



Welsh Government

2020 has been a difficult year for all of us in Wales, and as an organisation, we needed to react to the emerging issues from the covid pandemic. Unfortunately many planned work streams for the year were either delayed or postponed.

As we emerged from the initial restrictions, Welsh Government were pleased to announce that volunteer beach cleans could once again continue, albeit with renewed guidance in place. The First Minister supported an MCS led beach clean in Cardiff to support their work on the Great British Beach Clean.

Welsh Government introduced two social media campaigns #LoveWelshBeaches focusing on marine litter and terrestrial litter, in light of the relaxation of restrictions and the anticipated influx of users expected at our beaches and other outdoor areas.

Welsh Government continue to explore options for end of life fishing gear and through the Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group (WMFAG) a task and finish group was established to lead on this policy area. A report was produced early in 2020 which improves our understanding of fishing gear usage in and disposal needs in Wales. The group are now exploring the potential to link in with an established gear recycling scheme which could support the Whelk fishery in Wales.

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/marineandfisheries/sites/marineandfisheries/files/understanding-commercial-fishing-gear-use-disposal-needs-wales.pdf>

Welsh Government continue to link the Wales Clean Seas Partnership with other policy areas such as waste & circular economy, plastics and the Litter Advisory Group. Officials were invited to present the proposals within the Single Use Plastics consultation at a workshop and have been subsequently invited for a follow up workshop. <https://gov.wales/reducing-single-use-plastic-wales>

(EMFF funded Research) Keep Wales Tidy

Things are progressing in terms of the educational side in partnership with MCS .and we are working on format and content of on-line teacher training, messaging and resources, including a range of lesson plans. The desk top study has been completed and is attached.



DTR Secondary
School Resource Inv

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, we are focussing largely on putting together on-line teacher training sessions and the resources to go alongside them (in partnership with MCS) in anticipation that we may not be able to get into schools this school year. We could look to go into schools either towards the end of the summer term if possible or delay until the Autumn term, but want to focus on providing teachers with the information and lesson plans to engage their students directly if we are unable to do so. This will also provide the opportunity to engage with more



schools than originally anticipated – our Education team are carrying out a number of topic based teacher training sessions which have proved incredibly popular, so we are using this knowledge to develop interactive/informative sessions to support teachers to deliver marine litter based activities and encourage behaviour change in students. Keep Wales Tidy has just employed a secondary school specialist in the Education Team due to start this month, so we would like to take the opportunity to have the resources reviewed by them before going to translation and design. Unfortunately, this has impacted the timeline of activity somewhat but all activity will be completed by the end of the project period.

Welsh Federation of Sean Anglers

Covid and Welsh Government have severely restricted our work by not allowing the majority of us to travel to fish. As a consequence the amount of litter from those who don't obey rules any way has exploded.

Surfers against Sewage

Big Beach Clean-related campaign is currently a work in progress and still in the planning stage and it is embargoed until March. SAS will share this with the group at a later stage.

Positive Changes:

The biggest change we faced due to COVID-19 was the inability to run our usual face to face interactions. As of late March, all our mass-community mobilisation efforts had to be postponed. The Big Spring Beach Clean, our National Regional Rep Training Events, Boardmasters, a Regional Tour and many other activations had to be put on hold due to lockdown restrictions. However, this created a unique opportunity for us to digitise our campaigning and overall work while also placing more of a focus on individual actions (Mini Beach Cleans for example).

Through April and May we ran our first #ReturnToOffender campaign, calling on members of the public to take photos of branded plastic and packaging pollution while out on their allowed exercise and upload these to Twitter with a template message to the companies responsible. This campaign proved hugely successful engaging 600,000 people across social media and finding that just 12 brands were responsible for half of the packaging found. A full report can be found [here](#).

Following the success of this, and the obvious appetite of the public to get involved, we launched the #PostPandemicPollution campaign aimed at targeting the systemic failures present including a lack of recycling and bin infrastructure. Again, this proved successful with several 'wins' including more bins placed in London parks due to campaigning by a Rep; greater remit of Brighton's Litter Abatement Enforcement



Officers, again thanks to Rep actions and big strides forward on microplastics in Southampton's rivers.

