

SURFERS AGAINST SEWAGE

2020 IMPACT REPORT

A year of growth and change



Despite the challenges of 2020, Surfers Against Sewage are pleased to reflect on a year of high impact and high-quality engagement. Our small team of 21 continued to nurture relationships and empower individuals, communities and schools across the UK to be the authentic voice of the ocean. We were able to achieve this with thanks to the incredible community of supporters and volunteers that we work with. Our philosophy is to give our communities the tools, knowledge & passion to protect the marine environment.

During this year we have worked hard to remain agile while supporting our team and creating safe ways for us to work collaboratively around restrictions and guidelines. Our gratitude for the UK's oceans that surround our team in Cornwall is discussed often in team meetings. It is a constant motivation as we have seen first-hand the increased value blue space plays in the mental and physical wellbeing of society in some of the most trying times.

We have developed how we engage our communities, volunteers and schools delivering programmes online and launching new community dashboards with dedicated microsites. SAS has also responded to 2020's Black Lives Matter movement starting our journey with the appointment of a Diversity & Inclusivity Officer and shifting our ambitions to be more inclusive both internally and through our networks, and programmes. We are also pleased to have started our SAS journey to Net Zero with our initial consultation and we look forward to working through our action plans in 2021. We were grateful for the chance to have celebrated our 30th anniversary event in March with His Royal Highness, The Duke of Cornwall present for the official announcement of his patronage.

While we have weathered a loss of 20% of our income from the impact of the pandemic on charitable giving we have shown great determination to continue the critical pushback as policies were weakened, the Environmental Bill was pushed back and the amount of pollution grew with the onslaught of PPE. We finish 2020 with a lot of learnings, improvements and an unwavering determination to continue protecting the UK's beautiful natural environment.



2020 IMPACT IN NUMBERS

1 million	Students engaged through Plastic Free Schools
10,000	Students attended the Pupil Power Assembly
2,450	Schools working towards going single-use plastic free – 112 accredited
12	Weeks of Digital Ocean School – 12,600 pupils per online session
44,000	#EndSewagePollution petition signatures
730	Communities working towards Plastic Free status - 117 accredited
230	Regional environmental volunteers (Reps)
819	Cleans organised
14,491	Volunteers
17,606.3	kilograms of plastic pollution removed from our beaches and communities
160	Attendees at the November All-Party Parliamentary Group

COMMUNITIES

Regional Environmental Volunteers



Even through challenging times our **Regional Environmental Volunteers (Regional Reps)** remain the lifeblood of SAS. We now have an amazing **230 Regional Reps**. We cover over **185** coastal locations throughout the UK. We have continued to engage our Reps with **217** receiving online training and networking throughout the pandemic and in turn, they have continued to motivate and empower their communities.

Our large-scale beach cleaning activities have been disrupted in 2020 with government restrictions limiting large group activity delivery. These events typically rally 90,000+ volunteers across the UK to remove significant amounts of waste from the UK's beaches, rivers, mountains and communities. This year, to keep our amazing volunteers safe, we have supported smaller cleans following government guidelines resulting in **819 Cleans, 14,491 Volunteers** mobilised and **17,606.3kg of plastic pollution** removed from our beaches and communities. We encouraged deeper engagement with more brand auditing in our Autumn Plastic Protest. Thousands of socially distanced volunteers took to the UK's coast, rivers, streets and green spaces to clean up plastic pollution and monitor what was found. The six weeks of action wasn't just about cleaning up – but also targeting the root cause of the plastic crisis, collecting data on the type and brands identified on waste and sending messages to hold the plastic producing companies to account.



PLASTIC PROTEST STATS

- 502** Beach Cleans took place during the Autumn 2020 Plastic Protest
- 8,721** Volunteers joined us across the UK to protect the environment
- 10,212** kg of plastic and packaging pollution was removed from the environment
- 131** Brand Audit data sets were submitted recording the brands found on our beaches
- 300** Tweets sent to challenge Industry to do more

Plastic Free Communities

Despite individuals and communities facing restrictions, our Plastic Free Communities programme has continued to grow, giving communities the tools they need to fight against single-use plastics and throwaway culture. Our team have provided support and guidance to maintain momentum throughout the pandemic. We encourage individuals to sign up to an action plan and work with local government and businesses. There are now 730 locations signed up, **681** working towards plastic free status. An amazing **117** communities are accredited as Plastic Free. Within these communities, **4248** businesses have signed up and **3675 Business Champions Awarded**, an average of 15 per community. Together these businesses have removed approximately **12,500** single use plastic items. In 2020 we have undertaken extensive profiling of our communities to understand them better and to inform a project next year to increase the diversity of our engagement. **125 council resolutions** have been passed encouraging plastic free businesses locally.

