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Don't Make Easter Rubbish!

- As lockdown restrictions start to ease across the UK, marine experts at SEA LIFE aquariums and the SEA LIFE Trust charity are appealing to the public to remember to take their litter home or put it in a bin when venturing outside this Easter and onwards – helping to protect the UK's precious marine life in the process.
- SEA LIFE teams in 15 aquariums across the UK are joining forces from the 25th March to create awareness ahead of the Easter break, including live updates, top tips and beach cleaning activities which can be found on their social media pages.

Last year as Covid-19 lockdown restrictions eased and more people spent time outside, the UK's marine life suffered untold damage as a result – from city canals to rural beaches, the effect was felt in waters across the country.

Now, SEA LIFE aquariums and their official charity the SEA LIFE Trust are launching the 'Don't Make Easter Rubbish!' campaign to prevent this occurring again, reminding visitors across the UK that the amazing creatures that live in our seas continue to need their love and protection - now more than ever.

Andy Bool, Head of the SEA LIFE Trust, explains the effect litter has on marine life:

"Last year, after restrictions eased we saw wave after wave of litter and rubbish being left after people began exploring outside again. If left lying around, all this rubbish can make its way into our precious waters, having the devastating effect of polluting the home of thousands of animals and causing immediate danger to life for those caught up in it.

We are determined to try and prevent it happening again to protect our marine life and habitat – but we can't do it without the help of people across the UK. We are appealing to everyone to consider marine life before they leave every public space – please take your rubbish with you or put it in a bin. In doing so, you could be saving the lives of precious marine creatures and ecosystems, and preserving them for future generations to come."

James Burleigh, Chief Ambassador for SEA LIFE, adds:

"At all our SEA LIFE aquariums across the UK, we've witnessed first-hand the worrying effects last year's restriction relaxation had on the amount of litter making its way into our waterways. By raising awareness with this campaign, launching from 25th March, we hope to stop this happening again, with everyone doing their bit to make a positive difference to marine creatures and their habitats.

It's easy to get involved, simply visit the SEA LIFE website for more information and keep an eye on our social media pages where we'll be sharing updates and tips from our teams on how you can help."

Plastics and waterways - what's the damage?

Littering and plastic pollution will also have a significant impact for the long-term future of the world's waters and ecosystems. It is estimated that **8 million tons of plastic waste** enter the world's oceans each year and that **by 2050, the oceans could have more plastic than fish**.

SEA LIFE aquariums and the SEA LIFE Trust teams across the UK take part in regular beach and waterway cleans, where the most common items found are plastic bottles and bottle tops, straws, food wrappers and cigarette butts. Sadly, this is now starting to include disposable face masks too, as discovered by fellow organisation the Marine Conservation Society, who discovered these on 30% of the beaches they cleaned last year. This isn't an easy fix – disposable face masks can take up to **450 years to break down** in the environment.

Litter (like face masks) getting into waterways poses a huge risk to hundreds of wildlife species, including seals, seabirds, turtles and whales, all of whom have mistaken marine litter for food, resulting in starvation, poisoning and fatal stomach blockages.

Amount of time it can take for litter items to biodegrade:

- Cigarette butts – 10+ years
- Coffee cup – 50 years
- Plastic bags – 20-50 years
- Crisp packet – 80+ years
- Straws – 200 years
- Plastic bottles - average 450-1000 years
- Single use face masks – 450+ years

Danger of Microplastics

Plastics can also breakdown and create Microplastics. Microplastics are tiny fragments of plastic – under 5mm in length – which are then small enough to enter the environment, marine life and eventually humans! Evidence of microplastics can be found throughout our seas and oceans, but also in rivers, soils, and also in the tissue of animals and plants.

It is estimated that there are 5.25 trillion plastic particles in the world's oceans – that's nearly 700 pieces for every person on the planet!

Case Study: Seal Pup 'Brian May'

A young grey seal pup, nicknamed Brian May, was discovered in an emaciated state and subsequently cared for by the SEA LIFE Trust's Cornish Seal Sanctuary based in Gweek. After a few days care from their specialist care team, he excreted pieces of a plastic bag which had been blocking his gut. Luckily with the team's help, Brian was able to make a full recovery and was released back in to the wild. A good ending for him but sadly not all marine life is so lucky.

SEA LIFE and the SEA LIFE Trust are appealing to the public to [pledge support](#) to help protect marine animals like Brian May for generations to come.

Beach Cleans to Reduce Plastic Pollution

The SEA LIFE Trust, supported by partners at SEA LIFE aquariums, work globally to reduce plastic pollution by running campaigns and supporting projects, like 'Don't Make Easter Rubbish', that can help to reduce the wave of plastic entering our oceans.

This summer, they plan to run a Global Beach Clean, leading the charge on cleaning up beaches, canals and waterways around the UK, from Scarborough to Weymouth. Supporters are encouraged to hold their own beach or river clean near their home, as a simple and effective way in which everybody can help to turn the tide on litter, starting with their own local areas – all litter ends up in our oceans. Recent cleans held have collected almost 2,000 kg of litter – the equivalent weight of two adult beluga whales!

To support the work being done by SEA LIFE and the SEA LIFE Trust in protecting marine life for generations to come, text RUBBISH to 70085 to donate £5 (texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message) or [pledge online here](#).

For more information on the 'Don't Make Easter Rubbish!' campaign, visit www.visitsealife.com/rubbish.



Further information:

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Notes to the Editor - SEA LIFE and the SEA LIFE Trust

SEA LIFE is the world's largest family of aquariums, proudly delivering amazing discoveries to more than 23 million people annually in over 50 locations across the world. From breathtaking underwater tunnels to incredible up-close encounters, guests can dive into the ocean world without getting wet.

SEA LIFE has a vision of oceans that are healthy, protected, and full of diverse, wonderful animals and works together with its partner charity, the SEA LIFE TRUST. Their joint focus is to protect these oceans and the amazing marine life within them, through its global BREED, RESCUE, PROTECT programme and dedicated Conservation, Welfare and Engagement team.

The SEA LIFE Trust owns and operates marine wildlife sanctuaries (including the world's first Beluga Whale Sanctuary in Iceland), runs inspiring conservation campaigns and funds projects and education programmes that champion the need to protect our oceans.

SEA LIFE's team of expert marine biologists pioneer global breeding projects which may one day provide a lifeline to the ocean's endangered species, as well as nursing sick creatures back to health and returning them to the wild. If they can't survive in the wild, they are given a safe and happy home for life.

For more information on the work SEA LIFE and the SEA LIFE Trust does in protecting our oceans, visit www.visitsealife.com and www.sealifetrust.org.
