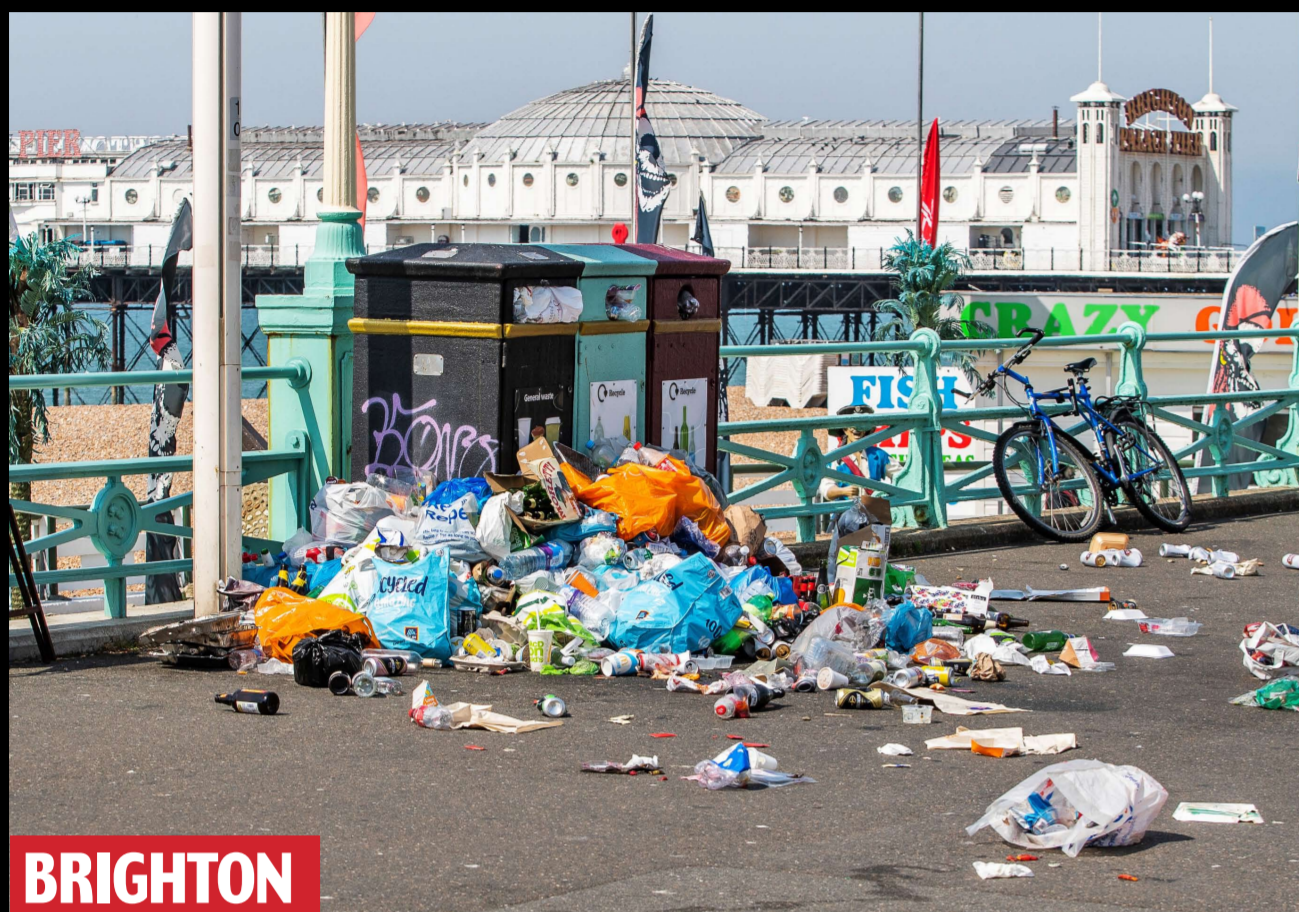


SUMMER SELFISHNESS SHAMES US ALL

As we launch a clean-up operation with Keep Britain Tidy, shocking images of a litter lout landscape



BRIGHTON

Wish you weren't here: The litter bins are overflowing on to the street in the seaside resort



NORRIS GREEN PARK

Green, green grass of doom: Plastic bin bags are piled up in this beauty spot in Liverpool