We also celebrated the ban on plastic straws, drinks stirrers and cotton buds after years of campaigning on the subject.

Our campaigning turned digital with huge successes in Water Quality including the delivery of the [#EndSewagePollution Petition](#), with over 44,600 signatures the publication of this year's [Water Quality Report](#) and our involvement in the [Sewage \(Inland Waters\) Bill](#). All of which, combined with the recruitment of a Policy Officer have seen us increase the connection between our communities and their MPs with targeted calls to action.

Education has also benefited from 'going digital' with the Digital Ocean School series proving hugely popular and our recent Pupil Power Assembly saw over 10,000 pupils and teachers joining the event.

2020 has also allowed us to lay the groundwork of planning for bigger and more impactful campaigning in 2021 including on Ocean and Climate and Ocean Recovery.

Negatives:

At SAS we pride ourselves on our personal relationships with our communities – be they Plastic Free Community Leads, Regional Reps, Clean Leaders, Members or part of our wider supports. Sadly, due to the pandemic, we have not been able to run the face to face events that form the basis of this relationship. While we have adapted as best we can, the Community and Events Team have run several Zoom Training Series of around 15 sessions and similar has been done for Plastic Free Communities, it is not quite the same.

From a wider point of view, the detrimental impact the lifting of lockdown restrictions in the summer had on the environment was a huge negative point. During the first lockdown it seems that the environment was healing itself, given a brief respite, beaches, rivers and streets were free of plastic and packaging pollution, people drove less and made conscious decisions to live with less of an impact. This seemingly came to an abrupt end when our 'freedoms' were returned.

Lessons:

We have learnt a lot through 2020, not least the strength of our communities and the need of the public to do more to protect the environment. Moving forward, we will place a greater emphasis on digital campaigning and training as well as physical but we are also planning a big year of face to face actions for 2021.

2021:



We will be engaging, upskilling, onboarding and mobilising our communities and the wider public in better, more impactful and more effective ways to achieve our 10 year ambitions:

- Plastic Pollution - End plastic pollution on UK beaches by 2030
- Water Quality - End sewage discharge into UK bathing waters by 2030
- Ocean and Climate – The UK to be Net Zero by 2030
- Ocean Recovery - 30% of the ocean & all UK Marine Protected Areas highly protected by 2030.

Severn Estuary Partnership

Promote evidence and research-based partnership working to address marine litter across the Severn Estuary. Ensure best available science on marine litter is available to partners and relevant actors across the Severn Estuary.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 restrictions, we were unable to run our Severn Estuary Big Beach Clean in 2020, usually held in September at the same time as Marine Clean Cymru and the Great British Beach Clean. This would have provided an opportunity to collect data on marine litter across the Severn Estuary through facilitating beach cleans over a weekend in September. Our hope is that we will be able to run the event for 2021 and continue to plan for it to be an annual event, supporting our understanding of marine litter in the estuary.

Continue to promote an action-based approach to addressing marine litter across the Estuary.

As a result of home working, travel restrictions and social distancing, we have had to cancel in person events and beach cleans undertaken by our flagship project Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset.

However, we have adapted well, taking our action-based approach online to develop responsive campaigns to address the influx of litter found on our local beaches (including PPE) during lockdown. Campaigns have covered themes such as #takeithome and #binthebeast, and have encouraged our communities to be aware of how they are using and disposing of a range of materials while under various restrictions. We will continue to respond to the changing circumstances everyone is currently experiencing, and hope to resume in-person events at some point in 2021 when it is safe and within government guidance to do so.

We have developed a COVID risk assessment and guidance for volunteers who would like to carry out social distance cleans. This information is available to beach clean groups across the estuary.

Adopt a catchment to coast approach to marine litter across the Estuary by working with litter picking groups on the coast and inland.



We are continuing to build our catchment to coast approach, working with inland litter pick groups across the Estuary, including Somerset Wildlife Trust's new project, Water Guardians.

