This year saw the return of SAS’s Return to Offender campaign, calling out big brands on their pollution of mountain tops, parkland, rivers and the ocean. Taking a twist on the approach of the original 2009 campaign that utilised freepost envelopes to return branded pollution to those who produced it, with the COVID-19 lockdown in place, SAS went digital! Over 600 people snapped & shared 8,400 tweets of pictures of plastic pollution spotted on their daily exercise between 22nd April - 22nd May 2020, calling out over 200 brands for their polluting ways. The campaign reached over 600,000 people across all social media wavelengths.

Just 12 brands responsible for over 1/2 of all packaging pollution.

So, who are the biggest culprits in 2020? A massive 56% of all items spotted came from just 12 brands—...the Digital Dirty Dozen. @Coca-cola are still performing consistently badly coming out top of the pack, no change from the SAS 2019 brand audit and countless other audits undertaken by other environmental NGO comrades. @Lucozade came in second place, jumping up the rankings from the 2019 brand audit where it came in sixth. @Walkers and @pepsi both products of @PepsiCo, filled the 3rd and 4th spots. We also see fast food giants @KFC, @McDonalds, and @CostaCoffee (owned by @Coca-Cola) in the dirty dozen despite lockdown seeing a close to many of their outlets.

So, what’s changed? Well, very little it seems. The Digital Dirty Dozen looks remarkably similar to the results of SAS’s 2019 brand audit. Big brands need to act fast to end their polluting ways, lead by example and actually start REDUCING the plastic they put into a system that can’t cope with such excessive plastic volumes.

We are grateful that you have spent the time to provide a detailed response numerous times. However, we would be far more grateful if you developed targets based on plastic reduction rather than anti-littering and recycling!
POST PANDEMIC POLLUTION

During lockdown, we have been craving Vitamin Sea with 84% of us missing the beaches and ocean most of all according to the #GenerationSea Blueprint survey. So it’s not surprising that as restrictions have eased, many of us have headed back to the environment that makes us feel free, calm and alive. But, this has further highlighted the devastation that plastic pollution causes. Bins piled high with trash, picked at and -strooned across beaches by hungry gulls highlight the continued issues we face with the linear nature of our disposable society.

As individuals, we can’t treat the environment as a dumping ground, but neither can we simply place the burden of blame on so called ‘litter bugs’. The issue must be viewed as the collective responsibility of industry, government and the public.

Through the digital #ReturnToOffender there has been a renewed appetite across community networks to take action, capitalising on the revived appreciation for beaches and the environment. This increased wave of support, combined with shocking images of parks and beaches covered in plastic pollution, has given rise to the #PostPandemicPollution campaign.

AIMED AT ALL ACTORS OF THE SYSTEM, THE CAMPAIGN:

SHARES images across social media of #PostPandemicPollution scenes on local beaches, streets or parks — tagging in @sascampaigns (twitter) and @surfersagainstsewage (IG).

ENCOURAGES #MiniBeachClean or #IsolationClean whilst still returning branded items digitally through #ReturnToOffender, highlighting the need for corporate, establishment and individual behaviour change.

ACTIVIST WINS!

JESS MORRIS, SAS LONDON REP
SECURES BIN INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE CAPITAL.

After an illegal rave in a park in London, Jess was left shocked at the amount of plastic and packaging pollution left behind. Along with other members of her community, she conducted a #MiniBeachClean while sharing photos, and tagging in the local council on social media. Going back the next day, she saw that the council had installed a large wheeled bin and it had already made a massive difference.

BIG BUSINESS MICROBEADS CAMPAIGN WIN

FOR SOUTHAMPTON REP’S, KATRINA AYLING AND MAIRIN WILLIAMS

Treen and Mairin have been campaigning about a local plastic factory spilling nurdles into the river which then wash up in huge quantities in Chessel Bay for years. After documenting the issue and tracing the spill back to the factory in question, these two utilised the focus of Return To Offender to target the British Plastics Federation and local council, highlighting the subject and calling for action to be taken to limit it. While no answer from BPF has been forthcoming, Southampton Council have been in touch to offer “to work on a strategy to prevent the pollution” and do what they can to support “you and your noble cause”.

SAS BRIGHTON REP’S ACHIEVE ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT FOR THE BEACH FRONT

A busy tourist spot year-round, Brighton was experiencing increased levels of plastic pollution as lockdown restrictions were eased. Through #ReturnToOffender actions and then contacting their local council, the Brighton Reps have persuaded the council to have “officers patrolling the seashore as well as their usual route in the city, giving out fines. They have also been asked by the Council to help write the Sustainability Guide for seashore venues nearing the end of their licenses.

SO WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS TO THE PLASTIC POLLUTION CRISIS?

A #PostPandemicPollution social media poll of over 400 people found that the public perceive a variety of solutions to be needed. These range from action required by individuals, government and business from education, enforcement, reduction in plastic production, and changes in legislation. If we are ever going to tackle the plastic pollution crisis, we need a complete systemic change in how we produce and consume materials.

EDUCATION 22%

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY 17%

LEGISLATION 11%

OPT-OUT POLICY 16%

ENFORCEMENT 15%

BATCH INFRASTRUCTURE 9%