

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

'It's clear we all must do what we can'

SPECIAL REPORT

LAURA FEINBERG found common ground with her fellow volunteers when she joined a beach clean at Stodday organised by North Lancashire Green Party

It's the day after the night before. David Attenborough has presented his most shocking and threatening picture of where we are all heading and I have awoken in sombre mood.

It is clear that we all must do what we can, from oil companies to charities to businesses and individuals, if there is to be a future for life on earth.

But what can we do? And isn't anything we achieve but 'a drop in the ocean'? What's the point?

Well for me today the choice is stark.

Sit at home worrying, do my washing, a bit of shopping on the internet or chatting on WhatsApp with friends.

I think I remember seeing something about a beach clean in Stodday, a place dear to me and many others who grew up cycling to the Stork pub, running in the fresh air along the old railway line, or



watching the wader birds out in the estuary.

I plump for b. The weather is good and I am short of cash.

Arriving at the picnic bench meeting place I realise that I recognise half of the faces in front of me. Someone mentions the

word 'community'. As time goes on more and more links become apparent, as does the shared sense of ownership of the beautiful landscape, wild, picturesque, but tainted with debris from the sea, the land, from 'us'.

This is why we are here. Every day we pass litter.

Perhaps the extreme pessimist thinks there is no point and continues on, even adding more to the debris. We're doomed after all, right?

And there are those who may agree with the sentiment, and yet somehow they show up anyway.

Personally I consider myself an optimist, but only just. I think 'we'll' be okay by the skin of our teeth, but only if we all work at doing what we can. That's also why I am here.

And where are the extreme optimists? Probably sitting by a pool somewhere sipping pina colada – because everything will be okay – right?

So back to the day, rubbish bags and litter pickers distributed, the group disseminates in different directions to the shoreline. The sun is out and there is work to do.

The litter pickers are new and shiny, the bags purple and numerous. We set off,



The litter pick at Stodday.

covering the breadth of the shoreline. The tide is out.

We begin to chat and it's good to find the common connections and surf the wave of motivation present, both on the day and in hearing about other people's involvement in projects and campaigns, for example declaring an official climate emergency in Lancaster and running the upkeep of a local community green-space.

In terms of what we are finding, it's old hats, plastic bottles, a trainer...

Speaking with my fellow volunteers, some common motivational themes emerge. Yes the sun is out and it's a bank holiday, but, deeper than that, there is a palpable emotional attachment to the area. It's a beautiful spot and the connection people feel between themselves and the land, unexpected in a 21st century technological age, is clear.

This sounds like deep stuff, but it is a message I get loud and clear with no recourse to email, Facebook or Twitter. People have grown

Call to action

What and where do you care about? If you'd like to take part in a beach clean yourself go to <https://www.mcsuk.org/beachwatch/greatbritish-beachclean>
●You'll find North Lancashire Green Party's website at <https://northlancs.greenparty.org.uk/>

up locally, history, stories and experiences woven into the landscape, and they want to see it protected.

We're here to do what we can, and what we're doing is a 'drop in the ocean' right? Yes.

It's also an opportunity for some to scratch the itch of seeing litter on a daily basis and do something about it. Doing something about it feels good, the workout, as an aside, is free.

The connections made and reaffirmed have given me a boost and I have a sense of happiness from knowing I've contributed something





Councillors Tim Dant, Abi Mills and Joanna Young have all been elected in Scotforth West where the litter pick took place.



positive this morning. This morning I chose to pull on my wellies rather than my slippers. A small choice in the grand scheme of things. A drop in the ocean one might say...

The tide comes in. It's quick and heralds the end of the beach clean for today. So we're drops in the ocean. But we showed up. Drops, with more drops, meeting the tide with the

beginnings of one of our own. I cleared a bag of rubbish myself. Together we cleared between 30 and 40 and that's one stretch of coast-line refreshed.'

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