

# Will the plastic **YOU** pick up be turned into a mattress, kitchen cabinets or a kayak?

by Louise Atkinson

**F**ROM the soles of your shoes to the comb you use on your hair, plastic has become an unavoidable part of modern life.

But now that we know the damage it can wreak on wildlife, momentum is growing in the effort to re-use and recycle more plastic — and to clear up the toxic trash littering our beaches and countryside.

On May 11-13, thousands of people across the UK will come together to clear their community spaces of litter as part of the Great Plastic Pick Up. This paper is organising in conjunction with Keep Britain Tidy.

So, what will actually happen to the plastic picked up over that weekend?

Well, once your Pick Up is over, you'll be encouraged to register the number of bags you collected with [greatplasticpickup.org](http://greatplasticpickup.org) — then check the website for details of how to get it to your local authority's recycling facility.

Each local authority works with various recycling plants around the country, where your plastic will be sorted, shredded, washed and melted down into pellets. These pellets are then sold on to manufacturers to use as part of their plastic production.

Richard McIlwain, deputy chief executive of Keep Britain Tidy, explains: 'The more we can recycle, the more cost-effective this process will become, reducing our dependency on the oil needed to produce virgin [newly made] plastic and ultimately limiting the amount of plastic washing around in our oceans.'

Recycled plastic has always been far more expensive to use than new virgin plastic. Some types are so hard to re-use they have traditionally been considered impossible to recycle.

But now, forward-thinking companies are coming up with innovative ways to put waste plastic to good use. Here, we reveal all the ways they're creating a fresh new life for the trash you'll find on the Mail's Great Plastic Pick Up...

**KAYAKS MADE FROM FISHING NETS**

IN JANUARY this year, the first kayak made from recycled fishing nets came off the production line.

It was created by amateur diver Rob Thompson, who was desperate to find a use for all the abandoned nets, crab pots and fisherman's rope he came across while exploring underwater.

An estimated 600,000 tons of damaged or dumped plastic netting has built up in the oceans, where it traps and strangles sea life.

He dreamed up a plan to turn the nets into kayaks, which beach-cleaning crews could then use to access remote stretches of coastline — and clear them of even more toxic plastic trash.

He tracked down a recycling plant in Denmark that would accept old nets and convert them into recycled plastic pellets.

Then, working with a kayak company called Palm Equipment, based near Bristol, he found a way to turn the pellets made from nets into a kayak by mixing the pellets with recycled marine plastic collected from beach clear-ups.

Now Rob has teamed up with Keep Britain Tidy, organising volunteer divers and beach-cleaning groups from around the UK to gather fishing nets and ship them off to Denmark in bulk, rather than seeing them dumped in landfill.

'The first batch has produced 150kg of recycled plastic pellets, which is enough for six kayaks,' says Rob.

The prototypes are being used by beach clean-up volunteers, but the

Once most plastic waste was impossible to recycle. But today's technical wizardry is changing that — all the more reason to join in the Mail's Great Plastic Pick Up!



next batch will be sold (for around £370 each) and the proceeds will help rid Britain's waters of yet more plastic ([fatthomsfree.org](http://fatthomsfree.org)).

**SHAMPOO BOTTLES FROM BEACH RUBBISH**

THE sight of plastic food and drink packaging littering British beaches is a sickening reminder of the work that still needs to be done.

But volunteer beach clean-up crews — many of whom will be taking part in our Great Plastic Pick Up weekend — have the option to put plastic which has been dumped or washed up on the beach into special bins funded by Procter & Gamble.

The company will then use this 'ocean plastic' — traditionally considered very difficult to recycle as it is often degraded after spending time in the water — into new bottles of Head & Shoulders shampoo and Fairy Liquid.

There's 25 per cent recycled beach plastic in each bottle of Head &

Shoulders Beach, and 10 per cent in Fairy Liquid Ocean. The rest of the bottle is made of other recycled plastics.

The process has been made possible by recycling company TerraCycle, which provides the bins and sorts the plastic. Its spokesman Stephen Clarke says: 'Plastic coming from the marine environment is notoriously difficult to re-use but we have found a technically revolutionary way of integrating 25 per cent of this plastic into the product.'

**GARDEN DECKING FROM MILK BOTTLE TOPS**

IMAGINE being able to wander into your garden to enjoy a morning coffee on your stylish decking, confident that it hasn't started to rot over the winter, there's no mildew to scrub off and no splinters — plus the satisfaction of knowing

it's also great for the environment. In recent years, the single biggest use of low-grade recycled plastic in the UK (such as bottle tops, yoghurt pots and bleach bottles) has been the manufacture of 'plastic wood' — plastic planks moulded to look like wood which are used to build outdoor furniture and play equipment.

