

The Journey of Litter



How a Single Wrapper Can Travel Miles and Harm Our Planet

Imagine this: you're enjoying a sunny afternoon in the park. There's a picnic blanket laid out, and someone finishes a snack. The empty wrapper gets left behind—maybe by accident, maybe the wind caught it. It seems like no big deal, right?

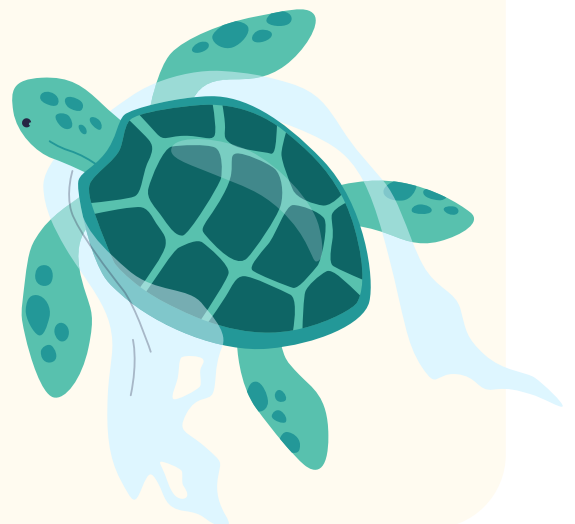
But that one little wrapper is about to take a big journey.

Every piece of rubbish, whether it's from the city, the countryside, or your local park, has the potential to reach our waterways and the ocean, harming wildlife and polluting our beautiful planet along the way.

Let's follow the journey of litter and discover how we can all play a part in stopping it.

Why does it matter?

Litter dropped on land—even in the middle of the UK—can travel hundreds of miles, ending up in the ocean and even washing up on beaches in other countries. But by picking up litter, you can help stop it in its tracks!





The Journey Begins at the park

A sunny afternoon, a picnic at a park, but a single wrapper is left behind – maybe by accident, maybe blown by the wind.

Washed Away – Down The Drain

Rain and wind carry litter along roads into storm drains. These don't lead to treatment plants, they go straight to rivers, canals and streams

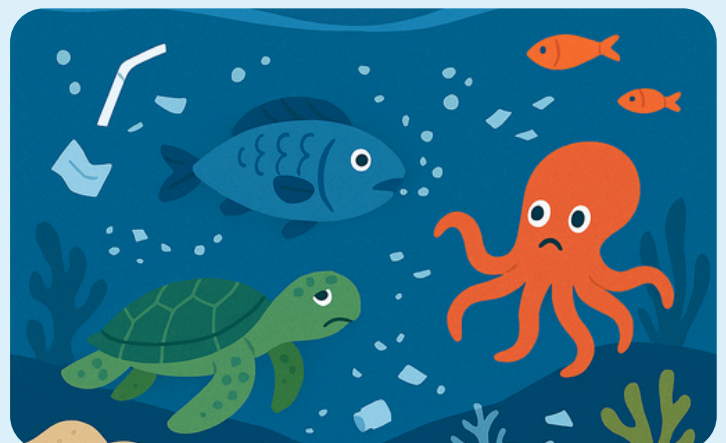


Flowing Futher Through Waterways

The wrapper floats through rivers, streams and canals. It can travel for miles, crossing towns and cities, breaking down along the way.

Destination: The Ocean

That wrapper can eventually make its way to the ocean, where it breaks down into tiny microplastics over time—harming marine life and disrupting delicate ocean habitats.



