



MID YEAR REPORT 2022

Surfers Against Sewage has had a strong start to 2022, growing our robust community engagement, education and campaigns. Our change-making programmes are ensuring that the actions of our network of volunteers, on the ground, contribute to triggering change on our long-term goals to protect the ocean. Goals of improving water quality, tackling plastic pollution, driving ocean recovery and confronting the ocean and climate emergency.

This year we have continued to grow our team with the appointments of a new Director of People & Operations and a Head of Communities. These roles are helping to enhance, scale up and deepen the impact of our successful community programmes and ensure strong systems and processes to support our team as we continue to grow the organisation. The growth in our communications team in 2021 is driving strong media engagement and empowering growing public awareness of the scale of the problems facing our oceans and rivers.

The ocean is being systematically decimated by the damaging practices of big business, poor regulation and weak legislation. We continue to show that by empowering communities, we can change the systems and structures that are destroying marine habitats worldwide. This report provides a snapshot of our work for the first half of 2022 for the ocean. We couldn't achieve all of this without our amazing network of supporters, so **thank you**.



In the last 6 months we have strengthened capacity in our team, scaling up and increasing the impact of our work to help protect and restore the ocean for the future, for all. We are engaging and supporting record numbers of citizen scientists and ocean activists through our campaigns and community initiatives, alongside the innovation and expansion of our work.

– Hugo Tagholm

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

It is our goal to become an exemplar environmental charity on diversity and inclusion. We want Ocean Activism to be open to everyone as we know a diverse voice is a more powerful voice. We acknowledge we're on an EDI journey and we're committed to progress over the next 3 years. We have started building internal capacity, delegating EDI responsibility across leadership, management and wider team. We have established an EDI trustee Committee which meets Bi-Annually. We have re-introduced the EDI Officer role and established an EDI Working Group who are identifying clear EDI objectives and actions for the rest of 2022, and we will embed Equality Impact Assessments across all of our 2023 plans. We have started EDI training and development sessions for all staff.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Much of our action is delivered by our strong network of **202 Regional Representative Volunteers** who form our new streamlined and strengthened Chapters Network. In March, we held a training weekend in Cornwall bringing together 'Regional Reps' and Plastic Free Community leaders and increasing connectivity between our programmes.

72 volunteers from 14 of our 16 regional Chapters attended the event alongside 15 SAS staff members. 100% of attendees said the weekend delivered what they had hoped. We are now following up with digital and face to face regional tour activities to nurture and strengthen local activity, support our volunteers and ensure a united voice across the UK.

MILLION MILE CLEAN

We are continuing to strengthen our position as Europe's leading beach clean organisation, utilising our regional networks and in partnership with Strava through the Million Mile Clean (MMC). With the success of the campaign we have committed to continuing to grow it throughout the United Nations Ocean Decade.

One of the main goals for the MMC 2022 is to diversify SAS's reach and make the environmental sector more accessible to everyone. Some of the partnerships already nurtured in 2022 include The Wave Project, Queer Surf Club, Swim Dem Crew, Black Girls Hike and the Black Swimming Association, and The Wanderlust Women.

SO FAR, WE HAVE DELIVERED

- 4,931 cleans (a new SAS record)
- 108,842 volunteers mobilised already
- 303,749.6kg of plastic and packaging pollution removed
- 771,343.06 miles of blue, green or grey space cleaned this year



COMMUNITIES

EDUCATION

In the first half of 2022, we have seen a significant increase in schools engaging with the Plastic Free Schools program, with engagement on all program objectives **increasing between 44% and 132%** compared to the same time period last year. This has led to a **93% increase** in the number of Plastic Free Schools accreditations.

We have had **174 new schools enrolled** in 2022, the total number of schools in the network now stands at **3,297 schools** attended by almost **1.3 million pupils**.

We have **reimagined Ocean School** for 2022 with a total rebrand and updated delivery model. **Ocean School Beach Sessions** will run from the end of June through to the end of August. The Ocean School resources are now available to increase ocean literacy amongst young people and encourage engagement with in wider SAS campaigns. Our 2022 Ocean School Beach Sessions are being delivered with a **focus on reaching children from disadvantaged backgrounds**.



WE PROUDLY NOW REACH OVER 10% OF UK SCHOOLS

- 232 Challenges to industry
- 174 Political actions
- 4,998 items picked up in Trash mobs
- 113 single use plastic items removed or replaced
- 3297 Schools enrolled
- 1.28 Million pupils reached
- 201 Accredited Schools

COMMUNITIES

PLASTIC FREE COMMUNITIES

We continue to unite and support communities in the fight against plastic pollution through our Plastic Free Communities accreditation. We now have **882 locations** signed up to the campaign with **158 communities** awarded full Plastic Free Communities status.

