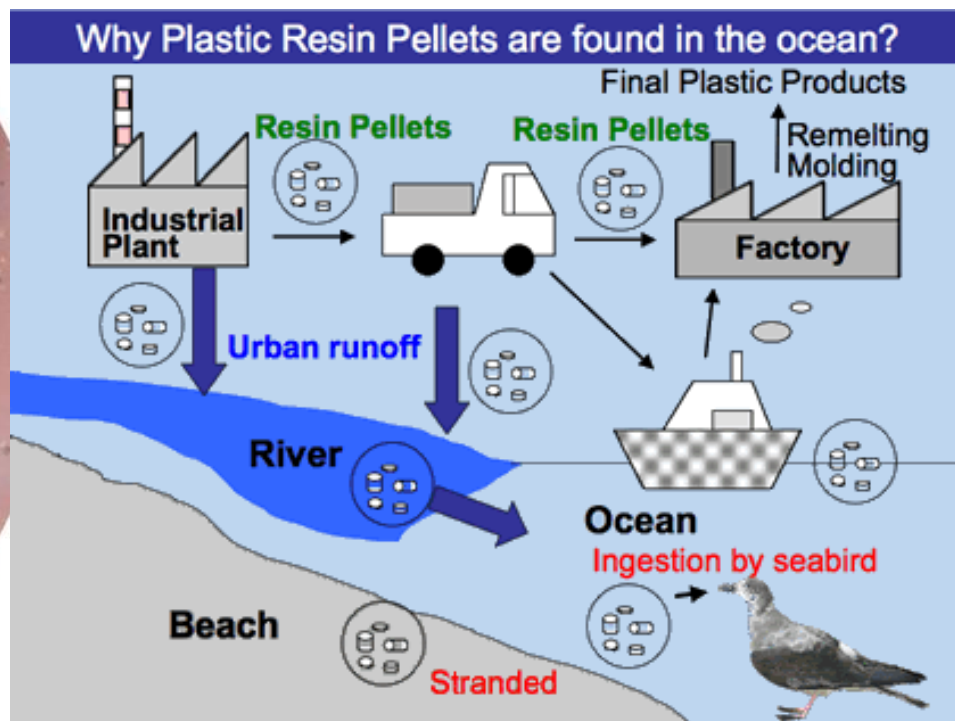
- Increasingly computer based
- Introduction of EEA app
- Volunteers interact differently
- Diversification of how volunteers hear about us
- Data has been shown to be of value
- Data helps to support where action needed
- Marine litter has now become an issue thought to be worth talking about by governments

# Changes don't stop: Developing new datasets



Plastic pellets / nurdles / mermaid's tears

<http://www.nurdlehunt.org.uk>





## Cost of a clean up?

- Supporting volunteers
- Data collection, storage and maintenance
- Training of the organisers- particularly if collecting data (consistent methodology important)
- Disposal of material collected on beach
- Equipment to do a beach clean
- Insurance



An underwater scene with various marine life including fish, jellyfish, and coral. The background is a deep blue gradient. In the foreground, there are several colorful fish (blue, yellow, and orange) swimming. There are also jellyfish (yellow and orange) and coral (red, orange, and yellow). The overall scene is vibrant and detailed.

## Lessons learnt?

- Utilise existing networks- they are stable and robust
- Utilise other organisations networks
- Ensure that the method used is consistent
- Volunteers are time intensive- prioritise organisers
- Good online system- make information easy to access
- Feedback how data is used to your supporters
- Provide a summary of the data to your volunteers- they feel part of a bigger movement- a single volunteer group feels lonely and isolated
- Use your data to get changes, and publicise it





**Thank you for listening.  
Any questions?**

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