

“Return to Offender” Campaign (UK)

Surfers Against Sewage is an NGO dedicated to improving the condition of surfing beaches. Initial actions were targeted on reducing raw sewage discharges into coastal waters. They have launched several initiatives to reduce marine litter (targeted at surfers and other beach users). One of those is

Return to offender – encouraging people who find identifiable items of beach litter to return these items to the manufacturer of the product (Freepost for the 12 most frequent ‘offender’ manufacturers). This is intended to encourage producer responsibility by challenging companies:

- To step up ‘the anti-littering’ message on their products
- To look at using less harmful packaging to ensure products can be broken down naturally without putting wildlife at risk
- To promote recycling and/or reuse wherever appropriate
- To support community beach litter initiatives or anti-litter projects

Other initiatives include:

- Break the bag habit – calling for a levy on single-use plastic bags
- No butts on the beach – provision of free ‘butt bins’
- Education

Think before you flush – to reduce non-degradable items being introduced to sewage systems

Facts

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Place / Location	UK
Commencement Date	<p>Surfers Against Sewage started in 1990</p> <p>Their Return to Offender Campaign started in Spring 2006</p>
Duration	Ongoing
Theme	Prevention, Awareness, Prevention
Type of Initiative	Practice/ Activity/ Action, Campaign
Initiated by	Surfers Against Sewage
Involved Stakeholders	Members of SAS and volunteers, surfers and other beach
Funding/Financial Support	Charity, supported by voluntary contributions. Additional support from Speedo International and the European Outdoor Conservation Association (EOCA). Additional support for The Return to Offender Campaign was provided by Patagonia in 2012.
Success Rate	<p>Somewhat successful</p> <p>SAS claim success in raising awareness of raw/untreated sewage discharge to coastal waters, leading water companies to invest £5 billion in sewerage infrastructures.</p> <p>More specifically, the Return to Offender campaign has won the Coast award for “Best Blue Green Campaign” in 2009.</p> <p>SAS have returned over 2000 individual items of identifiable marine litter and received almost 100 individual responses from companies. The campaign has received support from key manufacturers such as</p>

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CocaCola. In 2009, in direct response to items returned to Coke, the head of sustainability for Coke Europe met with SAS and committed to take action on all of the RTO challenges (listed above). In 2012, Haribo improved their anti-litter messaging on packaging, replacing the universal “Litter Man” icon with their own, larger “Golden Bear” which is more accessible to younger consumers. Further, there is ongoing contact between SAS and Pepsi-Co as a consequence of action at the Boardmasters Surf Festival involving Mountain Dew plastic drinks bottles (see image below of the Christmas tree made of these bottles which was sent to PepsiCo).

The RTO campaign has received significant media coverage in national and regional press. SAS receives 25,000-30,000 unique users per month to their website, has 20,000 subscribers to their E-Newsletter, and 36,500 followers on Facebook.

Case Study prepared by	MARLISCO Partner 3, Cefas (Peter Kershaw) with additions from Plymouth University, Bonny Hartley
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Available documentation and further information

www.sas.org.uk

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