

**K**irstie Allsopp is passionate about litter. Despite a crazily busy schedule that sees her charging up and down the country filming for Channel 4's Location, Location, Location and juggling her various craft and cooking enterprises she is happy to drop everything to lend her support to the Daily Mail's Great Plastic Pick Up.

'It's a genius idea!' she says. 'It's all too easy to think those awful scenes of plastic rubbish bobbing about in the ocean and poisoning sealife are somebody else's problem, but it really is up to us – all of us – to do our bit. And it's great to know thousands of people will be coming together in force to clean up the country and recycle plastic.'

Kirstie is as good as her word, as she'll be out with her family next weekend for the Mail's special event, picking up litter and separating it for three separate collections – including plastic bottles and aluminium cans for recycling – but so fanatical is she that there's every chance a spot of litter-picking would have been on her family weekend agenda anyway.

She and her partner of 14 years, Ben Anderson, a property developer, divide their time between homes in Devon and London. They have two boys of their own – Oscar, nine, and Bay, 11 – and are often joined by Ben's older sons Hal, 15, and Orion, 18, on litter-picking trips.

'Whether at home or on holiday, we regularly go out together to collect rubbish,' she says proudly. 'People think I'm keen, but Ben's

probably the most evangelical of us all. He's been known to stop the car in the middle of nowhere and leap out to rescue an ugly item of tat from the verge.'

'We keep a full set of litter grabbers for our walks and regularly clear the verges on the roads leading to our house. Often I'll give each child a bag and challenge them to a litter-collecting contest. They're so competitive, my motivational tactics work a treat!'

'Things can get a little heated if the child who spotted the litter isn't the first child to grab it, but we've pulled in some impressive hauls including a fridge, a microwave and a deep-fat fryer dumped in front of our gate.'

Kirstie, 46, was appointed an ambassador to Keep Britain Tidy in 2009 after spotting a job advert Keep Britain Tidy took out in the national press to find a celebrity spokesman, and she loves to tell everyone that although she fell into her very successful property-based TV career, the KBT job is the only one she ever properly applied for.

## THREE BAGS FULL

As part of our Great Plastic Pick Up, local authorities are giving away colour-coded bags made from 100 per cent recycled plastic – see overleaf for details on how to collect these. **BLUE** is for plastic bottles and **RED** for metal drinks cans plus any ring-pulls, all to be recycled. The **WHITE** bags are for all other litter, including non-bottle plastics, juice cartons, paper and cardboard. The key to the success of this brilliant plan is ensuring that the bags are filled correctly, as plastic bottles put in the rubbish bags won't get recycled and rubbish in the plastic bottle bag could contaminate the bag and render it un-recyclable.

If you can't get the colour-coded bags, use recycled rubble sacks or bin bags – but again, these must be correctly and clearly sorted.

She joins presenter Julia Bradbury, naturalists Chris Packham and Steve Backshall and actress Vicky Michelle, who are all enthusiastically speaking up for litter picking and supporting the Daily Mail with The Great Plastic Pick Up campaign.

Kirstie has a stash of Daily Mail-branded recycled bags for rubbish collecting and will be heading with her family to Welcombe in Devon on Saturday 12 May to meet up with local litter-pickers there.

Once you start Kirstie talking about



*Nothing enrages Kirstie Allsopp more than rubbish. That's why she'll be out collecting it with her family for the Mail's campaign – and she urges you to take part too*

# Join Kirstie's Litter helpers

litter – and plastic – it is very easy to see why she waltzed into the Keep Britain Tidy job. Her passion can sometimes bubble into anger and she seems to relish a bit of controversy. Last year she was so infuriated when someone threw a bottle out of a car window she photographed the number

plate and posted it to her 413,000 Twitter followers with the label, 'The driver of this car is a tosser'.