How wildlife is affected

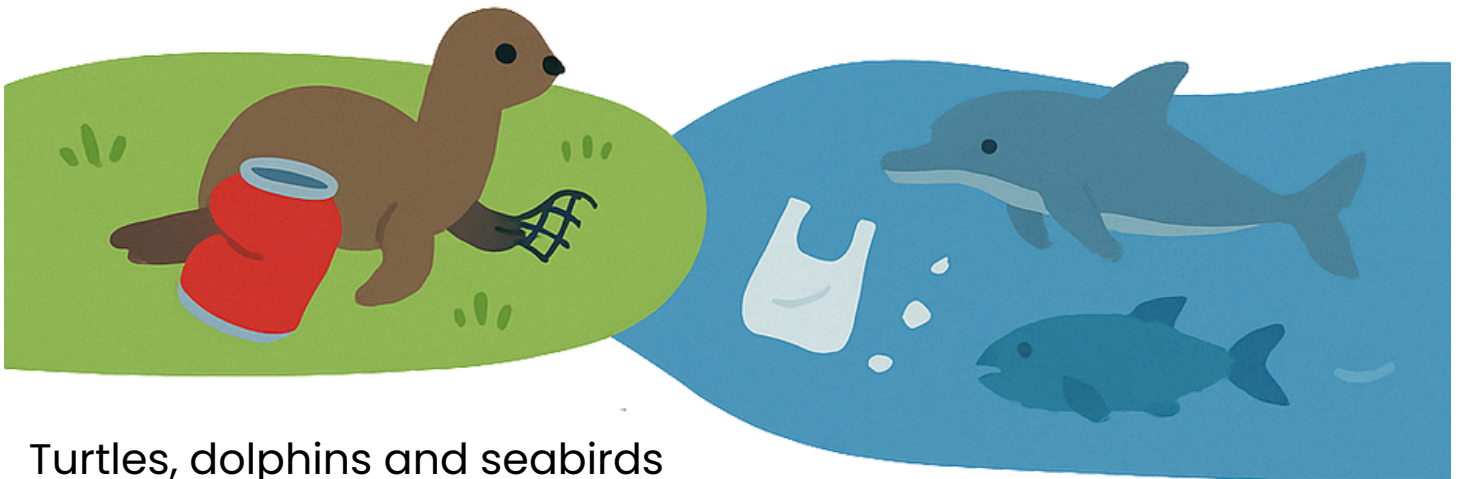
Plastic pollution harms thousands of animals in the UK every year, not just in the sea, but in canals, rivers, lakes, and streams too.



Swans, ducks and fish living in city canals can get tangled in plastic rings or injured by sharp rubbish.



Hedgehogs and birds in parks can get trapped in cans or netting.



Turtles, dolphins and seabirds mistake floating plastic for food and can become very sick—or even die.

Even microplastics have been found in the stomachs of fish and shellfish caught in British waters.

Water Isn't Cleaned Like You Might Think

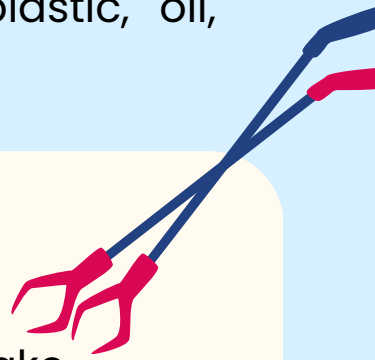
Many people believe that street drains go to a treatment plant—but in most cases, storm drains in the UK lead straight to a nearby stream or river.

That means anything dropped on the street—plastic, oil, paint, or cigarette butts—can end up in the water.

What You Can Do to Help

Small changes add up. Here's how you can make a difference:

- Always bin your rubbish – even better if you can recycle it.
- Join a litter pick in your area—great fun for families and schools!
- Don't pour waste down street drains – no paint, no oils, no litter.
- Use reusable items – bottles, bags, lunch boxes, and cups help reduce waste.
- Talk about it – the more we understand, the more we can protect.
- Look out for wildlife – and help keep their homes safe and clean.



How much do you know about The Journey of Litter?

What types of litter can travel through drains and end up in the ocean?

Why doesn't litter just stay where it's dropped, and what can cause it to move to rivers and canals?

How long does it take for plastic to decompose?

What happens to plastic when it breaks down over time?

What do turtles and seabirds sometimes mistake plastic for?

What is one thing people often wrongly believe about storm drains?

Why can litter from towns and cities end up on beaches in other countries?

Name two animals that can get trapped or injured by litter in the UK.

What are microplastics and why are they dangerous?

What is one thing you can do to help stop litter pollution?



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