

This is your big chance to join in our ground-breaking Great Plastic Pick Up campaign. Next weekend, individuals, families, groups and whole communities across the nation will be getting together to gather up litter with one huge mission in mind – to win the war on plastic. In recent months, the Daily Mail has highlighted the horrific effects of plastic on our wild-life and oceans – and now you can do something to help.

For the first time ever in a litter pick-up on this massive scale, we will be urging everyone to separate plastic bottles and aluminium cans from other rubbish. You can get colour-coded bags, made of 100 per cent recycled plastic, from your local authority to make this even easier – visit greatplasticpickup.org to find out if your council has them. But even if you can't get hold of these, you can still join in using recycled plastic rubble or strong bin bags, provided you keep your collected litter correctly sorted, as explained below. Your local council will also tell you where to take your bags once you've filled them.

By taking part, not only will you be ridding your local area of ugly litter and saving the innocent wild-life it harms, you will help to divert plastic waste directly into the recycling process so it can be reused, reducing the amount of new plastic in the world.

Even if you live hundreds of miles from a beach, you can be confident you will be making a major contribution to protecting the world's oceans from the scourge of plastic. An estimated 80 per cent of the plastic washing around in oceans originated on land. That's because, wherever you live, inland plastic is blown on to rivers and out to sea on a windy day, and when it rains heavily, the rubbish littering the gutter is washed into storm drains or overflowing sewers, eventually making its way into the ocean.

So that casually discarded chocolate wrapper is just as likely to poison a whale or a turtle whether dropped in Birmingham, Edinburgh or Bude. Globally, rivers carry over two million tonnes of plastic into the sea annually. And as the BBC's Blue Planet series last autumn showed so clearly, the world's oceans simply cannot cope.

But if you join our Great Plastic Pick Up, you will be taking the best possible step to reducing that burden.

BRILLIANT PRIZES ON OFFER

Your Great Plastic Pick Up team could win one of three incredible community clean-up prizes worth £10,000. This could see a team of professionals arriving with pressure-

washers, outdoor furniture, play equipment or planting expertise to transform an area of your choice – to your specification.

There's also an amazing prize for our top litter-picking school: an all-expenses-paid school visit to a Sea Life Centre alongside naturalist and television presenter Chris Packham to see some of the marine life you will have helped with your Pick Up efforts.

PUT A LID ON IT

There's no need to rinse out any plastic bottles, as they get washed in the recycling process. But do follow these rules: 1. Empty the bottle 2. Stamp on it to flatten it 3. Replace the lid if you have it.



SORT IT OUT

Although much of the rubbish you collect on the Great Plastic Pick Up might be technically recyclable, unfortunately local authority rules on what they can accept for recycling vary widely across the country. So we are focusing on separating plastic bottles and aluminium cans for recycling, with all other litter items classed as general rubbish. Unlike other forms of rubbish, plastic and aluminium have a horribly long lifespan if left as litter.



An item of plastic, for instance, might eventually break down into tiny pieces – so-called micro-plastics – but in many cases, these will never fully disappear. And that casually discarded single-use plastic water bottle could remain recognisably bot-

tle-shaped for as long as 450 years if it slips through the net and doesn't make it into the recycling stream.

Every sack of plastic bottles you gather on your Great Plastic Pick Up next weekend provides many reasons to be proud. You might find just a few

bottles, or perhaps hundreds, but each one you package off to be recycled means you are saving potentially thousands of pieces of plastic from finding their way into the ocean to poison sealife for decades to come.

