



## **Review of Marine Litter Action Plan for Wales 2017 – 2020**

### **Background**

The Marine Litter Action Plan (MLAP) was developed through a task group of the Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group. The Task Group established a 'Clean Seas Wales Partnership' with the aim of encouraging all sectors in Wales to take action on marine litter issues. The name and identity was aligned with the global [UN Clean Seas campaign](#).

The Wales Clean Seas Partnership is designed to be the platform for engagement, education and cross promotion of campaigns and initiatives to address marine litter and to take forward the actions contained in the MLAP. The Visit Wales Year of the Sea and the hosting of the Volvo Ocean Race in 2018 provided important focal points for the action plan.

Wales Clean Seas Partners include national and local government, Visit Wales, harbour and port authorities, private businesses, fishing associations, marine recreation bodies and representatives of the third sector with the aim of building a collaborative approach to delivering the MLAP and taking action to address the root causes of marine litter.

The MLAP is designed with prevention, collaboration and long-term solutions as its core principles as required by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

The MLAP was agreed in November 2017. The MLAP focused on five key areas

- Building a strong evidence base
- Focusing on preventative action
- Involving communities and marine users
- Integrating environmental, economic and social benefits
- Monitoring and reporting on progress

The three-year period of the MLAP coincided with a significant increase in public awareness and action driven by media coverage of the impact of marine litter. In Wales this was accentuated by the Visit Wales 2018 Year of the Sea and our hosting of the Volvo Ocean Race with its focus on turning the tide on plastic.

### **Review**

## Building a strong evidence base

Research was commissioned through Welsh Government and undertaken by a consortium of Keep Wales Tidy, Marine Conservation Society and Eunomia. This research has been published and provides an extensive evidence base for the next stage of the action plan. This research has been compiled into three reports, each relating to aspects of the Marine Litter Action Plan for Wales – '*Building a strong evidence base to inform action*'. The considerations and findings within these reports have been derived from interviews, focus groups and a series of regional workshops. This evidence can now inform the future direction of the Marine Litter Action Plan for Wales, in particular:

- there remains confusion and mixed messages as to appropriate responses, in relation to compostable alternatives to single use plastic.
- despite recent innovations scalable alternatives to single use plastic appear unlikely, in the short – medium term, thus, prevention must be at the heart of the plan. The adoption of the Single-use Plastics Directive and future UK EPR regulation will be key to tackling persistent and problematic items at source.
- there is need to maximise the effectiveness of communication efforts through a more joined up approach across local authorities and NGOs, particularly focused across key “spatial pathways”
- the tourism sector has a key role to play in regard to communication and represent a currently under-utilised resource for engagement
- Volunteers taking part in litter picks and beach cleans in Wales are unprecedentedly high but increasing volunteer numbers is not without resource implications and a more coordinated approach by Local Authorities and the third sector to formalise support could prove beneficial.

## Focusing on preventative action

There has been a clear focus on the need for greater preventative action at Government level with *commissioned reports* for proposed legislation on extended producer responsibility. The Welsh Government made it a criminal offence in June 2018 for anyone to manufacture, sell or offer to supply any rinse-off cosmetic or personal care products which contain plastic microbeads in Wales.

The research showed that over half of the Councils in Wales have passed a form of motion on reducing plastics with a number of these actively reviewing procurement across all of their estates. Many other councils have said that this was an aspiration they hope to work on in the near future.

The support of Welsh Government and the water companies enabled the introduction of Refill Wales in 2018, with the aim of reducing the use of plastic drink bottles. The scheme established 55 refill schemes and 1653 refill stations by September 2019 and achieved 80% refill coverage in communities on the Wales Coastal Path.

Clean Seas Wales partners have been active advocates in promoting action at source, for example the National Federation of Women's Institute– Wales promoted the End Plastic Soup campaign about the impact microplastic fibres are having on marine life and the potential effects of the fibres entering the food chain. The key focus has been through an extensive education programme delivered through Clean Seas Wales Partners

Keep Wales Tidy Eco-Schools activities, including the 'Litter-Less' project and specific Marine Litter Workshops across Wales have been a great success and has included 22 Marine Litter Workshops in Secondary Schools (2018) and 590 teachers trained in environmental education (2016-2018)

Surfers Against Sewage have 126 schools working on the Plastics Free Schools Programme and ran 26 Ocean Schools sessions involving 750 children

In 18/19 Marine Conservation Society reached over 3000 students with their education programmes

In 2019 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park worked with approx. 300 school children on learning activities around marine plastics, most of these were 'Plastics in the Sea' workshops at Oriel y Parc. The Park also carried out a number of engagement activities with community groups aimed at raising awareness of marine plastics including talks and art workshops

## **Involving communities and marine users**

The research indicated that the numbers of volunteers taking part in litter picks and beach cleans in Wales are unprecedentedly high. Volunteers are vital and many Local Authorities are heavily reliant, if not dependent, on their activities and support, particularly 'out of season'.

