

## 'Keeping Seals Safe from flying rings - Campaign Update December 2019

After a busy summer distributing posters and leaflets all along the coast, from Great Yarmouth to King's Lynn and beyond, to over 300 venues and 370+ members of the public, it is evident that the campaign message *'Please take your flying rings home'* is being heard. Some shops have stopped selling the rings including Lathams, Potter Heigham.

Many people have been saying to us:

*'Beach shops shouldn't sell flying rings...ban them from the beach..'*

As we reported in the first campaign update (August 2019) the overwhelming response has been one of sympathy and concern for the stricken seals as well as shock at the severity of the injuries they are suffering from entanglement in plastic toy rings.

We have just heard good news from Sea-Changers: they have awarded FoHS a 2<sup>nd</sup> grant to continue the campaign!!

### Ambassadors

10 Ambassadors who have promoted the campaign have been named and thanked: Teachers and pupils at 5 Primary schools: Acle, Castle Acre, Catfield, Cromer Junior and Stalham Academy, took part in activities and project work to learn about the campaign. Cromer Junior Beach School teacher Amy Gill brought a group of pupils to visit the seals at Horsey and learn about the dangers of flying rings to seals. Allison Pell at Catfield (Church of England Forest School) made a presentation to the school assembly and all the pupils responded.

*'At Catfield Primary School everyone from Reception to Year 6 are motivated to do everything we can to protect our local seals. We feel deeply saddened about the impact our toy plastic rings can have, just by being careless with them. We want to be better and change the way we play. It's not just our beach, it belongs to all God's creatures.'*



Paul Kirkham of K. Hardware Cromer destroyed his stock of flying rings after his staff expressed concern about the danger they can pose to seals he said:

*'I think it's time to give back to the community and the seals. It's important to tell people what this campaign is all about. If enough people get involved we won't have these rings.'*

Terry, who runs T & Js burger van situated in Horsey Gap car park displays a permanent message on his van asking people not to take any flying rings onto the beach.

Jason Bean of Beans Boats Seal Trips told us:

*'On our boat trips we explain about the problems seals face from litter being discarded into the sea especially items such as plastic flying rings and frisbees with a hole in the middle. All the seal trip operators are aware of this problem...the seals are our livelihood and I don't think anyone wants to see them suffering.'*

John Hayes and Brian Hillman of Gaywood Valley Conservation Group, King's Lynn said:

*'We have seen pictures of the seals suffering deep wounds on their necks from getting stuck in flying rings and felt moved to help publicise this as we're sure the many of the public are not aware of the problem.'*



As well as distributing leaflets and posters in Hunstanton and Heacham John explained the dangers of the rings to a local Beaver & Scout group asking the children not to play with rings on the beach and Brian approached Heacham Newsletter who published the poster in their September edition.

FoHS have also thanked the Gorleston Beach Clean group who bought the stock of 250+ flying rings from their local Yacht shop and distributed them to inland groups who pledged to keep them safely away from seals.

### **Councillors on board**

Peter Ansell and Jenny were invited to a Cromer Council meeting in September by Tim Adams one of the Councillors. The group (Planning, Transportation & Environment) decided to ask North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) to consider putting an order in place to stop flying rings being thrown on their beaches and also to approach their local trade group to see if they could stop local shops selling the rings.

Since then Jenny has given presentations about the seals and the campaign to the Coastal Forum organised by NNDC and the Environment Panel at King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council. There was a positive response from both meetings including a pledge from Councillor Paul Beal to stop the sale of flying rings in his shops in Hunstanton.

### **Great Yarmouth Sealife Centre**

Following a meeting at the Centre arranged by one of our Wardens a short video is being developed for the Native Species Section showing the detrimental effects of entanglement in plastic rings and netting for seals.

### **Keeping Seals Safe from flying rings - longer term solutions**

Huge thanks are due to Sea-Changers who have shown their commitment and belief in the campaign by awarding us a 2<sup>nd</sup> grant which will enable us in 2020 to:

- Launch a fresh wave of publicity about the campaign
- Attend coastal events to spread the message
- Invite more schools to take part
- Build on our links with Councillors, other beach owners and Trade groups to establish some longer term solutions
- Start talking to suppliers, importers and manufacturers of flying rings to raise their awareness and consider how the seals can be safeguarded

If you have any ideas or want to get involved please let Jenny know through FoHS website: [enquiries@friendsofhorseyseals.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@friendsofhorseyseals.co.uk) or if you are a Warden via Chris.

Finally we thank all our Trustees and Wardens who have supported the campaign giving their time, energy, skills and ideas.

We are grateful also to the RSPCA, British Divers Marine & Wildlife Rescue and Dan Goldsmith Marine & Wildlife Rescue our main supporters.

**Thank you to everyone who has helped and please continue with the great work...!!**