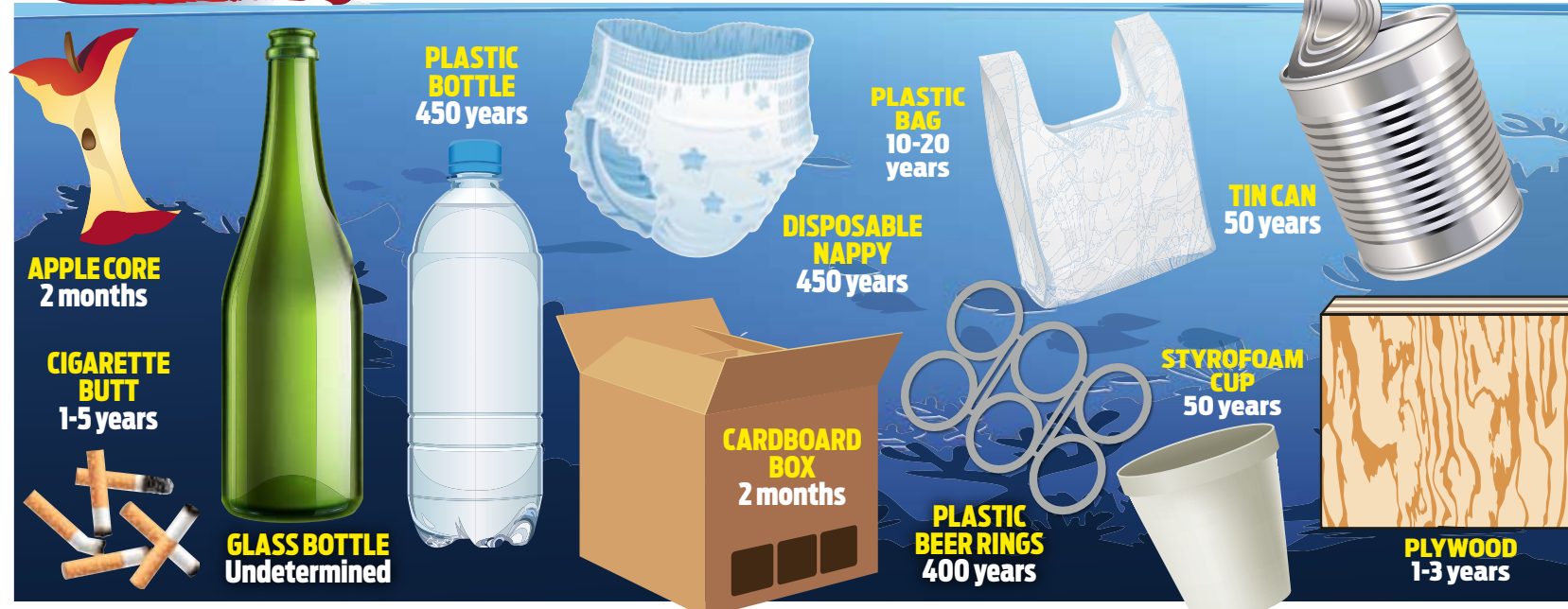
The plastic bottles you collect



Rubbish washed up with the tide on the Thames in London

P-p-p-pick up some plastic

WHEN WILL ALL OUR WASTE BE RECYCLED?



PLASTIC FACT

Approximately eight per cent of the world's oil production is used to manufacture plastic, and recycling



SHAMEFUL TRUTH

62% of people are guilty of dropping litter but only 28 per cent admit it. The biggest growth in litter since 2004 has been in fast food-related items, up 12%



sent for recycling. By the same token, any plastic bottles or aluminium cans put into the white, general rubbish bags will not be able to be recycled.

If you want to pick up any glass bottles or jars you find, these should be placed in a bucket or box and taken to your local recycling centre.

Even the non-recyclable rubbish you collect will make a huge and long-lasting difference. A Keep Britain Tidy study showed that brightly coloured branded items (such as some crisp packets and sweet wrappers) that had been discarded attracted more litter faster than other discarded items, making these important things to pick up and take away.

If you want to go the extra mile, you could send hard-to-recycle waste such as biscuit wrappers, coffee pods and cigarette butts to be recycled - see www.terracycle.co.uk.

