# Surfers rally in Stonehaven to demand urgent action on sewage pollution in UK waters



Surfers and paddleboarders gathered in Stonehaven, Scotland, as part of a nationwide protest to address the pressing issue of sewage pollution affecting the UK’s seas. Organised by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), the event is part of a broader movement to raise awareness and demand accountability for rising sewage discharges from water companies. While originally intended as a paddle out, organisers decided against entering the water after a risk assessment, opting instead to demonstrate on the shore.

According to SAS, Scotland has seen alarming figures in recent years, with 23,498 monitored sewage spills reported in its waters alone in 2024. These discharges occurred over a staggering 208,377 hours, raising concerns for the health of marine ecosystems and the safety of those who enjoy these waters. This protest in Stonehaven coincided with similar demonstrations at Nairn Central and Dunbar beaches, alongside numerous locations across England, illustrating the widespread frustration among water users.

The urgency of the protest is underscored by recent data indicating that sewage pollution is not merely a localised issue. SAS's annual report indicates that in 2022, there were 301,091 sewage spills in England, 14,008 in Scotland, and 74,066 in Wales, amounting to an astonishing total of over 2.4 million hours of contamination across the UK. Despite a slight decline from previous years, the situation remains critical, prompting SAS to call for drastic changes in how sewage is monitored and managed—advocating increased investment in infrastructure to safeguard waterways against further pollution.

Charlie Allanson-Oddy from SAS articulated the organisation’s stance, emphasising the need for improved monitoring standards and greater transparency from water companies. In an interview with STV News, he remarked on the staggering scale of sewage incidents and the resultant impact on public health and environmental integrity, echoing calls for systemic reform in the water industry.

The protests serve not only to highlight the issue but also to press for legislative changes aimed at significantly reducing sewage discharges by 2030, especially in high-priority bathing waters and nature sites. Activists stress that immediate action is necessary to protect both aquatic life and the communities reliant on these waters for recreation and livelihoods.

As awareness grows and voices unite against this environmental crisis, the hope is that both the government and water companies will finally respond to what many are now deeming a public health emergency, ensuring cleaner, safer waters for future generations.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2
2. Paragraph 3
3. Paragraph 4
4. Paragraph 5
5. Paragraph 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/6760578/stonehaven-surfers-sewage-photo-gallery/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/6760578/stonehaven-surfers-sewage-photo-gallery/> - This article from The Press and Journal reports on a protest held by surfers and paddleboarders in Stonehaven, Scotland, organized by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS). The event aimed to highlight the issue of sewage pollution in the UK's seas. SAS reported that in 2024, there were 23,498 monitored sewage spills in Scotland's waters, totaling 208,377 hours. Similar protests took place at Nairn Central and Dunbar beaches, as well as numerous locations in England. The article includes a photo gallery capturing the Stonehaven protest.
3. <https://news.stv.tv/east-central/protestors-take-to-sea-demanding-end-to-sewage-pollution-across-scotland-with-surfers-against-sewage> - STV News covers a series of protests organized by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) across Scotland, including Stonehaven. The article highlights the group's call for urgent action to address the high levels of sewage spills into rivers and seas. Charlie Allanson-Oddy from SAS emphasizes the need for improved monitoring standards and increased transparency from water companies. The protests aim to raise awareness and demand accountability for the pollution affecting Scotland's waterways.
4. <https://www.sas.org.uk/updates/annual-data-reveals-the-extent-of-sewage-in-englands-waters/> - Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) releases annual data revealing the extent of sewage discharges across Britain in 2022. The report highlights 301,091 sewage spills in England, 14,008 in Scotland, and 74,066 in Wales, totaling 2.4 million hours of sewage discharges. Despite a slight reduction from 2021, SAS criticizes the ongoing pollution and calls for significant changes, including improved monitoring and investment in sewage infrastructure to protect waterways from further contamination.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/jun/22/catastrophic-scale-sewage-spills-england-and-wales> - The Guardian reports on the 'catastrophic scale' of sewage spills in England and Wales, with water companies averaging five serious sewage spills into rivers or seas every day over the past decade. The article highlights the environmental impact and public health concerns associated with these spills. Campaigners accuse the water industry of polluting rivers and seas at a catastrophic scale, calling for stricter regulations and accountability to address the ongoing issue.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/may/18/clean-water-protesters-sewage-seas-rivers-uk-water-companies> - The Guardian covers nationwide protests organized by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) demanding action against sewage pollution in UK waterways. The article details events at over 30 locations, including Stonehaven, where protesters gathered to call for an end to sewage discharges into bathing and high-priority nature sites by 2030. The protests aim to raise awareness and pressure water companies and government bodies to address the pollution affecting rivers and seas.
7. <https://datahq.sas.org.uk/data-investigations/2023-water-quality-deep-dive/> - Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) presents a 2023 Water Quality Deep Dive report analyzing sewage discharges into English rivers, waterways, and seas. The report reveals 464,056 sewage discharges in 2023, averaging 1,271 spills per day, totaling 3.6 million hours of sewage spills. The report highlights the increasing trend of sewage pollution and calls for urgent action to address the issue, including enhanced monitoring and investment in sewage infrastructure.