



PLASTIC-FREE FIFE ECO-FRIENDLY CLEAN-UP TIPS

If you organise or participate in beach cleans or other clean-ups, well done! You're already making a huge contribution to improving our local environment. Plastic-Free Fife's members have organised clean-ups for several years and we've now put together a few tips on how to make your clean-up events even eco-friendlier. We hope you find them useful.

- 1) Ask participants to travel to/from the event as sustainably as possible.**
 - ✓ Car share if necessary, but walk or cycle if you are able.

- 2) Recycle as much as possible**
 - ✓ Collect plastic bottles and drinks cans separately for recycling rather than sending them to landfill with everything else. They should be emptied of any liquid and in reasonable condition, as badly contaminated items will be rejected at the recycling plant. Use a strong, reusable sack for these items and designate a small team to collect them separately. You can recycle them at council recycling points after the event.
 - ✓ If you note down the brands of the cans and bottles during or after the event, you can contribute the results to the Surfers Against Sewage Brand Audit of the top plastic polluters: <https://www.sas.org.uk/plastic-pollution/brand-audit/>
 - ✓ Soft plastics in good condition, like crisp packets and sweet wrappers, can be recycled in your green bin at home if you are able to collect them separately.
 - ✓ Glass bottles can also be collected and recycled at council recycling points. Use a bucket or trug to collect glass separately – if you put bottles in bin bags and the bottles break, they will rip the bags to shreds and pose a health and safety hazard. There's no point collecting and recycling sea glass or any pieces that aren't dangerous, as sea glass is not environmentally harmful. The same applies to cardboard and wood that will degrade harmlessly anyway.
 - ✓ Any "compostable" cups, containers or cutlery made from bioplastics (e.g. Vegware) must go to landfill. They can't be recycled with conventional plastics and shouldn't go in with food/garden waste either, as Fife lacks the correct facilities to compost them.

- 3) Minimise bin bag use**
 - ✓ Keep the number of plastic bin bags used down to a minimum by ensuring volunteers fill bags completely before starting a new one.
 - ✓ Combine partly filled bags at the end of the clean-up and save any that aren't too dirty for next time.
 - ✓ Use reusable sacks for recyclable items like plastic bottles and cans. Wash them after the event for use next time.
 - ✓ Collect any glass for recycling in buckets or trugs.

- 4) Focus on how your clean-up can benefit wildlife and the environment**
 - ✓ It's equally important to clean up the very small items. Microplastic pollution is particularly harmful to wildlife and ecosystems. Picking up nurdles and other small bits of plastic may not fill lots of bags, but it will do a lot of good – it's not a competition to see how many bags you can fill!
 - ✓ Birds and other wild animals can easily get entangled in items with rings and hooks such as six-pack yokes, bottle collars, rubber bands and floss sticks. Where possible, make these items safe by cutting through the rings.
 - ✓ Impress upon participants that the main benefit of a clean-up is preventing harm to wildlife and the environment rather than just "tidying" the place up.
 - ✓ Consider activities that can accompany the litter pick and raise awareness about plastic pollution. Surveys are one option – the Marine Conservation Society is one organisation that asks its beach cleaners to do this. Even a simple survey of the main items gets participants to focus on what they are finding and is a good way of communicating what you collected after the event.
 - ✓ If you have lots of nurdles on your beach, you might want to tell people the story of what they are, how they are made and how they get onto our beaches. Contact Plastic-Free Fife at plasticfreefife@gmail.com for more information.
 - ✓ Games or beach art with an environmental theme are great for young volunteers.