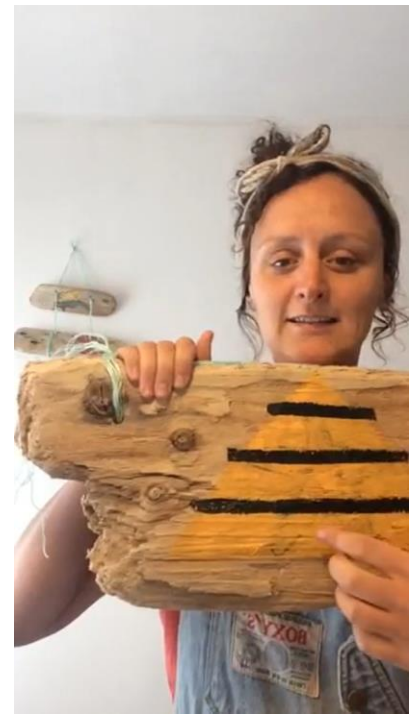


EDUCATION

We have risen to the challenge and transformed our education work in 2020. Our school programmes 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.

Digital Ocean School

Normally each year we take school groups to the greatest classroom on Earth; the beach! This year presented an amazing opportunity to innovate our programme and take Ocean School online. From April to July we hosted a series of live lessons on our Facebook and Instagram pages and created new resources every week to accompany the lessons. The resources remain online for free access. The average reach each week was an incredible 12,600 participants.



Plastic Free Schools

Plastic Free Schools is a pupil-led education programme designed by SAS to create real positive environmental and behavioural change in UK schools, reaching 1 million students. It is endorsed by the Department of Education which has challenged all schools to go single-use plastic free by 2022. More than **2450** schools are signed up and have been sent their resource pack, and **112** are now accredited. The programme is currently working with 6% of schools in the UK, our aim is to increase this to 20% by 2023.

PLASTIC FREE SCHOOLS MUST:

- Form a Plastic Free Action Group
- Conduct a 'Trash Mob' – school clean up
- Challenge government- contact their local MP
- Challenge 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

Pupil Power Assembly



On Friday 13th November the SAS education team brought together **80 schools** / over **10,000 students** from across the UK for a three-hour Pupil Power Assembly. The online event broadcast live to participants of our Plastic Free Schools programmes from St Agnes to the Shetland Islands. The Assembly was designed to equip pupils with the tools and inspiration to make their voices heard at the highest level. Co-hosted by children's TV presenter Naomi Wilkinson and biologist, presenter and writer Gillian Burke, the Assembly focussed on helping pupils eradicate the unnecessary single-use plastics being used in their school through a series of workshops.

CAMPAIGNS AND POLICY

Water Quality Report

In November we released our annual **Water Quality Report**, revealing water companies are routinely discharging untreated sewage into UK waters, polluting the environment, and placing people's health at risk. The report reveals that water companies were responsible for almost **3,000 raw sewage pollution** incidents into bathing waters in England and Wales from licensed Combined Sewer Overflows from 1st October 2019 to 30th September 2020, impacting some of the most popular beaches in the country. We track these discharges with real-time data obtained from water companies and provide pollution alerts for over **370 UK beaches** through the Safer Seas Service app. In addition to sewage discharge notifications, a further **2,642 pollution risk warnings** were issued by regulators, indicating coastal pollution from agriculture and urban environments, and a potential risk to public health. The report shows that, despite some water quality progress over the last 30 years, the UK still ranks a woeful 25th out of 30 European countries for Bathing Water quality.



