

# Sister act: Teens who picked up 69,000 bits of plastic

By Louise Atkinson

FOR many teenage girls, free time means the chance to watch online make-up tutorials or chat aimlessly to friends on social media.

Amy and Ella Meek, on the other hand, are on a mission to pick up litter.

The sisters have already collected more than 69,000 pieces of single-use plastic and now aim to make that 100,000.

'That is the number of sea mammals killed each year from being trapped in plastic or eating it,' said Amy, 16.

'We take our gloves and litter pickers with us wherever we go at the weekends and fill our pockets with plastic if we're on a bike ride.'

'Once you start picking it up, you start seeing it everywhere and then you end up feeling uncomfortable about driving or walking past it without doing something.'

Amy and 14-year-old Ella, from Nottingham, plan to join next month's Great British School Clean. This is part of the Great British Spring Clean run by Keep Britain Tidy and backed by the Mail, which has long campaigned against plastic waste.

'It can be quite scary to learn about the world's environmental issues and the lack of action on the part of authorities but young people don't have to sit back,' said Amy. 'If we don't do something right now, by the time we are middle-aged the plastic problem will have spiralled out of control.' The Meek

**TURN THE TIDE ON PLASTIC**

**Daily Mail**  
THE GREAT BRITISH SPRING CLEAN.

sisters' campaigning work goes way beyond litter picking. Four years ago, they set up Kids against Plastic, a registered charity which they call a 'youth social action project'.

Their website is packed with free downloadable resources helping schools, cafes and councils to reduce their plastic consumption. As junior activists they get invited to speak at international conferences and make regular appearances at schools talking about plastic pollution and the virtues of litter picking.

Their activism dates back to their parents' decision, when Amy was 11 and Ella nine, to give up their jobs as teachers.

The couple sold their house and embarked on a life-changing three-year trip around Europe, home-schooling the

girls as they travelled. 'When we were driving through France we were horrified to see so much plastic along the roadsides,' said Amy. After the trip, the Meek family returned to normal life in the UK - but the girls' passion for the environment continued. They've also

written a book called *beplastic-clever*, due to be published by DK in May, explaining the importance of reducing single use plastic to children.

Ella said: 'Wherever we are, if we see litter - particularly plastic litter - we will *definitely* pick it up.'

Plastic fantastic: Amy, left, and younger sister Ella with their haul of rubbish



Beach clean: Sisters tidy up by the sea

## Fast food giant wants to Mac a difference

MCDONALD'S yesterday admitted it has 'lots more to do' in the fight against litter as it backed the Great British Spring Clean.

Britain's biggest fast-food chain said it was 'delighted' to get behind the campaign - run by Keep Britain Tidy and supported by the Daily Mail - after 2,500 staff got involved last year.

The UK arm of the American company organised 243 Great British Spring Clean litter-pick events across its franchises last year.

This time, the firm hopes to 'grow those numbers' and contribute to the one million volunteers the Mail is hoping to get signed up. But McDonald's admits it still

has work to do to become more sustainable, after facing criticism for fuelling the litter crisis on Britain's streets.

A Keep Britain Tidy survey published in 2018 revealed fast-food-related waste

contributed to 33 per cent of rubbish at sites across the country. And last year, analysis of branded items found on UK beaches revealed that McDonald's accounted for 6 per cent of all litter - with

1,196 pieces of McDonald's waste picked up across 229 beach cleans.

The company does arrange regular collections around its premises but much of the packaging is dumped further afield as customers take their food away.

A statement on the fast food chain's website reads: 'We've made big progress so far, but we know there's lots more to do.' A spokesman said: 'At McDonald's we are proud to be supporting the Great British Spring Clean once again this year.'

The campaign has also received the backing of Boris Johnson along with 180 MPs - representing more than a quarter of the House of Commons.

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