BOURNEMOUTH

Beach bums: Detritus left by sunseekers



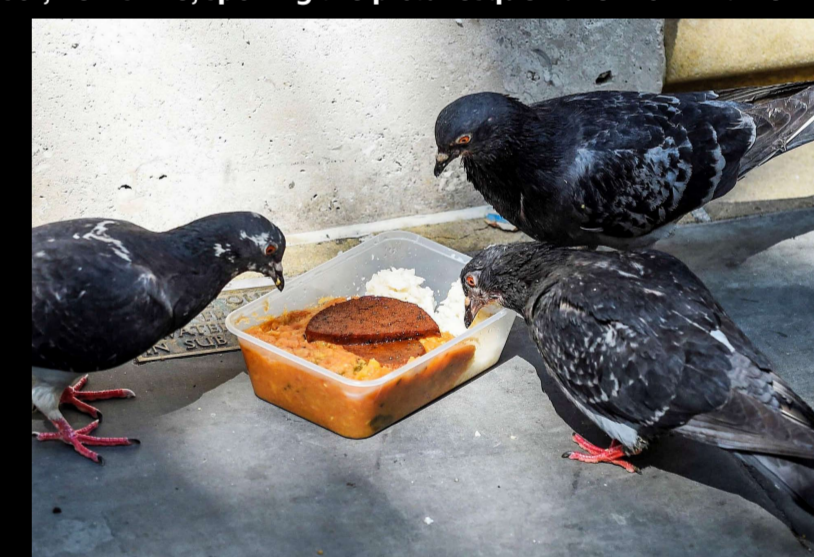
RIVER THAMES

Flooded by waste: Plastic bottles and other rubbish lies strewn on the riverbank in Windsor, Berkshire, spoiling the picturesque haven for wildlife



BREAN BEACH

Rubbish tip: Ruined tourist hotspot in Somerset



NORTHUMBERLAND

Flight risk: Three pigeons tuck into discarded fast food

AS IF we don't have enough to be depressed about right now (and I am speaking as an optimist), I think I'm going to have to get myself an eye mask to go with my Covid-19 mask. I nearly cried when I saw the photos of Bournemouth beach last week, and nothing can shield us from the numbers: 500,000 people caused a 'major incident' in Dorset, leaving behind 33 tons of litter to be cleared away. The

lowest point of all the reports was to read about human waste left in a burger box. I am enraged and miserable in equal measure that there are so many lazy, selfish, thoughtless people out there. Disease loves dirty corners to hide in, and rubbish is the perfect harbour. In

case these lazy louts didn't know it (and one must assume by their behaviour that they don't), there's a worldwide pandemic on and a deadly virus that is searching for places to linger and spread. Leaving behind tons of litter from plastic bags and bottles to

picnic leftovers and abandoned tents (and now let's add used face masks and gloves to the list) isn't just indolent and wretched — it's dangerous and amoral. Just who do these people think is going to pick up their detritus? And Bournemouth, sadly, wasn't just a blot on the beach. Since

lockdown has been eased, I have noticed our beautiful green spaces and precious parks have suffered more. My various television series have taken me all over the UK and the world and I have sadly seen a huge increase in litter and plastic pollution. My local parks in London are strewn with masks and beer bottles. This isn't just littering, it is polluting. Leaving human faeces in a box is potentially life-threatening during a pandemic (as is dumping used face masks and gloves). My children, who are five and eight, go around picking

up litter, pointing out cigarette butts, and they are sure to tell me when something is plastic. But I can't let them pick up litter right now because it is positively dangerous. And before you all cry that all the public litters are closed — yes, we all know that. But if someone finds themselves needing to go, they should take it home with them. Don't leave someone else to deal with your mess. It's disgusting. Local authorities spend £800 million every year cleaning

up our streets; wildlife and thousands of pets die and are injured getting tangled up in it, and this year parks managers across the country are reporting that the situation is the worst they have ever seen. Salford council staff collected 200 tons more rubbish from the city's parks and streets in eight weeks during lockdown compared to last year. My favourite anti-litter sign is by the City of York council, which asks: 'Why are you tossing your litter around here? I'm lazy/I don't care about this community/I think other people should pay

to clean up after me. Don't be a tosser. You brought your rubbish here, please take it home with you.' Sadly, we are a nation obsessed with takeaways, and that equates to a throw-away mentality. We spend billions of pounds a year on convenience food and we don't want the inconvenience of dealing with the waste that it produces. We need to create a culture where cleanliness is valued, the deposit return scheme on plastic bottles needs to be pushed through urgently, recycling facilities need to be updated and businesses must be held accountable

for waste they create. We must start taking rubbish seriously. If you're as frustrated as I am, there is a way you can make a real difference. It's simple and effective. Sign up to participate in Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean, which, as a result of Covid-19, is now running throughout September. Let's get outdoors and show those people trashing our parks and beaches that the majority are prepared to stand up for our environment and push back against selfish behaviour. ■ GO TO keepbritaintidy.org and theoutdoorguide.co.uk.

by Julia Bradbury

PICTURES: ALAMY/HUGO MICHELIS; LIVERPOOL OUTDOORS; BNP/SHARON BERRY; CHRIS CORMAN