SEP is continuing to communicate via social media, monthly e-newsletters and email, informing members and other interested parties of the work going on around the estuary, despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

Non-Covid related updates

Our flagship project, Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset has received 5 years' worth of funding from Wessex Water. We have developed an action plan to expand project reach to 5 new sites across West Somerset. We will continue to share best practice, key messages and campaigns developed through this project with our partners and stakeholders in Wales through the Severn Estuary Partnership and hope to explore opportunities to build on the momentum of the project on the Welsh side of the estuary.

Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum

Lead by example as a team, by championing practical sustainable solutions e.g. water bottles and reusable coffee cups at external meetings, encouraging behaviour change in others.

Whilst we are all now partaking in only online virtual meetings we will continue this pledge when meeting in person and actively avoid single use plastics on show in our video calls. An example of 'more sustainable' merchandise is our plastic free branded gift = a glass and local North Wales beers shipped to our participants as part of our Marine Energy Wales networking event.

Ensure all PCF events avoid using single use plastics.

Encourage actions on best environmental practice from suppliers, through procurement processes.

Continue our stakeholder work on water quality and nutrients in the Cleddau catchment helping to achieve good environmental status for Pembrokeshire Marine SAC.

Our BRICs – Building Resilience in Catchment project continues and we are actively working with stakeholders such as Welsh Water, farmers and landowners, industry, NRW and Welsh Government

Continue to play an active role in relevant marine stakeholder and policy groups, contributing to Clean Seas outputs.

Important task and finish groups we attend include: WMAAG, MCF T&F, Wales Clean Seas Partnership; Green Recovery, Wales Marine Plan



Stakeholder Reference Group; as well as NRW Area Statement meetings, conferences and network meetings and PSB group meetings.

Encourage schools we work with to take action on clean seas and marine plastics.

Whilst our work with schools has to be virtual at present, our engagement includes clean seas and marine plastics learning. Resources here:

<https://www.pembrokeshirecoastalforum.org.uk/education/>

Support and collaborate with other charities working on Clean Seas priorities e.g. NARC, Surfers Against Sewage.

We continue to support charities working on Clean Seas priorities including SAS – Surfers Against Sewage and offer support and advice to groups like Cary y Mor, Seatrust and others where we can.

National Federation of Women's Institutes-Wales

End Plastic Soup Campaign

Due to the restrictions placed on meetings and community events, the NFWI produced a 'work from home' fixing fast fashion toolkit which contains End Plastic Soup projects members can do from home. The NFWI will be releasing the full community event toolkit when the public health measures will allow public meetings.

Nature and green spaces

Throughout the crisis, the importance of nature and the environment to people's mental health and physical health has become more prominent than ever. Green spaces have been a lifeline to people dealing with the impact of lockdown.

In a member survey by the NFWI about the impact of Covid-19, 57% of respondents from Wales stated that they had noticed cleaner air outdoors and 65% had noticed more wildlife. Fifty-one percent of members stated that we should 'value and protect our local green spaces more'. Yet during the crisis, we have continued to see litter impacting on our local environment.

#PlasticFreeJuly

Since Covid-19, the NFWI has doing more digital campaign work. NFWI's Public Affairs and Membership teams put together some tips for #PlasticFreeJuly and these were promoted on social media.



Dwr Cymru

To put it short our frontline engagement almost ground to a halt due to COVID and continues to be that way at the moment. We shouldn't be taking any additional risks with our colleagues in terms of meeting face to face etc. so will remain in the same position until we have started coming out of the pandemic properly.

Beach Cleans – we planned a regional beach clean challenge but this was stopped due to localised lockdowns coming into force. Realistically spring/Summer will be the next time we even consider this.

Stop the Block– please see attached approach taken for our campaigns last year. They were focused online and social sites with some radio and TV ads too. This has proved successful in terms of reach to the public.



IEAP meeting
14.10.pptx

Commercial audits – We replaced face to face auditing with video calls to try bridging the gap during the pandemic. These are working but we will return to the on site visits once restrictions are properly lifted.

The strategy for 2020 will only be short term as engaging with the environment and general public is still seen as the most impactful way to make a difference.

Marine Conservation Society

1a. Working with Welsh Government to develop and implement the Beyond Recycling strategy and specifically the Wales Litter Prevention Plan.

We have provided responses to both the Welsh Government's Beyond Recycling and Single Use Plastic consultations and will be submitting a response to the Litter and Fly tipping consultation. In addition, we sit on the Welsh Government Litter Advisory Group.

