



THE RIPPLE EFFECT

SEA LANES BRIGHTON'S IMPACT ON COASTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Sea Lanes Brighton, launched in June 2023, is the UK's National Open Water Swimming Centre. At its heart is a 50m outdoor heated pool, surrounded by 19 local businesses focused on fitness, wellbeing, food, and drink. The project transformed a previously neglected seafront plot into a vibrant, year-round hub for physical and mental wellbeing.

INITIAL CHALLENGE

During the Sea Lanes pop-up (2018–2021), the site lacked mains utility connections, which necessitated the use of single-use packaging for food and drink. While compostable materials such as Vegware were used, disposal required specialist waste services. The challenge was to transition to a sustainable solution which focused on reusables for the permanent Sea Lanes regeneration project.

SOLUTIONS & INNOVATIONS

Sea Lanes adopted a phased, collaborative approach to sustainability:

Reusable drinkware

- Hot drinks served in Huskee cups (made from coffee husks).
- Cold drinks and alcoholic beverages served in glassware.

Reusable tableware

- Food served on metal and durable crockery.
- Shared metal cutlery provided by all vendors.

Water access

- No plastic bottled drinks sold.
- Water refill station and canned water available.

Operational controls

- Sustainability standards embedded in lease agreements and operating handbooks.

FURTHER CHALLENGES

Despite progress towards the solution, several operational and environmental challenges emerged after the launch of Sea Lanes in 2023:

- Use of single-use plastic cups and lids for smoothies and juices.
- Free sauce sachets contributing to waste.
- Pre-made iced drinks in PET ‘cans’ and juices in plastic bottles.
- Inconsistent customer bin style, waste type and signage lead to contamination and low recycling rates.
- Seasonal business peaks put a strain on waste and recycling collection and segregation.
- Room hire customers using single-use celebration items such as balloons.
- Difficulty sourcing specialist services to compost packaging.

SUMMER 2025

A comprehensive review of the food and drink area and vendors at Sea Lanes, working with Leave No Trace Brighton led to targeted interventions:

Team and culture

- Hired two General Managers (responsible for Operations and Growth & Sustainability).
- Installed the Sea Lanes values to encourage the expected behaviours.

Packaging audit and improvements

- All vendors audited for single-use plastic.
- All remaining plastic bottled drinks replaced with glass or cans.
- Overnight oats served in glass jars instead of plastic pots.
- For instances where reusables weren’t possible (e.g. takeaway orders) plant-based compostable packaging used.
- Plastic sauce sachets replaced with chargeable compostable dip pots.

Recycling and waste

- 1.4-tonne hot composting system implemented to process compostable packaging and food waste onsite, reducing transport emissions and fostering a sustainability culture.
- Recorra appointed for all recycling and waste collections to ensure all waste produced on site is recorded and the data analysed to identify further improvements.

Service adjustments

- Coffee cart introduced for takeaway customers during peak times, helping separate eat-in and takeaway formats to stop takeaway cups being used by eat-in customers
- Food vendor requires table numbers to discourage takeaway orders which require single-use takeaway packaging.
- Asking customers to avoid using single-use celebration items when booking a hire room and advising them on possible reusable and sustainable alternatives.

ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS

- Regular vendor audits and training to enhance recycling compliance.
- Exploring pricing strategies to incentivise reusable cup use (e.g.charging for takeaway cups).
- Improved communication to educate customers on waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting initiatives to raise awareness and understanding, reduce bin contamination and improve recycling rates
- Continued collaboration with vendors to reduce supply chain packaging.
- Reviewing site composting and using Reccorra for surplus compostables collection.
- Reviewing investment opportunities such as a bio digester and shredder to process heavy food waste and compostable packaging on site and distribute to communities as fertiliser.

CONCLUSION

Sea Lanes Brighton demonstrates how a coastal, multi-vendor site can successfully transition from single-use dependency to a circular, sustainable model. Its approach offers a replicable blueprint for venues balancing customer experience, operational feasibility, and environmental responsibility.





2025 BEACH CLEAN DATA

Leave No Trace Brighton and Sea Lanes have been working together since 2019 to run monthly beach cleans during the Spring and Summer months. These cleans are well-attended and see the Brighton community come together to protect our beautiful beaches.

The aim is to educate, encourage, and empower individuals, communities, and businesses to reduce waste, recycle, and properly dispose of rubbish. Together, we can keep our beaches and seas clean for everyone to enjoy.

The data collected from the beach cleans provides valuable insights into the types and quantities of waste found along our shores. By analysing this data, we can identify trends, track the effectiveness of our efforts, and develop strategies to reduce marine pollution.

	RECYCLED PLASTIC	METAL/ ALUMINIUM	GLASS	PAPER/WOOD	FISHING WASTE	NON RECYCLED WASTE	TOTAL	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
30/03/25	4.2 kg	7 kg	5 kg	7.8 kg	8 kg	19.5 kg	51.5 kg	75
27/04/25	4 kg	3 kg	4 kg	11 kg	3 kg	31 kg	56 kg	43
25/05/25	Cancelled - Bad Weather							
29/06/25	11 kg	7 kg	5.5 kg	15 kg	0.5 kg	14 kg	53 kg	75
27/07/25	6 kg	2 kg	6 kg	0.5 kg	0.5 kg	20.5 kg	35.5 kg	52
31/08/25	4.7 kg	3.2 kg	3.7 kg	4.9 kg	0.5 kg	16 kg	33 kg	45
28/09/25	5 kg	2 kg	7 kg	9 kg	2 kg	18 kg	43 kg	50
TOTALS	34.9 kg	24.2 kg	31.2 kg	48.2 kg	14.5 kg	119 kg	272 kg	340

THE DIRTY DOZEN



3,749

#1 Plastic food packaging



1,472

#2 Paper tissues/napkins



912

#3 Plastic fragments 2.5-50cm



830

#4 Aluminium drinks cans



782

#5 Plastic drinks bottles



532

#6 Plastic single use cups



518

#7 Mixed bottle caps/lids



506

#8 Cigarette butts



489

#9 Plastic fragments 0-2.5cm



411

#10 Plastic cable ties



388

#11 Paper/Card takeaway container



376

#12 Plastic fishing waste 0-50cm