



# Just a Balloon

BALLOON DEBRIS ON CORNISH BEACHES

Cornish Plastic Pollution Coalition | January 2017

## BACKGROUND

This report has been compiled by the Cornish Plastic Pollution Coalition (CPPC), a sub-group of the Your Shore Network (set up and supported by Cornwall Wildlife Trust). The aim of the evidence presented here is to assist Cornwall Council's Environment Service with the pursuit of a Public Spaces Protection Order preventing Balloon and Chinese Lantern releases in the Duchy.

## METHODOLOGY

During the time period July to December 2016, evidence relating to balloon debris found on Cornish beaches was collected by the CPPC. This evidence came directly to the CPPC from members (voluntary groups and individuals) who took part in beach-cleans or litter-picks, and was accepted in a variety of formats:-

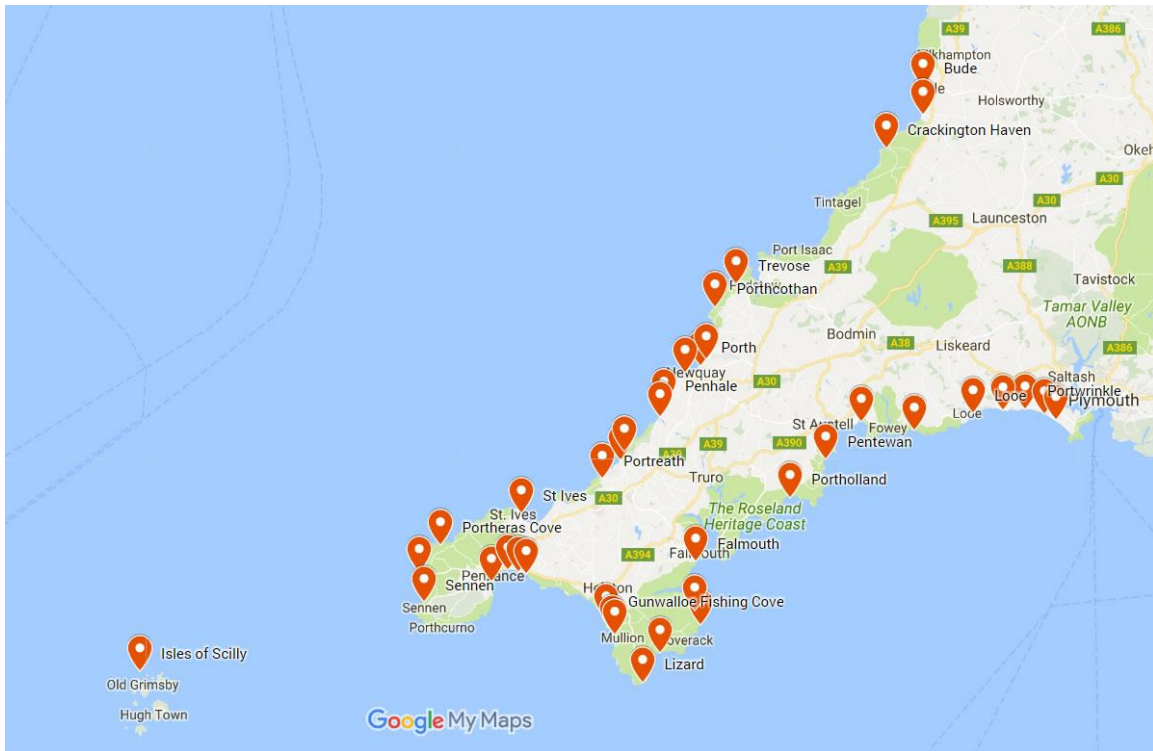
- Physical balloon debris (latex, mylar, cords & strings, plastic ends/sticks)
- Photographs
- Numerical data
- E mails
- Phone calls/text messages
- Social media posts & direct messages

Each piece of separate balloon debris was logged, but no 'double-counting' took place i.e. if a balloon was found still attached to its cord, or plastic end, it was recorded as a single piece of debris.



## RESULTS

During the six month reporting period balloon debris was found and recorded during beach cleans at 39 locations across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly shown here:-



Cornwall has an extensive network of volunteer beach cleaners and beach cleaning groups. Many of these are active on a weekly or even daily basis, and so some of the locations were cleaned on more than one occasion during the period, whilst others only once. It is important therefore, to look at the total number of pieces of balloon debris recorded, rather than focus on the amount at each individual location.