The problem is most types look much more like unsightly plastic than wood.

But a company called Composite Prime has melted down recycled plastic and mixed it with unwanted off-cuts of hardwood, ground down to a fine flour, to create durable, low-maintenance decking which looks just like the real thing.

Each plank has roughly 35 per cent plastic from discarded milk bottles and their tops.

'We saved over 9.5million milk bottles from landfill last year,' says Charles Taylor, a director of the company.

**A KITCHEN MADE FROM COLA BOTTLES**

THAT plastic bottle you toss into the recycling bin could one day return as part of your kitchen cabinet door.

Ikea's new KUNGSBACKA range of kitchen fronts is made from recycled wood coated in a thin plastic foil made from recycled bottles, with 25 half-litre bottles used for each door.

Darryl Pirie, of Ikea kitchens, says: 'The range turns everyday waste into beautiful furniture.'

Ikea also makes storage boxes (£3 to £12) from recycled plastic bottles, spray bottles (80p) from waste plastic collected from the store and its distribution centres, and a desk pad (£4.50) made with 50 per cent recycled plastic from Ikea packaging.

**...AND A MATTRESS**

YOU could soon be dozing off on a soft mattress made from plastic

bottles collected during the Great Plastic Pick Up. Silentnight uses 150 recycled plastic bottles in each of its Eco Comfort Pocket mattresses (£489 for a double, [silentnight.co.uk](http://silentnight.co.uk)).

The mattress, launched last year, is made from plastic bottles which are crushed and spun into a fine, soft fibre. This is then used in to form a special breathable layer that makes sleeping on it a cooler, more comfortable experience.

In one year alone, Silentnight claims to have prevented 105million plastic bottles from entering landfill or the sea.

**ROADS MADE OF PLASTIC PELLETS**

YOU could be driving to work over a recycled plastic road.

Toby McCartney, founder of road surfacing company MacRebur, came up with the

idea after a trip to India. He saw locals collect waste plastic from rubbish dumps, pile it up over potholes in the road, pour petrol over it and set it alight.

'I watched with fascination as the melted plastic moulded to fit the shape of the hole, effectively filling it for free,' he says.

Now Toby takes plastic waste from local authority recycling plants across the country ('It's the waste plastic no one really wants and which would normally be incinerated or go to landfill,' he says), then melts it into pellets which are added to an ordinary road surface mix to supplement the bitumen.

'Our roads are up to 60 per cent stronger and ten times longer lasting — and they don't pothole,' he says proudly.

**COFFEE CUPS MADE FROM... COFFEE CUPS!**

THEY might look like they're made from paper, but most

takeaway coffee cups are lined with a thin layer of plastic. It stops your coffee from leaking out, but also makes them notoriously difficult to recycle.

Now a UK company called ashortwalk, based in Cornwall, has designed the rCup, made from discarded coffee cups.

Managing director Dan Dicker explains that the company gathers takeaway cups from outlets such as McDonalds and Costa. They are then washed, shredded, and mixed 50/50 with recycled plastic from coffee cup lids and straws.

The rCup is leakproof, insulated, lasts ten years and is fully recyclable (£12 from [www.rcup.co.uk](http://www.rcup.co.uk), Waitrose and John Lewis).

**TRAINERS MADE OF OCEAN PLASTIC**

YOUR new trainers could once have been a fishing net floating in the Maldives.

Adidas has teamed up with a company called Parley for the Oceans which organises coastal clean-ups in the remote island chain. The fishing nets and into sports shoes.

The upper is 95 per cent recycled ocean plastic which is melted down and spun into a technical yarn fibre called Econyl that behaves exactly like nylon. The rest of the shoe is made from recycled polyester.

Marine waste is also used in the laces, heel webbing, heel lining and sock liner covers, adding up to the equivalent of 11 plastic bottles per pair.

The Adidas x Parley sports shoes range starts at £69.95.

**NEW JUMPERS MADE FROM OLD CLOTHES**

OUTDOOR clothing brand Patagonia was creating fleeces from plastic bottles as far back as 1993.

Today it turns plastic bottles, difficult-to-recycle manufacturing waste and worn-out garments into thin polyester fibers, which are then used to produce clothing such as the Snap-T fleece pullover (from £80, [eu.patagonia.com](http://eu.patagonia.com)) which is made from 85 per cent recycled polyester.