1b. Maximising the scale of volunteer involvement to build consensus for greater preventative action by business and working with Government to shape appropriate legislative change.

Retailer Wet Wipe Survey

This week (10/2/2021), the Marine Conservation Society launched their [wet wipe survey results](#). At last year's Great British Beach Clean, Marine Conservation Society volunteers found an average of 18 wet wipes per 100 metres of coastline, making them the third most common litter item on UK beaches in 2020.



Aldi was found to be the only UK retailer to have certified all its own brand flushable wipes against the Fine to Flush standard. The retailer's wipes have been stringently tested to ensure they break down in the UK's sewer system.

Boots, Morrison's, Tesco and Waitrose have committed to having Fine to Flush status by June 2021 while Asda, Lidl, Sainsbury's, Superdrug and Wilko are yet to make a commitment to meet the charity's summer deadline. Health and beauty retailer Superdrug have stated they have no plans to test for Fine to Flush at all.

Encouragingly, all retailers surveyed by the charity clearly state 'Do Not Flush' on their own brand, non-flushable wipes. The Marine Conservation Society hopes that retailers will extend this labelling to all of their own brand sanitary products however, only three retailers currently do this: Co-op, Sainsbury's and Waitrose.

As part of its survey the Marine Conservation Society also assessed retailers' commitments to remove plastic from their non-flushable wet wipes. Boots, Waitrose and Wilko are the only retailers to have already removed plastic from their wipes, while others have committed to doing so by the end of this year. The only retailers not to have committed to removing plastic from non-flushable wet wipes by the end of the year are Aldi, ASDA, Co-op and Lidl. **(Please see results graphic figure 1)**

#StopOceanThreads campaign

In November 2020, the Marine Conservation Society launched our #StopOceanThreads campaign. With every wash and wear, microfibres shed from our clothes and can end up in the environment. A single wash can release over 700,000 microfibres into wastewater, many of which then end up in the ocean.

Washing synthetic clothes accounts for 35% of primary microplastics found in the environment. We are asking UK Governments to bring in legislation that requires washing machine manufacturers to fit microfibre filters in all new domestic and commercial machines, by law, by 2023 and that all commercial machines are retrofitted with microfibre filters by 2024.

For more information and to sign the pledge, please visit our website [here](#). You can also learn more from our campaign video [here](#).

Please note: In light of the current situation regarding COVID-19, we will not be bringing this petition to government until the timing is appropriate.



Figure 1: Wet Wipe Survey 2020 results

2a. Continuing focus on building scale, coverage, coordination and impact of beach cleans with improved mapping of activity, hot spots and gaps

Great British Beach Clean

This year, the Marine Conservation Society’s annual Great British Beach Clean, supported by players of People’s Postcode Lottery, took place against the backdrop of the Coronavirus pandemic. As the charity introduced measures to ensure beaches could still be cleaned and surveyed in accordance with guidelines, it also asked volunteers to record face masks and plastic gloves for the first time.

The results from this year’s Great British Beach Clean show a concerning, but perhaps predictable, presence of PPE litter. Face masks and gloves were found on almost 30% of beaches cleaned by Marine Conservation Society volunteers over the week-long event. The inland Source to Sea Litter Quest data shows a similarly worrying presence of masks and gloves, with more than two thirds (69%) of litter picks finding PPE items.

Across the week of the Great British Beach Clean, over 3,000 metres of Welsh beach was cleaned and surveyed during 32 events, with 143 volunteers getting involved, including Welsh First Minister, Mark Drakeford. An average of 237.5 litter items were found per 100 metres of Welsh coastline, with small plastic pieces remaining the most common form of litter, an average of 92.4 pieces being found per 100m of beach.



Figure 2: Top 5 litter items on Welsh beaches from 2020 GBBC results (top) and the PPE litter problem (bottom)

Covid-19 update on Beach Cleans:

Beachwatch update taken from: www.mcsuk.org/beachwatch

Small, local, private, social distancing beach cleans

Following the latest restrictions, governments across the UK have updated their guidance on volunteering. Volunteering can continue provided you do not need to self-isolate, you follow social distancing guidance and are Covid-secure.