Despite the flak this triggered, with her being accused by some members of the public of taking the law into her own hands, she is unrepentant and enthusiastically urges anyone who sees

a 'tossler' to take a photograph and send the number plate to Keep Britain Tidy so they can check with the DVLA or, if the vehicle is branded, to tweet the picture to the parent company.

'It should be instant dismissal for any member of staff at any company if an employee is identified as a tosser.'

## WHY JULIA AND CHRIS ARE PITCHING IN

**JULIA BRADBURY**  
Former Countryfile presenter Julia Bradbury, known for her love of walking – she co-presented an ITV documentary on Britain's Favourite Walks earlier this year – urges everyone to take part in the campaign to help keep our countryside beautiful.

'People might think I bang on about this a lot, but litter, and in particular single-use plastic, is a

subject that's close to my heart. When I'm out walking I see the huge impact it has even in the most remote places,' she says.

'It's good to see this issue is getting the attention it needs and I hope as many people as possible will join in The Great Plastic Pick Up to protect our wildlife and marine life – and personally take responsibility to clean up the environment on our doorstep and beyond.'



**CHRIS PACKHAM**

Springwatch presenter and wildlife fanatic Chris Packham will also be joining the campaign next weekend and will be collecting litter close to his home in the New Forest. As he says, 'It couldn't be easier to join in. This is a brilliant chance for us to clean up litter – specifically toxic plastic litter – from our environment. You will be helping to halt a deeply worrying problem.'



**PLASTIC FACT** Converging ocean currents have created an island in the middle of the North Pacific – the Great Pacific





Kirstie leading a litter-picking crew in Wigan last Christmas

# HOW PLASTIC IS TRULY DEADLY

## STEVE BACKSHALL

Wildlife TV presenter Steve Backshall has seen the deadly threat of plastic to sea life. 'Plastic was a world-changing miracle, but is now a world-tainting horror. I've spent 25 years travelling for shows such as Deadly 60 and Fierce. Filming seabirds in the Antarctic Ocean, as far away from humans as you can imagine, I found a common

cause of seabird deaths is marine plastic,' he says. 'I've stood on beaches in the Pacific strewn with plastic bottles that were discarded on British beaches, untangled seals from plastic wraps cutting through their flesh and caught leatherback turtles in UK seas with throats tangled with plastic bags that they mistook for jellyfish.'



could laminate an instruction sheet and stick it on the fridge to ensure the whole family knows exactly what to do with different types of plastic. 'It's no good manufacturers thinking they're doing the right thing by putting "recyclable" labels on their plastic packaging when the local authority can't accept it in the doorstep recycling scheme – I'd much rather know the packaging was made from recycled plastic itself in the first place.'

And that's where Kirstie's signature 'make do and mend' values come into play. 'Knowing something is secondhand is thoroughly rewarding. It adds value to the product if you can be reassured it contains plastic that has already been used,' she says.

get washed into a gutter, a storm drain or a sewer and find its way out to sea to join the ever-growing toxic plastic soup endangering wildlife.

'If each person in the UK was just a little bit careless, dropping, say, five pieces of plastic a year – just the odd bottle top or hair band – a population of 67 million people in the UK means around 340 million small items of plastic could be making their way into the ocean. This has to stop.'

When Kirstie vents her anger on social media to her 413,000 followers, she is greeted with a huge swell of support but says there'll always be a few taking a stand against her. The most common response she gets is defensive cries of, 'Our taxes should pay to clear up litter.'

'This blows my mind!' she says. 'Public money should be allocated to caring for people, not to picking up after lazy tossers who don't give a fig about where the plastic ends up. Just think about how much cancer treatment or how much mental healthcare could be paid for and how many children's lives could be altered if we all took our litter home or took the trouble to find a bin?'

'Even if there was a bottomless pit of public money and an unlimited number of municipal clean-up crews, I would still think it unacceptable to drop litter. And I would still resent the idea of anyone paying to pick up litter that shouldn't have been dropped in the first place.'