Our recently commissioned impact report shows we eliminate an estimated **43.3 million** items of single use plastic through our PFC campaign annually. One of the key areas we wanted to grow this programme in 2022 was through business engagement. To facilitate this we launched a new business tool kit in March. We set an ambitious target of **5,000 Business Champions** for 2022 having achieved over **5,058** we will be increasing this target!



We have held **monthly online masterclasses** supporting an upturn in our communities hitting their objectives. We've provided online training on the new **gold, silver and bronze business award** and held online sessions with our Town Twinning participants to support them as well as drop in sessions on EDI.

Our **Communities Tour** is underway with the wider C&E team. We visited London in May and held a business breakfast in Brixton followed by an evening event in Hackney for leads to hear from our Community Partners and get **tailored support** for their local campaigns. We then held two online sessions for leads in the Central and East Region and also the South West.





WATER QUALITY

Early in the year we commissioned a poll into how the population feels about the UK's waterways. This revealed that over half of the British public (52%) are **scared of swimming outside due to not knowing if the water is clean or polluted**. Of the one in six Brits (17%) that have tried wild swimming in UK waters, over half (55%) have subsequently fallen ill. The survey also showed **wild swimming is increasing in popularity**, with 43 per cent of Brits inspired to try it since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On the eve of the long Jubilee weekend, when the public flocked to coastlines and rivers to enjoy a sun-soaked break, we **relaunched the updated Safer Seas & Rivers Service (SSRS)** to help keep people safe from sewage and agricultural pollution. We launched with an awareness event, setting up a **'Poo Watch' lookout** on Jubilee Beach in Southend-On-Sea, highlighting the issue and how people can stay safe and enjoy the UK's coastlines and rivers with the service.

This action received **70 pieces of media coverage**, including articles in The Times, The Telegraph, The Independent, Daily Mail, Daily Express and local BBC radio stations. Before the event we had **90,000 registered users** of the SSRS app and 2 weeks later we had **41,500 new users**, bringing the total number of users to **131,500**.

CAMPAIGNS

PETITION & COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR DESIGNATING IN-LAND BATHING WATERS

In March we launched a petition calling for the UK Government and the devolved administrations to set legally binding targets to increase the number of **Official River Bathing Waters** in the UK and work with regulators and communities to ensure the target is delivered. Bathing Water Designation creates blue spaces where **water quality is officially monitored** for harmful bacteria and viruses, with legal obligations placed on industry to stop sewage and agricultural pollution. This provides a powerful indicator of the state of our water. At present, there are only **two official Bathing Water located on UK rivers** and by adding more we can drive real change.

At the end of June **28,681 water lovers have added their voices** to our call for change, taking us a good way towards our target of 40,000 signatories.

ACTION

On 23 April we delivered a **national day of action** on water quality with 11 protests across the UK, each targeting a regional water company. Hundreds of ocean lovers took to the streets, beaches and riversides in Newquay, Worthing, Edinburgh, Belfast, Scarborough, Tynemouth, Bath, Abergavenny, Liverpool, London, Manningtree and Stoke Bardolf. We came together with one voice to tell water companies that we want to see change in investment in infrastructure to improve the future of the UK's precious waters. The action achieved **40 pieces of broadcast across 19 channels with 56 online and print articles**.

UN OCEAN CONFERENCE

At the end of June, we were pleased to be present for the **UN Ocean Conference** in Lisbon. We proudly co-hosted an official side event 'Accessible Ocean Action: Ocean Communities Driving Citizen Science & Conservation in the Ocean Decade'. The event brought together leading campaigners, academics, NGOs and water sports representatives to discuss **how can we best engage active ocean users in citizen science, grassroots activism and local volunteering** to influence and deliver environmental outcomes, conservation decisions, national policy and public awareness to **protect and restore our seas in this most crucial Ocean Decade**.

WE WERE ENCOURAGED TO SEE:

- Plastics back at the top of the agenda ahead of the Global Plastics Treaty
- New marine reserves and protected areas announced by many nations
- A growing call for a legal framework to stop deep sea mining before it starts.
- Blue Carbon in the spotlight with sea grass, kelp, mangroves, salt marshes and other coastal ecosystems.



KEY WINS

1

The UK government announced a new **£154m programme to protect and restore marine and coastal habitats** and £100m to implement and manage Marine Protected Areas.

2

Progress is being made towards developing and ratifying the legally-binding **Global Plastics Treaty**. The UK government will be bringing together an expert group to inform the UK's 'nationally determined contribution', which SAS will contribute to.

3

The Office for Environmental Protection announced it will be **investigating the Secretary of State for the Environment & Defra** over the sewage scandal. This adds to the criminal investigations into the majority of water companies and the investigations into the financial regulator Ofwat and the environmental regulator, the Environment Agency. Our campaigns have played a significant role in making this happen.