There has been a notable increase in the scale of volunteer beach cleans. Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and Keep Wales Tidy collaborated in the 2018 All Wales Beach Clean involving over 5,400 volunteers in 238 events.

Surfers Against Sewage's (SAS) 2019 Autumn Beach Clean completed 126 cleans in Wales mobilising 4,496 volunteers and helped remove 5,259.44kg of plastic pollution.

The National Trust is involved in cleaning more than 30 beaches across Wales with monthly cleans arranged in Gower, Llyn and Pembrokeshire. The Trust also has a network of approx. 15 "Coastodians" across Wales, NT volunteers who have adopted a beach.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park supported 401 person-days of shoreline and litter clean-up. This includes 332 volunteers and 69 young people taking part in a social action activity through their school or college. 10 volunteer events were part of the 'Big River Clean' campaign to clear up litter from the shore of the Daugleddau Estuary;

Some of the most successful initiatives have been community led with the growing number of Two Minute Beach Cleans and the network of plastic free communities stimulated by Surfers Against Sewage. SAS have 28 volunteer representatives working around the coast with 61 Plastic Free communities working towards Plastic Free Status with 15 having achieved the status.. Anglesey was the first county in the UK to be awarded Plastic Free status by SAS.

Significant highlights of community led action included

- Amroth Community Council commissioning Bertie the Sea Bass. A striking sculpture of a sea bass filled with plastic litter. This has toured Pembrokeshire with associated education programmes. The initiative also received a national One Voice Wales Award.
- The Criccieth community project delivered as part of the Llyn Marine Ecosystems Project, looked at reducing the amount of litter generated by the town and actively cleaning the beach and surrounding area. The project focused on monitoring marine litter beach cleans and using the information to reduce litter from source
- Ocean Guardians started as a community group of local people and organisations from Fishguard & Goodwick who noticed the levels of local plastic pollution on the rise. It has developed into a programme involving business, the local fishing industry and community volunteers with an associated Ocean Guardians recognition scheme

Marine user organisations such as The Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers and the Royal Yachting Association have played an important role in working to inform and engage members. There is no formal Fishing for Litter scheme in Wales, which should be addressed, in the next stage of the action plan.

## **Integrating environmental, economic and social benefits**

The Action Plan aimed to ensure that interventions provided environmental, economic and social outcomes.

Visit Wales' Year of the Sea 2018 provided a focal point with opportunity to engage tourism businesses in action on marine litter. As part of its Year of the Sea promotion Visit Wales supported the Small World Theatre in producing Cragen a sea monster show that toured coastal communities highlighting the impact of marine litter. These events centred around an impressive 20m long giant sea monster puppet from ocean waste plastic built by Small World Theatre for this project and toured to locations along The Wales Way connecting The North Wales Way to The Coastal Way. Between July and April 2019, Cragen attracted audiences of over 36000 adding social and economic value of £313K.

Cardiff City Council followed up their hosting of the iconic Volvo Ocean Race working to create a race legacy including working with the leisure and tourism business community and creating guides for business and visitors, culminating business networking event to celebrate World Oceans Day 2019

The Port of Milford Haven has improved procurement practices including switching from milk in plastic bottles to a local dairy using reusable glass bottles and ensuring festival tenants use only recyclable or compostable plates, cutlery etc. As part of a wider climate change adaptation project, the Port will be setting up internal Terracycle hubs for several waste streams both for Port waste and employee's home-generated waste.

293 businesses are also working towards Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free accreditation with 194 already having achieved recognition

## **Monitoring and reporting on progress**

The MCS 2019 Great British Beach Clean involved 30 beach cleans and litter surveys across Wales, with over 700 local volunteers getting involved to remove more than 15,000 litter items from Welsh beaches. An average of 474.9 litter items per 100m were found along Welsh beaches in 2019, with the five most common being - plastic/polystyrene pieces, plastic/polystyrene fishing net, cigarette stubs, plastic/polystyrene fishing line, packaging (crisps, sweets, lollies and sandwiches)

The Beachwatch (MCS) and LEAMS (KWT) Surveys provide consistent and long-term datasets, which provide a wealth of information, particularly over time. SAS have also promoted citizen science audits of material collected with 35 completed in Wales

However, the Clean Seas Wales research indicated that other data collection methods need to be explored and uniformity of collection systems would significantly enhance collaboration. It emphasised that the primary challenge is not of data collection but how this is used to identify and monitor persistent issues.