Surfers Against Sewage — training weekend for our network of Regional Environmental Volunteers.

Some of our volunteers who attended

Training date: Friday 4th to Sunday 6th March 2016

Training Venue: Eden Project with accommodation at the YHA Youth Hostel

Surfers Against Sewage, team who attended:

- Hugo Tagholm, Chief Executive
- Jack Middleton, Volunteer Manager
- Dom Ferris, Education & Projects Manager
- David Smith, Campaigns & Science Officer
- Peter Lewis, Head of Fundraising

For details on all of our volunteers please see our website here - www.sas.org.uk/regions-reps

Overview:

We held our volunteer training weekend later than expected due to having to change the venue. We decided to hold it at the Eden Project in Cornwall which was a fantastic and inspirational venue. The YHA hostel also located at the Eden meant that the volunteers could stay close to the conference facilities at the Eden Project.

Having recently recruited 25 new volunteers to the programme we felt it was important that as many of them attended as possible. Of our 75 volunteers 30 attended, 23 of whom were recruited in 2015.

The feedback received from our volunteers was overwhelmingly positive, where they stated that a session did not help them it was due to the fact that they were already confident in this area, e.g. delivering beach cleans.
One of the most beneficial aspects of the weekend was that the volunteers really felt that they are now part of the wider team and they were able to form friendships with other volunteers, share their experiences and ask for advice.

Originally we hoped that more of our volunteers would be able to attend, however we have found that it is very difficult to find a date and venue that works for all 75 volunteers and the training is in fact more effective with fewer volunteers, bearing this in mind we will be holding another training event later in 2016 as well as looking at the possibility of holding regional training events to make them more accessible to more of our volunteers.

Area covered by the training weekend:

• Surfers Against Sewage – overview of our strategy and aims for 2016 – Hugo Tagholm, Chief Executive, Surfers against Sewage
• Overview, Plans and Expectations Workshop. This session was conducted by Dom Ferris and Jack Middleton and included a plan of what we expect and want from our volunteers this year, what they want and expect from us followed by a workshop on what events they want to be involved with and ideas for activities throughout the year.
• Environmental Education Session, this session was led by Dom Ferris, It included an overview of our new “Seeds for Change” education programme.
• Beach Cleans. Organising a community beach clean, including recruiting volunteers from your local area and promoting beach cleans. This session was led by Jack Middleton and was followed by a team beach clean at Pentewan Beach.

Feedback received from the event via feedback form

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Did the beach clean activity give you more confidence in leading a beach clean?</td>
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<td>Did the education session inspire you to do this in your area?</td>
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<td>Were the practical activities suitable and beneficial?</td>
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<td>Was the balance of team building and classroom style learning correct?</td>
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<td>Do you feel like part of a stronger team of volunteers after the weekend?</td>
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<td>Do you feel more confident as an SAS volunteer after the event?</td>
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<td>Was the content from the weekend expected and was everything covered in enough detail?</td>
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<td>Were you happy with the level of planning that went into the training weekend?</td>
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Feedback from volunteers about the training weekend

“Thanks so much for such a brilliant weekend, it obviously took a lot of planning and putting together, and I think it was really useful both in terms of giving us information and inspiration to continue with campaigns, and to meet the other reps and form connections there.” Caroline Major – volunteer for South West

“Just wanted to say thank you to you and the team for organising such a great reps weekend, certainly one of the best i’ve been to so far! Thought the location really fit into the SAS ethos, and the accommodation was great fun.” Robin Johnson - volunteer for Plymouth

“Just to say a massive thank you for this weekend! It was great to meet everyone and I am so happy to be a part of a fantastic team/cause!” Hollie Coleman - volunteer for South West based in Exeter

“Great to meet and catch up with the other Reps and SAS Team. Good to be able to share ideas, ask questions – I feel inspired to keep up the good work! Adam Reed – volunteer for West Somerset

“It felt very well organised, I loved the accommodation and everyone was super friendly and engaging!” Jess Bone – volunteer for Dorset

“It was my first weekend so I didn’t know what to expect really but yes I feel much more knowledgeable and motivated now. Can they happen more often!?” Samantha Kenshole – volunteer for Exeter

“Yes – I would love to give talks through the medium of Welsh to schools in my area” Laura Truelove – volunteer for Swansea

“Loved Getting Involved, the venue fitted the weekend perfectly, the content was very insightful and the whole event eased me into the role very well” Matt Indge – volunteer for the Gower, Wales