



Surfers Against Sewage
Unit 2, Wheal Kitty Workshops
St Agnes, Cornwall, TR5 ORD

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Protect Our Waves
All Party Parliamentary Group
Room B, 1 Parliament Street

1pm – 2pm
Monday, 15th October, 2018

Meeting Minutes

Attendees

Hugo Tagholm, Surfers Against Sewage (HT)
Ben Hewitt, Surfers Against Sewage (BH)
Harry Dennis, Surfers Against Sewage (HD)
Steve Double (SD)
Nicole Zandi for Geraint Davis MP
Geraint Davis MP
Samuel Jackson for Gary Streeter MP (SJ)
Robert Hayward (Lords)
Scott Mann MP
Kerry McCarthy MP
Researcher for Helen Goodman MP
George Causer for Caroline Nokes MP
Anne Double for Steve Double MP
Alistair Carmichael MP
George Eustice MP
Jessica Anderson for Rebecca Pow MP
Andy Simmons for Helen Hayes MP
Martyn Day MP
Researcher for Yvette Cooper MP
Sir Petter Bottomley MP

Drop-in 2-3pm:

Alex Evelyn for Royston Smith MP
Barry Sheerman MP
Elinor Cope for Caroline Dinenage MP
Harriet Newman for Richard Drax MP
Chloe Grant for Nigel Huddleston MP



Proceedings:

Steve Double MP (SD) – Welcomes the group to the meeting and begins proceedings. Register is taken and introductions to attendees.

[Meeting begins at 13.00]

SD - It's been another really good year I think for SAS and for this group, particularly focused around work on the ocean plastics issue. This has been due to some real positive progress being made in awareness not just in Parliament but the country as a whole, and through new measures in policy. I won't say much more, so not the steal Hugo's thunder later but I think we have had a very good, positive year. Much more to do, which will be discussed later, but we have a lot to be positive about.

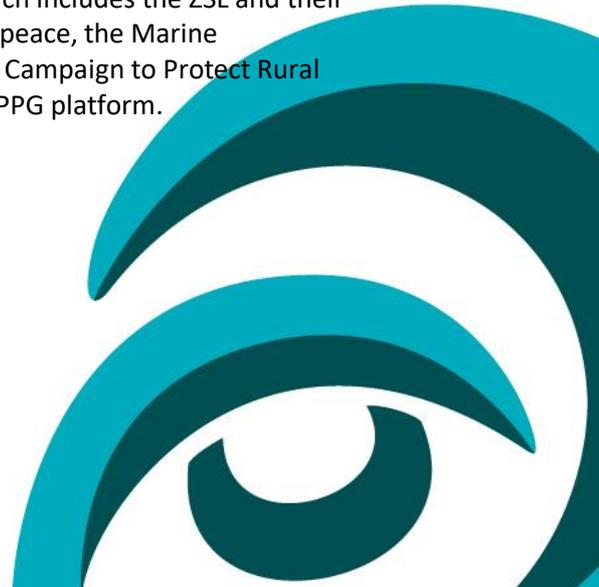
SD - We will move onto the election of roles. You'll see on the agenda the current roles in place.

[Group is in agreement in electing the following roles]

Chair Person – Steve Double
Vice Chair – Geraint Davies,
Vice Chair - Kerry McCarthy (changing from Treasurer)
Gary Streeter - Secretary
Scott Mann – Treasurer (taking over from Kerry McCarthy)

Hugo Tagholm (HT) - Thanks all in attendance.

It has been a really exciting and impactful year for the APPG. We've really tried to focus on this group as not only a platform to present SAS's ideas and projects, but to bring together other charities, businesses, individuals, who work towards protecting our oceans, and to grow as an authentic voice of ocean in Westminster. We've been particularly pleased to collaborate with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Marine CoLABoration which includes the ZSL and their #OneLess campaign. Other charities collaborating include Greenpeace, the Marine Conservation Society, Eonomia, CitytoSea, Keep Britain Tidy and Campaign to Protect Rural England, all of which have presented or attended through our APPG platform.





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As part of that collaborative intent, we published the Ocean Conservation Register this year, the first directory of its type. It outlines all MP's with interests in marine conservation issues since 2017. It includes over 430 MP's who have supported Early Day Motions, debates, external campaigns as well as comments in the media (relating to marine conservation). It was sent to all MP's and has made available to Ocean Conservation NGO's and charities.

Many APPG members have been involved with beach cleans – we now coordinate the UK's biggest beach clean community of 75,000 volunteers that contribute about 225,000 hours to protecting our beaches, our rivers, and now the wider environment. Our Autumn Beach and River clean is coming up (20th – 28th October), involving 500 events and 20,000 volunteers. We welcome the participation of the members of this group (SAS to circulate details).

