

## Surfers Against Sewage – Our work in 2019

### 2019 in numbers

**2,210** – cleans organised  
**205** – Regional environmental volunteers (Reps)  
**659** – Communities working towards going single-use Plastic Free - **91** accredited  
**90,564** – volunteers  
**128** – Tonnes of plastic pollution removed from our beaches and communities  
**163** – Beach Clean Boxes despatched  
**48** Ocean School sessions – **1500** pupils directly engaged  
**1,936** – Schools working towards going single-use plastic free – **75** accredited  
**772,400** – pupils in schools signed up  
**35** – Members of Parliament as part of our All-Party Parliamentary Group



We've had an amazing year of environmental cleans, organising **2,210**, nearly **6** for every day of the year! This has been made possible by an amazing **90,564** volunteers who together have removed over **128** tonnes of litter from the UK's beaches, rivers, mountains and communities.

### **Regional Environmental Volunteers**

We now have an amazing **205 Regional Environmental Volunteers (Regional Reps)**. This means that we cover **157** coastal locations throughout the UK. We have held **2** training events for our volunteers in 2019 (unfortunately Boardmasters was cancelled) resulting in **188** of them receiving training.



### **Volunteer Stats**

**159** – Coastal locations in the UK covered  
**35** – Urban locations covered  
**11** – Rural locations covered  
**621** – Beach cleans organised  
**27,380** – Local community volunteers recruited  
**2** – Training events held for our volunteers

## Our Education Work

We've significantly increased the reach of our education work in 2019. Through our education programmes we aim to equip, empower and inspire the next generation of ocean and inland conservationists. We now have 2 well-established programmes to work with a variety of different school groups, these are: **Plastic Free Schools** and **Ocean School**.

**Ocean School/Ysgol y Mor** enabled us to provide outdoor educational experiences to **over 1,500 pupils** in the summer of 2019 (**26 sessions** in Wales and **22** in England). About **20** pupils had never been to the beach – it may have been more but many were embarrassed to admit it. There were **10** delivery teams, including **21** Regional Reps. We were able to provide free transport of a number of schools in areas of social and economic deprivation (Boscombe, Swansea and Manchester). **3** sessions were delivered in **Cymraeg** at Ogmere and Harlech by bi-lingual Regional Reps.



*"It was absolutely amazing and we would most definitely do it again. I felt a little nervous before as I know we had several children (coming from Sea View School) with behavioural issues but they were so engaged with Ocean School that they were as good as gold; many of them didn't want to leave".* **Sal Benyon, proud teacher of the Knelston School students who delivered Ocean School themselves!**

*"Just a quick one to say thanks for all your work yesterday! Some really interesting conversations had back at school with the students, who were recalling lots of key facts (especially about the cigarette butts) and I'm sure there was a little less litter left on the field after lunch today..."* **Leticia Hooper, teacher at Grange School (44% pupil premium). 58 yr8 students joined us for our most challenging session of the programme.**

**Plastic Free Schools** is a pupil-led education programme designed by SAS to create real positive environmental and behavioural change in UK schools. It is endorsed by **Department of Education** which has challenged all schools to go single-use plastic free by 2022. More than **1,930** schools are signed up and have been sent their resource pack, and **75** are now accredited.



In order to achieve **Plastic Free Status** schools must:

- Form a Plastic Free Action Group
- Conduct a 'Trash Mob' – a quick fire, high energy school clean up
- Challenge government by contacting their local MP
- Challenge the industries who's packaging ends up as pollution
- Remove at least three single-use plastic items from the school and commit to reducing individual single-use plastic consumption

## Our Beach Clean Box & Schools Beach Clean Box

Our Beach Clean Boxes continue to be a huge help to communities across the UK. **65** were dispatched to communities all over the UK in 2019. They have proved especially useful for our volunteers to take along to education as well as beach clean and litter-picking events. A staggering **98** additional boxes were sent to schools as part of our education programme.



## Plastic Free Communities

Our Plastic Free Communities project goes from strength to strength, uniting communities in the fight against single-use plastics and throwaway culture. We encourage individuals to sign up to an action plan as well as work with local government and businesses. **Penzance** was the first town to be awarded plastic-free status and there are now **659** communities working towards it. An amazing **91** communities are accredited as Plastic Free.



**Plastic Free Isle of Wight** has been working with all three leisure centres. They have held a plastic bottle amnesty, replaced plastic bags with reusable gym bags as part of membership, removed paper cups, hand out reusable water bottles, replaced paper towels with reusable cloth and removed plastic cutlery.