Your safety is of utmost importance to us. Where possible, we are happy for volunteers to run small, private beach cleans with their family or allocated bubble, but please always check and follow national and local guidelines around lock down restrictions, along with the following rules:

1. Always follow the government, and local council rules, where you are
2. A private event with group numbers that follow your government advice, with social distancing measures in place
3. On distance to travel, please always follow the government, and local council rules, where you are
4. Book these as private, closed events to avoid clashes with other beach cleans
5. Update your risk assessment in accordance to [our new safety guidelines](#)



6. Stay 2m apart from people other than your household
7. Use gloves, litter pickers (if you have them) and wash your hands

To help we have updated all our resources including the [health and safety guidelines](#) and [Q&A](#). Please do have a look at these and review the government advice before you start.

2b. Supporting community led action such as the SAS Plastic Free Communities network, Ocean Guardians

Please see 2a.

2d. Building on the success of spatially focused initiatives e.g., to address litter supply via catchments; through connecting community action on the All Wales Coast Path.

Please see 2a.

3a. Continuing the development and expansion of education programmes and youth engagement

The Marine Conservation Society are developing a series of secondary school resources in collaboration with Keep Wales Tidy. These include several marine litter focused sessions, along with sessions looking at other threats to our ocean. The plan was to deliver pilot sessions in schools soon, although it is now expected this will go to online delivery due to Covid-19.

We have also developed 'Cool Seas Explorers' education webinars throughout 2020. While school visits are suspended due to the pandemic, we are now holding live online lessons, which can also be watched back on our YouTube channel. More information can be found [here](#).

In September 2020 we launched our 'Source To Sea' initiative alongside our 'Great British Beach Clean' and hosted educational webinars for primary and secondary schools online. We also developed our [Source To Sea Resource Pack](#) which is full of cross curriculum activities. The aim of the initiative is to connect schools to the ocean and the problem of marine litter, despite their proximity to the coast.

In November 2020 we took part in the Youth Climate Summit, a week-long event bringing schools together from across the UK. We delivered a series of online lessons, called Climate, the sea and me. Topics linking plastic pollution, PFAS and microfibres to climate change and the ocean. All sessions were recorded and are available to watch through [Transform Our World's](#) website.

We are currently in the process of evaluating all our existing education resources and will be launching lots of redeveloped and new resources in 2021.

3b. Focusing on high profile, high impact targeted initiatives - Refill Wales, Stop the Block, 2 Minute Beach Cleans

Please see 2a.

4a. Promoting common “Clean Seas Wales” messaging

MCS x ASH Wales cigarette butts campaign

At the beginning of this year, the Marine Conservation Society launched a joint campaign calling for a ban on plastic cigarette filters. We produced a press release around this issue which had additional support from Keep Wales Tidy. The Marine Conservation Society wrote to and met with Lesley Griffiths to discuss the campaign further.

Cigarettes are one of the most common forms of litter in Wales and pose a huge environmental risk, often ending up in waterways and eventually the ocean after being washed down drains. Each cigarette butt releases thousands of chemicals and microplastics into the environment and takes up to 14 years to degrade.



Figure 3: Collecting cigarette butt litter during GBBC 2020

4b. Contributing case studies to the Clean Seas Wales newsletter and web site

The Marine Conservation Society has actively contributed case studies to the Wales Clean Seas Partnership; most recently for the new year Clean Seas Wales newsletter. For some examples of contributed case studies, please see the campaigns and projects mentioned above.

4c. Setting common measures for reporting on beach cleans

Please see 2a.

Impact of Covid-19 on the Marine Conservation Society

COVID-19, and the subsequent actions taken by the government, have impacted the programmes MCS is able to deliver, the ways that stakeholders can engage, our ability to raise funds and the ways we work together. Therefore, we have modified the



programme of our activities and methodologies, for example by increasing our focus on, and capacity for, on-line activities.

Keep Wales Tidy

Environmental education as part of distance learning

2020 saw our Eco-Schools Wales programme move from a traditional school-based setting to a host of new digital platforms and learning opportunities.