The plastic pollution debate started at the coastline, particularly with the broadcast of Blue Planet II some 18 months ago which projected the issue into households around the country. We can pick up lots of plastic which is a really important task, but it is vital that we also stop pollution at source. We're grateful to the APPG, particularly Kerry McCarthy, Steve Double, Caroline Lucus, Geraint Davies for supporting the Deposit Return System (DRS) on beverage containers. Last year we delivered biggest plastic pollution petition in the country, some 330,000 citizens who had joined us to call for an inclusive DRS to stop plastic bottles from escaping into the environment.

We're delighted that as a result of that the Government have now committed to a DRS – a real result for this APPG and the charities who worked alongside us. We have a commitment in Scotland too, and we're now on the cusp of what that system will look like. So we'll be collecting data through our Autumn Beach and River Clean events as evidence to inform Government as they design the system, and we urge that an inclusive system is created to make sure we capture the full range of plastic items before they arrive in the environment. Local authorities are set to gain from DRS – we commissioned a report last year as part of this APPG, and LA's are set to gain anywhere between £60,000 - £500,000 per year.

We have contributed heavily to the Treasury consultation on using the tax system and financial interventions to control plastic pollution. We believe any taxes, bans or charges would reduce virgin plastic use production – not just the point of consumption, and could reduce number of types of plastics/polymers on the market. It would also incentivise producers to reduce their use of virgin plastic and increase the content of recycled plastic to drive higher recycling rates and simplify domestic recycling, reduce need to export our plastic waste abroad.



We need to recognize that plastic producers and manufactures take the full responsibility of the life cycle of their packaging and product by taking extending producer responsibility in the UK, of which DRS is part. Producers currently only contribute 10% of the cost of dealing with their materials at end of life, the rest being covered by tax payers.
[SAS to make available treasury response available to all members.]

I'd also like to congratulate the group for your support leading to Plastic Free Parliament – a campaign we launched earlier this year, particularly driven by Kerry McCarthy. Thousands of citizens called on their MPs to reduce the number of single-use plastic items used on the estate following SAS's freedom of information request which revealed 2 million single use plastic items were used in 2016. Nearly 200 MPs supported the campaign and thanks to Kerry McCarthy and Steve Double and rest of the group we achieved an great example of institutional change that sent strong message to the nation with other organisations (The BBC) following suit. 386,000 plastic sachets and 120,000 plastic water bottles eliminated.

We will continue efforts and evidence collection to inform policy and legislative change to lead country in right direction in regards to single use plastic pollution.

But it's not only plastic pollution that we're working on, we are delighted to have Scott Mann taking us through his Bathing Waters Bill today and as our name suggests, water quality is where SAS started back in 1990. We've since evolved into a broad marine conservation charity working on water quality, plastic pollution, climate change and marine protected areas. Water quality is very much still in our DNA. We've been involved with the changes that have lead to what would have been 27% of beaches meeting current minimum standards in 1990, to almost 100% today and we are working hard to safeguard this standard. Our Safer Seas Service maps fluctuations in water quality between monitoring dates and is freely available to water users. It tracks sewage release from Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO's) and also diffuse pollution, allowing for healthy, happy community's who know where and when it's safe to enjoy the sea. We're moving this forward with the Environment Agency to redevelop our service for the 2019 season. As a headline figure, during the 2018 bathing season there were 1300 sewage spills around the country. Scott Mann will follow up on later today.

Final point on the future direction of this APPG – specifically the renaming of the group. Current 'Protect Our Waves' name is esoteric and instead proposed as the 'Ocean Conservation APPG' – to be a strong voice of ocean in Westminster. It will bring together charities, NGOs, marine conservationists, scientists, academics, MPs, Ministers, business leaders and other key stakeholders into an energised and collaborative space where expertise, ideas and networking come together to enhance the collective force of ocean advocacy. The



development of the Ocean Conservation APPG could also be beneficial as the UK withdraws from the EU to ensure standards are maintained and as a platform to call for a Minister for the Ocean.

SD – Proposes a vote. All in favor of the change.

SD – Thanks SAS for their work and asks for any other points from members.

Robert Haywood (RH) – Two quick comments; firstly an omission of guilt – I was Personnel director for Coca Cola in the 1970's where we introduced the first ever plastic bottles in the UK. Secondly, relating to the discussion you've had with the Parliamentary Estate authorities, I've also had conversations with them, less around reducing plastic beakers and bottles etc., more around conveying messaging to suppliers. We don't want packaging. Supermarkets require this wrapping and packaging to present food items to customers – we don't need it here.

Gives the examples of the In-House magazine, imported as an external product, wrapped in plastic wrap. We need to look beyond to these wider links also.

HT – Thanks RH.

