# Surfers and environmentalists unite in Stonehaven to protest record sewage pollution in UK waters



In a striking display of solidarity, surfers and environmental advocates gathered at Stonehaven last weekend to protest against the alarming levels of sewage pollution affecting the UK’s waters. This demonstration, part of a nationwide campaign organised by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), was emblematic of growing public concern over the deteriorating condition of the nation’s seas, rivers, and lakes. The event in Stonehaven was one of many that occurred simultaneously across various coastal and river locations, including Nairn Central and Dunbar beaches, as well as multiple sites in England, demonstrating a unified call for action.

The statistics are stark. SAS reported that Scotland recorded a staggering 23,498 monitored sewage spills in the year 2024, with these discharges occurring over an unprecedented 208,377 hours. This data underscores the severity of the problem, compelling local communities to voice their frustrations and demand accountability from water companies. Participants at Stonehaven lined the shore, although adherence to a risk assessment led to a decision not to enter the water during the protest, illustrating a cautious yet passionate stance against pollution.

This recent display in Stonehaven echoes a growing wave of protests across the UK. For instance, on May 18, 2024, demonstrations at Hythe Beach and Viking Bay in Broadstairs similarly called for an end to sewage discharges into bathing waters by 2030. Local officials and environmental advocates joined forces, emphasising the urgent need for regulatory reforms and nature-based solutions to combat this escalating crisis. In Kent, a wastewater treatment facility was identified as the worst offender, discharging untreated sewage into streams more frequently than any other site in the region during the previous year.

SAS has highlighted that in 2023, England saw over 464,056 sewage spills—a staggering 54% increase from the prior year—which not only pollutes bathing waters but also raises serious health concerns for swimmers and local wildlife. During these protests, participants rallied under banners with slogans like "Stop the Poo-lution of Our Oceans," illustrating a collective outrage against the perceived negligence of water corporations.

The urgency of these protests was further magnified by alarming reports earlier this year, which indicated that untreated sewage was discharged into Windermere in the Lake District for ten hours straight. This incident, among others, has intensified the call for immediate actions to safeguard water sources deemed high-priority for both public health and ecological balance.

As SAS leads the charge towards a cleaner and safer water landscape, the demonstrations serve as a powerful reminder of the community's role in environmental stewardship. The movement is not merely about ensuring clean waters for recreational purposes; it's a fundamental advocacy for clean water as a basic human right. In recent years, the reduction of Blue Flag beaches in areas like Kent, attributed to pollution concerns, further underscores the stakes in this ongoing battle against sewage contamination.

With the initiative set firmly on the public agenda, the movement is likely to gain more momentum, calling on policymakers and corporate entities to prioritise ecological integrity and public health as paramount. The combined efforts of demonstrators across the UK highlight a profound societal commitment to reclaiming the country’s waterways—not just for today’s population but for future generations to enjoy and protect.

**Reference Map**1. Paragraph 1:   
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[[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/may/18/clean-water-protesters-sewage-seas-rivers-uk-water-companies)3. Paragraph 3: [[2]](https://www.kentonline.co.uk/hythe/news/protests-demands-for-water-companies-to-stop-dumping-sewage-306995/),   
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## 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.kentonline.co.uk/hythe/news/protests-demands-for-water-companies-to-stop-dumping-sewage-306995/> - On May 18, 2024, Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) organized protests at Hythe Beach and Viking Bay in Broadstairs, Kent, demanding action from water companies over sewage spills into the sea. The demonstrations were part of a nationwide campaign highlighting the pollution of beaches, rivers, and lakes. Attendees, including local officials and environmental advocates, called for an end to sewage pollution in bathing waters by 2030. The protests were prompted by revelations of frequent sewage overflows in Kent's waterways, with one wastewater treatment works releasing overflows into streams more times than any other location in the county in 2023. The SAS chief executive emphasized the need for regulatory enforcement and nature-based solutions to address the issue. The protests also highlighted the reduction in the number of Blue Flag beaches in Kent due to pollution concerns.
3. <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8ypx5o> - A video from May 19, 2024, showcases protests against sewage pollution held at beaches, rivers, and lakes across the UK. The demonstrations were organized by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) to address concerns over the state of the country's waters. The video features footage from various locations, including Falmouth, where protesters paddled into the bay on surfboards, kayaks, and stand-up paddleboards. The protests were in response to reports of raw sewage being pumped into Windermere in the Lake District for 10 hours in February. Protesters called for an end to sewage discharges into all bathing and high-priority nature sites by 2030, emphasizing the need for clean water as a basic human right.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/may/18/clean-water-protesters-sewage-seas-rivers-uk-water-companies> - On May 18, 2024, protesters gathered at Gyllyngvase Beach in Falmouth, Cornwall, to demand action over sewage pollution in British waterways. Organized by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), the demonstration featured participants wearing fancy dress and waving inflatable plastic poops as they paddled into the bay on surfboards, kayaks, and stand-up paddleboards. Similar protests took place at over 30 other locations across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The protests were in response to reports of over 464,056 sewage spills in England's rivers and coastlines in 2023, a 54% increase from the previous year. Protesters called for an end to sewage pollution in bathing waters by 2030, highlighting the need for clean water as a basic human right.
5. <https://metro.co.uk/2023/05/20/surfers-protest-against-greedy-water-companies-dumping-sewage-18816628/> - On May 20, 2023, Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) organized protests at various UK beaches, including Brighton Beach, Gyllyngvase Beach in Falmouth, South Bay in Scarborough, Saltburn Pier in Yorkshire, Croyde Beach in Devon, Appley Beach in the Isle of Wight, and Portobello Beach in Edinburgh. The demonstrations aimed to call for an end to sewage discharges into UK waterways, highlighting the damage to fragile ecosystems and the health risks to swimmers. Protesters displayed slogans such as 'Sick of sh\*\*t' and 'Stop the Poo-lution of Our Oceans.' The protests were prompted by data showing over 301,091 sewage discharges in 2022, amounting to more than 1,750,000 hours of pollution. SAS campaigners warned that the sewage spillages were damaging local wildlife and called for water companies to stop spewing untreated sewage into waterways.
6. <https://news.sky.com/video/campaigners-protest-on-beaches-against-sewage-in-uk-waterways-13138786> - A video from May 18, 2024, features campaigners protesting on beaches against sewage pollution in UK waterways. Organized by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), the demonstrations took place across the UK's beaches and rivers, calling on the government to take more action against the growing concerns around water pollution. The video includes footage from various locations, including Scarborough, where protesters paddled into the water to raise their concerns about sewage in the sea. The protests were part of a nationwide day of action coordinated by SAS, aiming to address the issue of sewage discharges into UK waterways and demand cleaner seas and rivers.
7. <https://www.itv.com/news/2024-05-18/protesters-call-for-end-to-sewage-discharges-plaguing-nations-waterways> - On May 18, 2024, thousands of people participated in protests at beaches, rivers, and lakes across the UK, calling for an end to sewage discharges into the country's waterways. The demonstrations, organized by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), followed reports of millions of liters of raw sewage being pumped into Windermere in the Lake District for 10 hours in February. Protesters gathered at various locations, including Brighton, Falmouth, and Scarborough, to demand action from water companies and the government. The campaigners called for an end to sewage discharges into all bathing and high-priority nature sites by 2030, emphasizing the need for clean water as a basic human right.