## Plastic Free Awards

For our inaugural Plastic Free Awards, held in Bristol in November, we received a staggering 850 submissions. The entries ranged from high profile individuals such as UN Patron of the Oceans Lewis Pugh through to front-line communities and inspiring individuals and businesses. The quality of the judging panel, which included Ben Fogle, Liz Bonnin, Helen Glover and Lucy Siegle reflected the importance of the awards for all those involved.



## Success for our 'Message In a Bottle' Campaign

Since 2016 we have been campaigning for a comprehensive deposit return system (DRS) in the UK. Following Scotland's lead, England and Wales will now introduce an "all-in" system covering all sizes of cans and bottles, as announced by the Environment Secretary in July.

### MPs sign #GenerationSea pledge



To mark World Environment Day in June, SAS took a 4.5m 'unknown sea creature' to Parliament to draw attention to the need for powerful legislation, enforcement and investment to safeguard our seas. **71 MPs** pledged to stop plastic pollution, act fast to tackle the climate crisis, not to let sewage back in the sea and fully protect areas for sea life to flourish.

More than **27,000 people** have signed the **#GenerationSea** pledge and written to the Prime Minister demanding action.

### Ocean Conservation All-Party Parliamentary Group

The **Ocean Conservation APPG**, for which SAS acts as the secretariat, has brought together over **80 MPs** who share an interest in marine conservation issues. It continues to provide SAS with an essential platform to raise serious environmental threats and marine conservation campaigns directly with politicians and senior civil servants. It also seeks cross-sectorial solutions to protect our coastal environment from marine litter, water pollution, habitat destruction and more.



### Brand Audit – the worst beach polluters in the UK



The largest ever nationwide survey of packaging pollution found on Britain's rivers and beaches was conducted by **45,771** volunteers during the **Big Spring Beach Clean**. The results have exposed that the vast majority of UK waste is the responsibility of just a handful of companies.

During the **229** cleans in April, **49,413** pieces of litter were picked up, of which **20,045** were branded with Coca Cola producing the largest proportion of items.

The research has been submitted as evidence in the consultation on plastic packaging and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in a bid to make producers take more responsibility for the costs of dealing with their discarded packaging.

Of the unbranded polluting items, cotton ear buds and cigarette butts together represented **55%** of the **29,368** items analysed.

## Water Quality

The issue of poor water quality is returning to public consciousness and was highlighted nationally by reports issued by both environmental charities and regulators. The **SAS 2019 Water Quality Report** was published in November and showed that water companies are performing consistently badly, with pollution events increasing and causing damage to local environments, wildlife, and putting human health at risk. Rivers and oceans are now at risk of being treated like 'open sewers' as underinvestment, population and climate pressures converge.

Over the 2019 'bathing season' we tracked and reported on **1,784** sewage pollution events along the UK coastline. Based on precautionary health recommendations, which advise against bathing for up to 48 hours after a sewage pollution event, this equates to an estimated **10%** of bathing days lost to sewage discharges.

This year Southern Water received record fines of **£126 million** for serious failures in their sewage treatment works and for deliberately misreporting its water quality performance. Despite these record fines, Southern Water was still responsible for the most sewage pollution events in 2019, with over **571** reported sewage pollution events.

## Safer Seas App

The Safer Seas Service's (SSS) objective is to alert users, in real-time, when there is an elevated health risk to use a designated bathing water (predominantly covering the UK's much loved tourist beaches) due to reduced water quality. The service integrates with both water company spill-monitoring sensor systems and state-of-the-art forecasting systems provided by the Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Environment Protection Agency. The app issues alerts to users when there are sewage discharges and 'pollution risk warnings' following heavy rain or high tides which can wash pollution off agricultural or urban land.



We were delighted to win the Tourism and Leisure Award at the UK App Awards this year.



**350** – Beaches covered by our Safer Seas Service App  
**12,454** - Registered users  
**261,871** – Reduced water quality alerts issued  
**1,784** – Combined Sewer Overflow alerts  
**265** – locations affected by CSOs

## **The SAS Team & Governance**

We are a small team of **19** that continues to have a big impact in our area of work thanks to the incredible community of volunteers that we work with. Our philosophy is to give our communities the tools, knowledge & passion to protect the marine environment.

During 2019 we have concentrated on ensuring strong foundations for our operations; consolidating and streamlining administrative processes around our database and introducing more robust systems for budgeting, forecasting and monthly reporting.

We were delighted to welcome Chris Hugo as a Trustee in March. Chris is the Finance director at Hubbox Ltd.

Finally, we are honoured that HRH Prince of Wales has become our Patron.