Explains how SAS are engaged with industry. Example: we've been working with Richard Walker, MD of Iceland, around tackling and removing plastic from their own brand and now beginning to tackle supply chain. It's a problem our Plastic Free Communities are working on aswell.

Magazines in plastic wrap – example of the National Geographic special edition on plastic pollution that came wrapped in plastic.

SD – Hands over to Scott Mann MP

Scott Mann MP (SM) – I had the opportunity to submit a 10 Minute Rule bill for this issue. Cornwall has some of the best beaches in UK, however these are heavily impacted by Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) events. These occur after heavy periods of rain, where large volumes of surface water and sewage combine and overload our sewer systems, with the only option being to let it out and straight into the sea.

SM thanks SAS for providing statistics to support the bill.



SM – It is apparent from my inbox that citizens care a lot about this issue, whether it is swimming or surfing. Many water companies have been announcing substantial profits and this might be an opportunity for us to use this for public good.

The real issue here is not actually the sewage itself, but the volumes of water going into the system. We need to better manage surface water. The objective of the bill is to fine water companies responsible for these CSO events, and to use this money to mitigate surface water runoff. Suggested methods would include free fitting of water butts in residential properties, attenuation ponds/tanks in agriculture and potentially the creation of new reservoirs and lakes. Later is an expensive option, main starting point would be residential water butts.

I have a meeting with Michael Gove about the bill. I'm not overly optimistic about how high on his agenda it is, however I'm going to push the point and he has been making noise around generating more public good from water companies.

Kerry McCarthy MP (KM) – The DEFRA select committee have just completed an enquiry. I suggest talking to Neil Parish MP. Would be another opportunity to engage Gove.

HT – Offers SAS support.

Geraint Davies MP (GD) – Slightly tangential point, 300,000 tonnes of potentially radioactive mud from Hinkley C dumped off South Wales. Natural Resources Wales filled legal requirements for testing, but Scientists disagree that this was adequate and the correct testing hasn't been conducted. Part of a wider and worrying discussion on water quality.

GD – I will continue on to discuss the Plastics Bill.

The bill sets aggregate plastic targets across the UK to reduce use and encourage recycling. Includes a proposal that plastic manufacturers should pay the entire cost of recycling and disposal – currently only 10% of this cost is paid for, the rest being covered by Local Councils. Alongside this, as part of a broader fiscal strategy, which I've written to chancellor about, would be to use the tax systems create a financial disincentive against the least recyclable plastics and use of virgin plastics with a ban on the 'non-recyclables'. A Plastics Agency would be established for enforcement (after Brexit) to ensure these targets are fulfilled. There would be a small levy on plastic bottles alongside DRS and retailer refill schemes.

It terms of the bills progress, it is in the system and growing in support. I've been talking to ministers and the bill is acting a legislative currency with the intention Government adopts it rather than rising through the long list of Private Member's bills.

HT – Thanks GD and reminds that taxation being considered as part of Treasury consultation with budget announcement due 29th October.



GD – Agrees. Acknowledges the enormous level of response to the consultation.

SD – Balloon and lantern releases. When considering the overall strategy and achievements made tackling plastic pollution it seems an anomaly that releasing thousands of balloons or sky lanterns isn't classed as littering under current legislation. The issue hasn't been looked at by DEFRA in 5 years ago when they deemed it was not significant enough. There is now much more awareness and evidence and it is an opportune moment to push again for more progress. Great progress has been made locally, for example Cornwall Council and Shetland Council, but it is time for Government to bring national action. The main objective is for this to be put in the same category as other forms of littering as it is very damaging. The Private Members bill is route is very congested and I believe the best initial action is to raise this with DEFRA.

KM – I've heard that the Waste and Resource Strategy is completed but is being held back to time it's release with the budget. This would be the obvious piece of legislation, does this contain anything on balloon releases? Can we get a debate?

SD – I have had nothing that gives me confidence that it will be included. I have previously raised it with the Minister.

GD – Can we clarify the groups position – should this go further and actually ban this? To me there isn't really a case for not banning it – it is not a cultural and religious activity and it is dangerous. Is just classifying this as an action of litter going to stop anyone?

SD – Well there is a potential £2500 fine under current legislation of littering that could be attached to it. So you're suggestion new legislation?

GD – We should at least submit this to DEFRA.

Alistair Carmichael MP (AC) – Lets push/raise issue and see where it goes. I feel there have been enough 'bans', but I agree there is no good reason for them. We need a careful campaign.

SD – Agrees.





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SD – Opens the meeting for any other business.

AC – In Pipeline Magazine your map on page 8 doesn't include Shetland.

HT – Apologies, this will be noted. We have great volunteers Shetland.

SD – No other business raised. Thanks all for attending.

Meeting close.

