

Working in coastal areas

Before carrying out a litter pick on a beach or other coastal area, it is worth finding out a little bit more about your chosen site before running the activity. Below are some common areas that need consideration before you start, and many beaches have maps indicating much of the information;

Tides / cut offs – you should be aware of the time of the next high tide and plan your event accordingly. If possible, it is best to start your event on a receding tide, one to two hours after high water. If this is not possible, you should be aware of any areas of the beach/coastal area that can become cut off on an incoming tide, and ensure all participants are aware of this. Participants should not enter the water during the activity.

Rock fall – clean-up activity should not take place under any cliffs, especially in areas that have signage indicating the possibility of rock fall. It is recommended that you stay in open areas and work along the strandline where the majority of litter will be found.

Cliffs – if working on the coast path, care should be taken on the edge of cliffs, and activity should be limited to the footpath itself. On the exposed cliff, care needs to be taken if carrying the red bags as they can be caught by the wind.

Weather – the weather can have a bigger impact on individuals working in the coastal environment, and the length of clean-up activity should be modified to accommodate. Wind, rain and spray can make people feel colder in a shorter space of time, and if sunny the wind chill can hide the impact of the sun leading to sunburn.

Work area (slippery rocks, shingle) – by its very nature, coastal areas can be more hazardous under foot, and suitable shoes/boots should be worn. Rocks exposed by the tide are likely to be wet and slippery, and sand and shingle can be difficult to walk on.



Flares and unidentified containers – if unused flares are found washed ashore it should be left where it is, people asked to move away, and the Coastguard informed immediately. If large unidentifiable containers are washed ashore, they should be reported to the local authority who will have appropriate arrangements in place. Large items like this should not be moved without prior arrangement with the local authority.

Strandline – the strandline is a vitally important habitat for the health of the beach, so only foreign objects/litter should be removed from the beach.