We adapted to ensure environmental education continued and formed part of distance learning in Wales. We created virtual training modules and a whole range of brand-new resources linked to the National Curriculum, available as a free download from [our website](#) and from Welsh Government's [Hwb website](#).

We also transformed our interaction with students through our weekly [Eco-Schools at Home challenges](#) and Tidy Summer Camp, covering everything from 'Plenty of Fish in the Sea', 'Wonderful Water' and 'Litter less Planet'.

The Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) competition continued despite the pandemic, giving many students the opportunity to get involved in environmental, litter-based activities. Students from West Park Primary School in Porthcawl and Ysgol Clywedog in Wrexham achieved global success, winning first prizes in the 2020 international competition.

The theme of this YRE year's competition is 'reducing plastic waste' and there are some interesting projects in the pipeline, including collaboration with schools in Spain and Beirut. Virtual support sessions are being offered to schools taking part.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many schools taking part in the Litter Less project last year could not complete the activities they had planned. However, schools still managed to carry out a selection of workshops, research tasks and community clean-ups.

Home Litter Less challenges and activities for class bubbles have been created for schools taking part this year.

Supporting practical action

In the interest of keeping our staff and our volunteers safe, we closed the Keep Wales Tidy offices in mid-March 2020 and all practical work supporting communities to look after their local environments had to be put on hold.

However, our Litter Champions, established community groups and visitors to our Litter Picking Hubs (when open) all stepped up to care for their communities. Between March and December, they devoted more than 14,000 hours to looking after our environment. Together, they collected a staggering 17,000 bags of rubbish and recycling.



After postponing Spring Clean Cymru in March we were delighted by the support September's Autumn Clean Cymru. More than 1,100 volunteers took part in nearly 200 socially distanced clean-ups. From post-campaign surveys, we know that a lot of the litter heroes who joined in were volunteering with us for the very first time.

As part of Autumn Clean Cymru, we encouraged coastal volunteers to get involved with MCS' Great British Beach Clean.

Wales Coast Awards – putting celebrations on hold

In agreement with national and international partners, we decided not to actively promote our award-winning beaches and marinas.

Once restrictions were eased, local authorities and other managing organisations were given the opportunity to fly their flags and carry out local publicity when they could meet the criteria and could open safely. However, only Penarth Marina chose to do this.

We hope to work with Visit Wales to showcase our award-winning coastline in May 2021.

Policy and research update

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were not able to complete LEAMS street cleanliness surveys. We instead used 2020 as an opportunity to review the survey to make it best fit for purpose for the monitoring and evaluation of the Litter Prevention Plan for Wales.

We were not able to commence the smoking related litter behavior change trial in Blaenau Gwent which will hopefully (pending restrictions) be launched in May 2021.

In August, we published a [2021-2025 manifesto](#) that we would like to see adopted by the next Government of Wales. It includes asks on litter reduction and plastic prevention, empowering young people to take action and the protection of our green and blue spaces.

We submitted a response to the Consultation on 'Reducing Single Use Plastics' in Wales and drafted a 'Stage 2' document to form the basis of a discussion for a range of policy measures to reduce plastic consumption and promote the repair agenda over the next five years.

We have been closely involved with the development of Wales' first Litter and Fly-tipping Prevention Plan and have supported efforts to align proposals with the Marine Litter Action Plan and work of the Clean Seas Wales Partnership. We continue to be involved in the Welsh Government Litter Advisory Group and related sub-groups such as data collection and monitoring. As such, we are working UK-wide on the issue of data collection and monitoring and continue to explore opportunities for collaboration in this area.



No litter after lockdown

As litter increased with the easing of lockdown rules, Keep Wales Tidy became a 'go to' organisation for comment. Members of the team were regularly featured on BBC Newsround, BBC Radio, BBC Wales and S4C commenting and advising on the issue, the outcomes and discussing solutions.

Throughout the summer, we promoted the 'Take your rubbish home' message across all our digital channels and made free social media resources [available on our website](#) - #NoLitterAfterLockdown / #DimSbwrielArÔlyCyfnodClo.

We are working with many stakeholders and partners to develop a consistent approach and message to address some of our most persistent LEQ issues, as well as a broader campaign to increase the spotlight on litter prevention with Welsh Government.