By clearing an area of litter as part of the Great Plastic Pick Up campaign you'll be helping make your community a safer place too. Scattered litter can very often encourage fly-tipping and vandalism and ultimately anti-social, illegal and unhealthy behaviours. But by joining our campaign and working together with friends, family and neighbours to clear up the litter in your community you could be creating a healthier, happier environment.

And you'll be preventing tonnes of waste plastic from poisoning the world's oceans while you're at it. So what are you waiting for? If you haven't already done so, go to greatplasticpickup.org and sign up today. ■

Louise Atkinson

should be emptied, crushed and the lid replaced, if you can find it, and put in a blue bag. Aluminium drinks cans and their ring-pulls go in the red bags. All other rubbish, such as cardboard, paper, juice cartons, crisp packets, coffee cups, cigarette

stubs and plastic food trays, should go in the white bags.

It's crucial all these items go into their correct bags. If general rubbish finds its way into the blue or red bags, this could mean the whole bag is contaminated and therefore unable to be



You could clean up your local beach

HOW TO SIGN UP AND WHAT TO TAKE

If you haven't yet registered, go to greatplasticpickup.org and sign up or register a group. Choose an area close to where you live or work that would benefit from litter picking (and which might yield a good bounty of plastic) and earmark a couple of hours over next weekend. Once registered you can access a comprehensive guide with step-by-step information on how to organise your pick-up, packed with advice on running a successful event and keeping everyone safe. You can keep your group private if you like, but why not opt for a public pick-up so other like-minded litter-pickers can join you? The key is that everyone – young or old – should sign up on the website first.

THIS WEEK

■ The first 3,000 groups to register will have received a pack of 30 coloured campaign bags, made of 100 per cent recycled plastic, from Keep Britain Tidy. But if you weren't quick enough, we have distributed more bags to participating local authorities across the UK so call your local authority switchboard and ask if they have bags you can collect. If they haven't signed up yet, give KBT a call on 01942 612660. If you can't get your hands on the colour-coded bags, use recycled plastic rubble sacks or strong bin bags – see 'Next weekend', right.

■ Drum up support by letting groups in your area (schools, clubs, etc) know where and when you will be meeting. You'll find social media banners and poster templates on the website.

■ Ask your local authority if they have any litter pickers you can borrow. These are long-handled tools that enable you to pick up items without touching them. Your council might supply gloves too. You can buy a litter picker online for about £2.

■ Keep an eye on the interactive map on greatplasticpickup.org to look out for other Great Plastic Pick Up groups in your area.

■ You'll need to know what your local authority wants you to do with your bags after your pick up, so check the Great Plastic Pick Up website to see if your local authority has posted information there. If your local authority is not listed, call KBT on 01942 612660 for advice.

■ Follow the #greatplasticpickup hashtag on Twitter to join the Great Plastic Pick Up community, spread the word, and encourage your followers to join you.

NEXT WEEKEND

■ Grab a pair of gardening gloves and a litter picker and meet your fellow Great Plastic Pickers at the designated point. A wheelbarrow, rake and shovel could be useful too.

■ Wear strong, comfortable boots or shoes and a waterproof coat.

■ Hi-vis armbands or clothing are a good idea.

■ Children are brilliant litter pickers, but aim for a ratio of no more than four children to one adult – and one hour is normally enough for youngsters.

■ If you didn't get Great Plastic Pick Up bags, or if you run out, use recycled plastic rubble sacks instead (around £15 for 100 sacks, available online) or strong recycled plastic bin bags. Make sure you clearly separate plastic bottles, aluminium cans plus their ring-pulls and all other rubbish into different bags.

■ At the end of your pick up, count and photograph the bags you collect, keeping a tally of full bags of recyclable plastic.

■ Proudly post your haul on Twitter using #greatplasticpickup and upload pictures to greatplasticpickup.org to enter the competition for the chance to win a prize.

WASTE BREAKDOWN?



one ton of plastic – around 25,000 plastic bottles – saves the equivalent of 1,000-2,000 gallons of petrol

www.greatplasticpickup.org
And if you still need help call 01942 612 660