

'Keeping Seals Safe from flying rings - Campaign Update September 2020

Campaign Re-launch

Our campaign to highlight the plight of seals caught in plastic flying rings was finally launched in August, after the easing of lockdown, with an incredibly successful press release featuring 'Sealy' our life size seal sculpture mascot.

Our aim to 'go national' was realized as 'Sealy' and the campaign was featured by BBC Look East (18/8), ITV East Anglia (19/8) [link to ITV coverage](#), Eastern Daily Press, Great Yarmouth Mercury, Lynn News, The Dereham Times and regional press across the country including in Bournemouth, Birmingham, Shropshire, Slough, Wiltshire, Aberdeen and Belfast.

'Sealy' toured six of Norfolk's beaches at the end of the month accompanied by Jenny, co-ordinator, assisted by FoHS Rescue Team members, Wardens and other volunteers.



Horsey Richard & Tony



Hunstanton Sailing Club

Peter, Billy, Sally and Tony members of FoHS Rescue Team and volunteer Richard helped out at Horsey on Saturday August 22nd. Visitors reported 2 stricken seals that day: one entangled in a yellow ring and another with green netting caught around their neck, photos were sent in.

After a few people had asked if we were selling (half) flying rings! One couple suggested we needed to make the message absolutely clear which resulted in the yellow poster above.

We spoke to 3 families who were about to take their flying rings on the beach. One promised not to use it, the 2nd took it back to their car, the 3rd, shocked by seeing 'Sealy' gave it to us to put in our 'amnesty box'

The next day we were hosted by John Fox, Commodore, and members of Hunstanton Sailing Club arranged via Colin Rose Cllr. Local Councillors Amanda Knight and Ann McKimm came along to offer support and liaised with Lynn News & the EDP who took photos to publicise 'Sealy' and the campaign.

Posters and leaflets with our ramped up strap line 'Please don't throw flying rings on the beach' had already been sent to many of the Parish Councils along the coast to display on their notice boards.



Hunstanton Cllr Amanda Knight, Viv West, Jenny



Sheringham



..... James Hutchinson Warden & Clare

As Jenny set up Sealy's display with volunteer, Bridget Villatora, on the Sheringham 'Tank', a local resident very kindly donated £20 to the seals. Whilst our aim was not fund raising we had a collecting box with all donations going to RSPCA East Winch Wildlife Hospital where the rescued seals are cared for. £150 was kindly donated.

Seal warden, James Hutchinson and his mum, Clare, came by, taking posters and leaflets to distribute. Deputy Mayor Liz Withington and Tim Groves Chair of the Museum supported us and Tim also took leaflets saying he would have a word with local shops that still supply flying rings to make them aware of the dangers to seals.



Cromer



.... Viv, Paul Kirkham owner K. Hardware ...



Tim Adams Cllr

On our day in Cromer the weather was windy and rainy but we were lucky to find a sheltered spot with some cover in front of the Henry Blogg Lifeboat Museum. Viv West of Gaywood Valley Conservation Group, assisted. Despite the weather we had a steady flow of visitors including Cllr Tim Adams who took up the campaign last year and is a super supporter. Local residents Paul Kirkham of K. Hardware (who destroyed his stock of flying rings last year due to concern for seals) and Richard Grey came to talk to us.

Richard took a leaflet to Bargain World and later reported they are no longer selling flying rings also due to the seals!

Thanks to Tim and Karl Read of North Norfolk District Council for arranging permission for us to display 'Sealy' in Cromer and Sheringham.



Gt Yarmouth Richard & Anne Wardens, Tony

Mayor Michael Jeal & Cllrs inc. Penny Carpenter, Barbara Wright from their Environment Panel

Seal warden, Richard Edwards, with Tony and his wife Ann, both also seal wardens, gave their time and help in Great Yarmouth. Local Cllr Barbara Wright is passionate about safeguarding wildlife and she and Penny brought along other councillors to see the display and give support.

Our final visit of the week was to Winterton on Saturday August 29th. Peter and Billy gave their time and again despite the weather people showed interest, shock and concern for the seals severely injured by flying rings. We are grateful to Jan who gave permission for us to place Sealy adjacent to her cafe.

We estimate numbers of visitors to be from 50 - 100+ each day and many we saw pausing to read the yellow poster.

The message of the campaign quickly became clear to people as they saw the display of Sealy and photos of the seals injured by flying rings and similar plastic rings. Some were already aware though a number were not at all. All however were shocked, sad and concerned. Many said they thought the rings should be banned from the beaches.

Whilst a sprinkling of coastal shops has stopped selling the rings many have not - there's still work to be done!

THANKS to RSPCA, BDMLR, Dan Goldsmith and FoHS Trustees working behind the scenes to safeguard seals through this campaign.

You can support the campaign by forwarding a link to our website and this campaign update to all your family, friends and contacts. Also by 'liking' and sharing our social media campaign updates. THANK YOU again for your help!

