

Tarka Accord



Conclusion from Fremington Quay Clean

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Introduction:

(As reference for the reader, the remainder of this document is written in 1st person from the perspective of the author of this document.)

This document contains information surrounding a clean which occurred on the 20th of September, 2024; specifically:

- My plans for engaging with the event
- My reasons for partaking
- Where the clean took place
- Who I was conducting the clean with
- My initial hypothesis
- My conclusion following the clean

Location and People Involved:

Location:

The clean took place in two main locations:

- The beach extending Northeast (and later just North) of the Fremington Quay café.
- A section of publicly accessible road East of the aforementioned beach, of which divides two sets of fields.

People Involved:

The clean on Fremington Quay beach (and the nearby road) that took place on the 20th was but one of various other local cleans that happened on the same day as a part of *World Clean-Up Day*. Various different organisations and volunteers took part in the wider event, with the main three groups of which engaged with the clean at Fremington Quay including:

- Plastic Free North Devon (the hosts of the clean).
- Coastal Recycling.
- Ian Roome, the local Liberal Democrat MP, alongside other councillors.
- Myself, independent from the other groups and individuals, attending as the director of Tarka Accord.

Most of the aforementioned stayed for the entire scheduled clean, although Mr. Roome and the two joining him only stayed for a majority of the clean at Fremington Quay as opposed to the entirety of it.

My Outlook before Attending:

Reasoning for Attending and Initial Plans:

The main factor behind my initial interest in partaking in the clean was my previously established line of communication with Plastic Free North Devon and trying to engage with them for a Tarka Accord project; it just so happened that the clean scheduled for the 20th was in a reasonable location, the date was available in my schedule, and the event was due to start at a reasonable time.

Regarding the plans of which I curated over time leading up to the scheduled clean, the approach I had in mind was to analyse and record the waste of which was gathered by the group. The way in which I was initially intending of doing so was by bringing a set of scales to weigh the material while categorising it by frequency and recording it in a notepad; yet due to time constraints, the scale of the project was reduced to merely be a test to gain experience and insight on the topic for possible further research.

My Initial Hypothesis:

Although I did not have a strict hypothesis before attending the clean, I had presumed that the waste material collected would be easily discernible as to where it had come from. Following this, I had assumed that the majority of the waste on the beach (of which was the only location I knew the clean would be occurring at before attending) would be from waste washing in from the river / estuary. In addition to this, I had thought that some waste on the beach would have been directly discarded onto it.

Conclusion from the Clean:

Extent of Waste:

Although my predictions before going into the clean were mostly accurate in assuming that waste would appear to be both deposited by the river / estuary and discarded directly onto the beach by individuals, I found that the extent of the waste far exceeded my previous subconscious expectation of what scale of damage there would be. Not only was the sheer scale of the problem shocking to realise, but the stories of far worse elsewhere and the complete lack of apparent and / or vocal shock from all of the others was worrying.

Although only roughly weighed at the end of the day, the lead of the clean at Fremington Quay (Clarie Moodie, Plastic Free North Devon's chief executive) presented the weight of the total amount of material gathered at around 150 kg at the end of the clean.

Additionally, considering the amount which had washed ashore from the river / estuary, it can be presumed that the total amount of waste on coastal beaches (like that at Westward Ho!) deposited by the current would be greater due to having more direct contact with the sea.

Content of the Waste:

Regarding the content of the waste discovered, it varied significantly in both size and material, and differed depending on the locations in which they were discovered (chiefly, the beach and the road).

The Beach:

The majority of the variety in waste came from the beach. As examples on what was discovered, either by me or others:

- Significantly large items, such as: two tents, jerry cans, and a fishing rod.
- Food-containers, such as: tupperware or tupperware-like boxes, many plastic water bottles, bottlecaps, drinks cans, and the presumed remains of glass bottles.
- Thin, torn and mostly deformed plastic sheets of varying sizes (of which would occasionally structurally collapse upon retrieval).
- Varying small pieces of plastic of which ranged from highly obscure / unusual to completely undesirable.

Alongside this large variety in items, I could observe a general trend where larger items would be further away from the water, with a significant uptick in larger items embedded within the shrubbery marking the end of the beach (excluding the large sections of sheer rock). Additionally, the smaller items on the beach tended to be coated in thin films of grime and often looked eroded past the point of recognisability with the exception of their unnaturality.

The Road:

Unlike the waste materials found on the beach, the waste of which could be found on the nearby road / pathway generally featured significantly less diversity.

Although the occasional plastic bottle and black plastic bag could be found, the vast majority of the waste consisted of large sheets of plastic mostly buried underground aside from small segments allowing them to be found. From the large amount of that particular kind of waste, it could be reasonably theorised that the waste could have come from the nearby farms and - also - that much of the waste could have been missed due to being fully buried.

Possible Reasons for Waste Presence:

Both while cleaning the locations and reevaluating the event afterwards, it became apparent to me that the sources of waste were and continue to be multifaceted. This conclusion rose from the diversity of the materials found, to elaborate: eroded waste would have likely come from the river / estuary, bagged dog waste would have likely come from irresponsible dog-walkers, large piles of waste in hedges could have come from fly-tipping, abandoned damaged tents could have come from irresponsible hikers, tourists or perhaps people sleeping rough.

The general trend in which I observed over the possible and / or likely sources of material waste was the apparent irresponsibility of various actors from all sorts of groups, communities, and types of individuals.

Final Conclusion:

Over the course of the clean-up and the reflection afterwards, it became apparent that whatever legislation and other measures in place designed to keep man-made material waste out of the environment have not wholly succeeded if not, arguably, failed. It is clear that, even with legal restrictions against contributing to the man-made waste issue in our environment and a deepening cultural attitude against littering and related issues, the irresponsibility of various individuals from various communities is still leading to this particular type of pollution.

Extrapolating from this, it is my opinion that: the attempted abolition of the irresponsible discarding of environmentally harmful materials as a way of preventing it should be sidelined in favour of changing the material composition of commonly discarded items on a large scale to ensure that the materials of which are discarded into the environment are less - or even not - harmful to it.