'By recycling old products, we can keep many of the same materials in circulation for years instead of creating new plastic,' says a spokesperson.

**SUNGLASSES MADE FROM FISHING NETS**

IN 2013, a group of U.S. surfers and environmentalists formed a firm called Bureo to help fishermen in Chile discard their old fishing nets responsibly rather than dumping them at sea.

The nets are recycled to create decks for skateboards (around £200, [carverskateboards.co.uk](http://carverskateboards.co.uk)) and the frames for high-fashion sunglasses.

## THE MAIL'S GREAT PLASTIC PICK UP

FRIDAY MAY 11 – SUNDAY MAY 13



THE Mail is stepping up its war on plastic with The Great Plastic Pick Up — a weekend helping communities, schools, families and individuals come together to clear plastic litter from our beaches, beauty spots and streets, in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy.

A staggering 7,330 people have already signed up, and there are 315 Pick Ups being held countrywide.

It's so simple to sign up and you can win amazing prizes that may make all the difference to your community. Here's all you need to know...

**WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?**

THE Great Plastic Pick Up will run from the beginning of Friday, May 11, to the end of Sunday, May 13. Communities will get together to pick up rubbish — with a specific mission to remove the plastic that poisons our streets, parks and public areas.

**WIN A SPRING CLEAN**

THINK your area could do with a spring clean? A Daily Mail team will scour photos sent in by The Great Plastic Pick Up groups and select three winners of this prize, worth £10,000. If you win, we'll send professional cleaners to your area — and you can tell them what to clean.

**HOW DO I SIGN UP?**

GO to [greatplasticpickup.org](http://greatplasticpickup.org) and give your details. Anyone can get involved, though children should be accompanied by an adult.

The first 3,000 sign-ups will be sent 30 recycled bags for picking up plastic, plus we have 450,000 bags to distribute to councils across the country, so you'll be able to collect your Great Plastic Pick Up bags from them.

**HOW DO I ORGANISE A PICK UP?**

SIGN up on [greatplasticpickup.org](http://greatplasticpickup.org) and work out where and when you want to hold your event.

You'll be asked if your Pick Up is just for family, friends or neighbours, or whether you are happy for others to join in. A public Pick Up will appear as a pin on an interactive map on the

- home page. People can click on your pin and sign up to join it.
- HOW CAN I KEEP INFORMED?**
- FOLLOW the #GreatPlasticPickUp hashtag on Twitter and keep an eye on developments in the Daily Mail.
- WHAT WILL WE DO ON THE DAY?**
- GATHER at the set time, check in with the organiser and get picking! Grab any litter you see and simply put it in the correct bag:
- PLASTIC bottles and lids in the blue bags (with caps and labels);
  - METAL drink cans in the red bags;
  - EVERYTHING else into white sacks.
- WHAT CAN'T I PICK UP?**
- NEVER touch syringes, broken glass or large fly-tipped items such as furniture; instead, tell your local council about them. Also, do not pick up litter near busy roads.
- WHAT HAPPENS AFTERWARDS?**
- THE organiser of each Pick Up should log the number of bags collected on [greatplasticpickup.org](http://greatplasticpickup.org) — then check the website for details of how to get them to your local authority's recycling facility.
- Next, proudly post your pictures on Twitter with the #GreatPlasticPickUp hashtag, while group organisers can go back to [greatplasticpickup.org](http://greatplasticpickup.org) to upload photos so they can be entered into the competition to win a professional spring clean.
- WHERE WILL THE BAGS END UP?**
- PLASTIC bottles will be recycled and made into new plastic items;
  - METAL cans will be recycled and made into new cans;
  - RUBBISH will be incinerated in a facility that generates electricity.

### HOW TO SIGN UP

Go to [greatplasticpickup.org](http://greatplasticpickup.org)

And if you still need help call 01942 612 660

## WILL YOUR SCHOOL WIN A TRIP TO SEA LIFE WITH CHRIS PACKHAM?

WE WANT children and teachers to take part in The Great Plastic Pick Up and there's an amazing prize for our top litter-picking school: an all-expenses-paid school visit to a Sea Life Centre alongside TV presenter and wildlife expert Chris Packham to see some of the marine life you will have helped. Keep Britain Tidy is in contact with 18,000 schools across the country, so yours may already know about the Great Plastic Pick Up. If not, urge a member of staff to visit [greatplasticpickup.org](http://greatplasticpickup.org) and sign up as a community leader.