Talking to Kirstie is like nattering with an old friend – albeit a strongly opinionated one. She is forthright, yes, but also warm and funny, and rather self-deprecating about what she is the

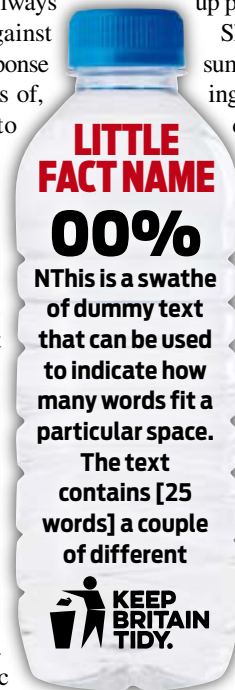
first to admit is her charmingly privileged life. There's no getting away from the fact she's posh (her father is a baron, so, in theory, she could call herself 'honourable'), but when she talks about the scourge of ocean plastics washed up on beaches around the world, she is swift to add caveats like, 'I'm very lucky to have travelled quite a bit.'

When I press her on the recycling regime at the Allsopp home, she squirms slightly. 'I'm nowhere near as good as I should be,' she admits, confessing that although she's tried wooden tooth picks she isn't ready to give up plastic interdental brushes.

She tries to keep plastic consumption to a minimum by buying kitchen liquids in bulk and decanting them into reusable containers. Plastic tubs that can't be recycled find their way into Ben's shed to store assorted nails or screws ('I've got to watch him because his hoarding habit is in danger of getting out of hand!' she whispers, conspiratorially).

She carries a refillable metal water bottle (as well as a reusable coffee cup) in her handbag and last year faced resistance from the Location, Location, Location team when she banned bottled water on shoots. 'We were taking crates of bottled water to each shoot – it was getting ridiculous! Oh, I'm definitely a militant,' she laughs. 'I'd happily ban all wipes and all plug-in air-fresheners as well if I could.'

However, like so many of us, she admits she's bamboozled by the varying and ever-changing rules about which plastics each local authority doorstep-collection scheme will and will not accept. 'A uniform approach would be very useful,' she says, 'then I



she says, adding that in her view, the authorities should just go ahead and shut the motorways so the verges can be cleared 'and if the haulage companies don't like it, perhaps they'll put pressure on their truck drivers not to throw rubbish out of their windows!'

Kirstie is furious about the volume of fast-food packaging dumped on roadsides. This, she says with shrewd insight, is very often 'guilty litter' swiftly abandoned by people who don't want their partner or family knowing they've grabbed a burger, chocolate bar or fizzy drink on their way home.

'I'd like to see a national behaviour change for drivers so it becomes completely unacceptable to dump litter: like using a seatbelt and not smoking with children in the car. We should all accept the rule that we gather up any rubbish that accumulates in the car and take it home or find somewhere for it to be recycled.'

Although littering fines recently increased from £80 to £150, a rap on the knuckles is not enough, she maintains. She'd like to see an on-

the-spot fine so high that the litter louts wouldn't be able to afford it and would have to agree to spend three consecutive Saturdays picking up litter instead.

Her real bugbear is the insidious idea that litter isn't your problem and that trash should, and usually will be, cleared up by someone else. 'Local authorities spend millions of pounds each year clearing litter, and they do a great job, but sometimes I think it would be good if they took a couple of weeks off so people could see how dropped litter builds up – it's horrific!'

She tells me the lip-curling story of leaving her London home each morning to be greeted by the sight of a dog-poo bag, neatly knotted and sitting beside a single disposable glove. 'I have no idea who they belong to, but what's the world coming to when someone is so phobic about germs they'll use a glove to clear up after their dog, but then is so ignorant about the dangers of plastic littering that they leave their detritus for someone else to deal with?'

As she points out, like so much discarded plastic, this could very easily

**OVERLEAF NOW FIND OUT HOW TO SIGN UP**

Garbage Patch – which is mostly composed of plastic waste and is the size of India, Europe and Mexico combined