WATER QUALITY REPORT MEDIA UPTAKE

- 60 pieces of coverage, including 6 features in broadcast, 6 features on radio, 7 features in national print
- 385,647,047 total readership / viewership
- 15.5K social media shares from online coverage
- 4,762,232 social media reach of shared coverage

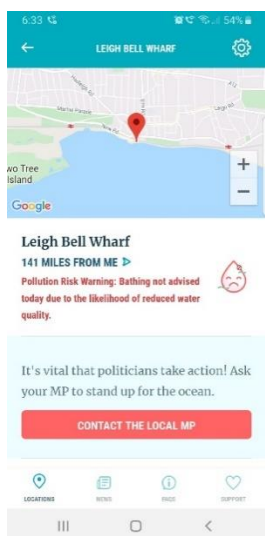
#EndSewagePollution Petition

On 10th November SAS presented the #EndSewagePollution Petition to Secretary of State for the Environment, George Eustice. With **44,691** signatures this petition called for an end to sewage pollution and a guarantee of safe seas and rivers all year round. The #EndSewagePollution coalition, led by SAS, representing the voices of tens of thousands of supporters from multiple organisations, including: The Rivers Trust, British Canoeing and Wildlife & Countryside



Link, handed in the petition digitally via an online call. A recording of the call is online and has over **1,300** views. In a year where so many have taken solace in nature and where participation in water sports has increased significantly, there have been thousands of sewage discharges into UK Bathing Waters. This petition is evidence that the people of the UK want governments to do more to protect our water ways. We are calling for world leading water quality legislation, with an Environment Bill that sets progressive, ambitious and legally binding targets to end untreated sewage discharge into Bathing Water and upholds the highest standards for inland and coastal waters.

Safer Seas Service App



The Safer Seas Service (SSS) is an innovative mobile app providing real time water quality information. It allows surfers, swimmers and other water users to find beaches with the best water quality, and to avoid pollution and associated health risks. The app provides vital public health information, but also allows users to take action to campaign for cleaner seas. Users can email their local Member of Parliament when there is a sewage spill at a beach in their constituency, calling for action to end sewage pollution. Now health reports can be submitted, allowing SAS to track health risk hot spots. Covering over 370 bathing waters across the UK and with over **31,000 users**, the app has issued **898,300 notifications** since its launch in 2019 with over **3,000 emails** sent to **93 MPs** demanding better water quality to keep us safe when using the sea. In October this app was awarded a 'highly commended' for digital innovation in the 2020 Third Sector Awards.

Surveys and Guides

As people returned to the beaches over summer, we published our **Socially Responsible Beach Guide** to remind people to treasure this resource while respecting each other and the environment.

Our **#GenerationSea Blueprint Survey**, with over **3,300** responses, revealed that out of all of the natural spaces, the vast majority of us most looked forward to a trip to the beach as restrictions eased, highlighted just how important the Ocean and our beaches are for the mental and physical well-being of the British Public

#GENERATIONSEA BLUEPRINT SURVEY

Almost 80% now believe their appreciation for the natural world has increased

Over 90% Agree that the pandemic provides an opportunity to rebuild an economy around tackling the Ocean and climate.

50% feel optimistic about the future of the ocean – up 14% from 2018

The recent **Climate and the Ocean Survey** had over **5,000 responses**. Responses will help inform our ocean and climate campaigns and projects, ensuring the voice of the ocean is heard within the climate crisis.

Ocean Conservation All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)

The APPG, for which SAS is the secretariat, has brought together over **200 MPs and participants** who share an interest in marine conservation issues. This essential platform raises serious environmental threats and campaigns directly with politicians and senior civil servants. In September the APPG moved online with discussion focused on ocean recovery, seizing the chance to highlight the environmental opportunities as the pandemic eases. November's meeting focused on plastic pollution, with **160 attendees**, including George Eustice, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, who received a number of hard-hitting questions from youth activists including SAS youth Reps.

Our final big push for 2020 is in preparation for the second reading of **The Sewage (Inland Waters) Bill** in January 2021. With over **44,000 signatures** on the #EndSewagePollution petition the government are starting to listen. The #EndSewagePollution Coalition, led by SAS, worked closely with the Senior Conservative MP and Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, Philip Dunne, to produce the Bill and ensure the Petition asks were included. It's vital we get as many MP's as possible, to show up to the reading and vote in favour of the Bill so that it continues its passage through legislation to become law, we currently have **86 MPs engaged**.