Where groups/individual did multiple beach-cleans before counting or photographing the resulting number of balloon pieces collected, a retrospective estimate was made (from the actual total picked up) as to amount found at each separate location.

The table on page 3 shows the detailed results.



	Location	No of pieces of balloon debris
1	Portwrinkle	25
2	Looe	19
3	Bude	64
4	Crackington Haven	4
5	Widemouth Bay	15
6	Porthcothan	1
7	Trevose	1
8	Porth	98
9	Watergate Bay	115
10	Fistral	27
11	Penhale	355
12	Perranporth	281
13	Portreath	15
14	Porthtowan	9
15	Chapel Porth	65
16	St Ives	5
17	Portherras Cove	52
18	Cape Cornwall	4
19	Sennen	37
20	Wherrytown	45
21	Long Rock	59
22	Marazion	283
23	Stoney Beach Marazion	160
24	Gunwalloe Fishing Cove	27
25	Gunwalloe	48
26	Poldhu	59
27	Lizard	2
28	Kennack Sands	1
29	Godrevy (Lizard)	1
30	Porthallow	2
31	Falmouth	1
32	Portholland	1
33	Pentewan	7
34	Par	2
35	Llansallos	4
36	Downderry	21
37	Tregantle	277
38	Freathy	19
39	Isles of Scilly	12
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2223</b>



The recorded balloon debris included single balloons (latex and mylar), multiple 'bundles' of balloons, weather balloons, branded and non-branded items, nylon cords, and plastic ends/weights/sticks. The CPPC now has an extensive photo-bank of this type of plastic pollution donated by contributors to the project.





## CONCLUSIONS

The amount of balloon debris found on Cornish beaches is significantly large enough to present a real danger to wildlife and the environment. Not only does the debris pose entanglement threats for seabirds and marine creatures, it is also potentially harmful in terms of possible ingestion when animals mistake it for food sources.

Balloon fragments have found in close proximity to our grey seals here in Cornwall:-



Photo: Terry Thirlaway Tomey



Photo: Rob Wells



This guillemot found at Whitsand Bay has balloon debris entangled around its legs:-



Photo: Rame Peninsula Beach Care

Some of the balloon debris collected by the CPPC during the past six months was fashioned into the 'Appalling Multi-Coloured Balloon Coat' to illustrate the extent of this issue around our coastline. The coat contains over 1000 pieces of balloon debris.



The CPPC has used the evidence gathered to date to make contact with all those businesses, companies, charities and organisations whose branded balloons are found during Cornish beach cleans. This has been done with the following aims:-

- To raise awareness of the issue of plastic pollution around our coastline
- To highlight the issue of balloon debris in Cornwall
- To attempt to persuade those organisations to choose more environmentally friendly ways of advertising/promoting/celebrating

The CPPC will continue to work with other networks, organisations, groups and individuals to try and further this work in 2017 and beyond.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been compiled by Delia Webb on behalf of the Cornish Plastic Pollution Coalition using data and evidence supplied to the coalition by its membership (groups and individuals). A massive vote of thanks goes to all those who have contributed to this project.

The CPPC comprises the following Marine Conservation & Environmental groups:- Surfers Against Sewage, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, National Trust in Cornwall, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Cornish Seal Sanctuary, 2 Minute Beach Clean, British Divers Marine Life Rescue, Friends of Portherras Cove, Rame Peninsula Beach Care, Looe Marine Conservation Group, Newquay Marine Group, Lego Lost at Sea, Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust, Polzeath Voluntary Marine Conservation Area, Transition Truro, Fathoms Free, Atlantic Diving, Newquay Sea Safaris, Widemouth Task Force, Newquay Crab, St Agnes Marine Conservation Group, Friends of Par Beach, Helford Voluntary Marine Conservation Area, Professor Richard Thompson, School of Marine Science & Engineering at Plymouth University, Newquay Beachcombing, Newquay Beach Care, Lost at Sea Group, Truro Green Street Volunteers, Friends of Poldhu, Polzeath Beach Care, Transition Falmouth, Falmouth & Exeter Students Union, Capturing Our Coast, Fishy Filaments, Crackington Crew