



**ON ALMOST EVERY DIVE
NARC RELEASES
ENTANGLED MARINE
WILDLIFE**



**LOST LOBSTER POTS IN
SKOMER MARINE
NATURE RESERVE**



**OUR RECORD IS 730
ANGLING WEIGHTS IN 1
DIVE AT STACKPOLE
QUAY**



**THE DIVERSITY OF
LITTER IS STAGGERING.
WE HAVE EVEN FOUND
THE KITCHEN SINK!**

NEPTUNE'S ARMY OF RUBBISH CLEANERS

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Winner of “Most Admired Voluntary Organisation in Wales”



Neptune's Army of Rubbish Cleaners (NARC) is an award winning registered charity, made up of volunteer divers with a passion for keeping the underwater world litter free. Since 2005, the group has carried out over 2000 underwater clean-up dives and been involved in a number of educational and awareness raising projects.



1. INTRODUCTION

This annual report has been produced to provide a progress update on 2023, provide a background to NARC and highlight our work since 2005. The report covers our underwater clean-up events, our efforts in raising awareness of marine litter, other work, and our collaborative future plans. The finance section is included, primarily for our funders but also to demonstrate what can be achieved with modest funding and huge volunteer effort.

1.1 ABOUT US

While the impacts of litter washed up or left on our shoreline can easily be seen, the same cannot be said for marine litter that is below the surface of the ocean. NARC is a voluntary group of divers and non divers with a passion for keeping the underwater environment litter free. Since its inception in 2005 by local diver Dave Kennard and Keep Wales Tidy, the group has carried over 2000 underwater clean-ups and a number of awareness raising events. This makes NARC the longest, most active underwater clean-up group in the UK.

NARC can be found at a number of sites along the coastline throughout the diving season, collecting litter that is often having a negative impact on the habitat and the wildlife it supports. Divers descend in buddy pairs armed with scissors, bags, trays, lifting bags and a great belief in what they are doing. Dives can last almost an hour in which litter is collected, bagged and sent to the surface for retrieval by a support boat.

The diversity of litter found on dives is staggering with mobile phones, shopping trolleys, bicycles, revolving chairs, skate boards, batteries and quite literally the kitchen sink! Litter type is dependant on the diving location and aim e.g. mainly angling litter at popular angling spots, commercial fishing equipment when working with local fishermen and fly tipped litter where there is easy access to estuarine locations.

The impacts upon wildlife are only too apparent with fishing line often cut from spider crabs and lobsters, dog fish released from hooks and lost crab pots ghost fishing. The litter can also be a hazard to divers and other water users. Once retrieved the various items are cleaned, sorted, recorded and recycled where possible.

1.2 THE BENEFITS

The group is doing its best to reduce the amount of litter in the underwater environment. By removing foreign objects from the sea bed NARC helps make the underwater environment a cleaner and safer place for wildlife and other water users. We believe the following benefit from NARC's actions:

Helping to keep the
underwater world
litter free since 2005



NARC have carried out
over 2000 clean-up
events. We have worked
with angling coaches to
develop tackle tips
leaflets aimed at
reducing tackle loss and
regularly work with local
fishers to locate and
return fishing gear.

- Marine wildlife - less entanglement potential/ decrease in potential ghost fishing from lost commercial fishing gear
- Bathers - less sharp and entangling hazards
- Divers - less entanglement hazards from lost line, ropes, nets
- Leisure craft users - Less chance of entanglement to propellers etc
- Anglers - a reduction in seabed litter decreases the chance of further entanglement
- Commercial fisher - retrieval of lost gear and less impact upon fishery

It is not only the obvious marine wildlife such as seabirds and seals that benefit from less marine litter. Pink seafans are a warm water soft-coral at the northern limit of their geographical distribution in Pembrokeshire. They grow at less than 5mm per year and can live for over a hundred years. They are specially listed for conservation action in the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Two of the pictures below show a seafan covered in lost angling line which had been trapped by a discarded soft drink can. The second shows it after fifteen minutes effort to cut it free of lost line.



2. RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT UNDERWATER LITTER

NARC was formed by concerned divers who had become aware of the increasing amount of litter they found underwater and the damage caused to marine habitats and wildlife. Whilst also carrying out underwater clean-up events the group are always looking for proactive ways to limit the amount of marine litter.

Raising awareness of the issue is an important part of the work.

Since its inception NARC has:

- Produced leaflets which are available from most dive centres in Pembrokeshire
- Keeps a project website updated with data, information and news – www.narcdiving.org.uk/
- Given multiple educational talks about marine litter to community groups and schools
- Visited Ireland, to promote the idea to Irish dive clubs
- Visited Greece and Sri Lanka to assist in international clean-up dives

- Produced 8 awareness raising videos
- Produced two ground breaking site specific leaflets providing visiting anglers with tackle tips on how to minimise tackle loss and underwater maps
- Assisted the Marine Conservation Society with the “hang on to your tackle campaign” sitting on the working group and providing advice on tackle bin placement
- Linked in with wider initiatives e.g. Ghost Fishing, Plastic Oceans, School projects, World Animal Protection
- Is a working group member of Global Ghost Gear Initiative
- Is a member of a Welsh Government Marine Litter Task Group

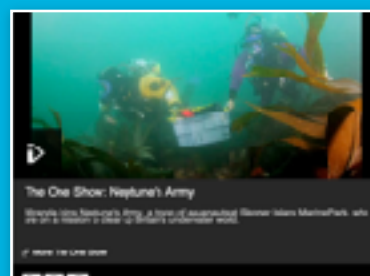
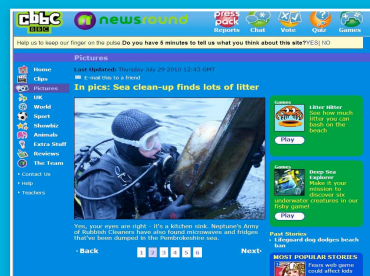
The group also uses local and national media to help raise awareness of marine litter and has had coverage on the BBC National UK news at ONE, BBC The One Show, BBC Countryfile, BBC Wild UK, HTV Coast and Country, HTV Welsh News, Newyddion, BBC Wales Today, BBC XRAY, Channel 4 Born to be Wild, BBC Wildlife Detectives, Sky News and a number of National radio stations and newspapers.

3. RECOGNITION OF NARC'S WORK

In its first year, NARC won the Beach Improvement category and the Peter Cambridge Trophy for voluntary organisations and schools working to improve their local environment in Keep Wales Tidy's Tidy Wales Awards 2006.

In 2009 NARC were voted the “Most Admired Voluntary Organisation in Wales” by the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action. This is one of the most prestigious awards for the voluntary sector.

In 2010 NARC were finalists in the Keep Wales Tidy Awards in the “Long Term Effort” category and in 2012 were chosen as one of 20 National projects to celebrate 20 years of Environment Wales.



Endorsements of NARC's work from NARC supporters

Sue Burton (Pembrokeshire Special Area of Conservation Officer)

"Not only are the members of NARC doing their individual bit to help make the marine environment a cleaner and more natural place to be, for themselves and fellow users (divers/fishermen.), but they are also improving the environment for the wildlife."

Simon Preddy (KEEP WALES TIDY)

"NARC has made an invaluable contribution to the Pride in Our Communities project within Pembrokeshire. They have raised the awareness of the problem of fly-tipping around our waterways and undertaken activities to clean up the mess. The divers have willingly and consistently given their time to help improve our local environment."

John, Local Fisher

"I have been collaborating with NARC for a number of years now and we have worked together multiple times to help find and recover gear which is helping the environment and our fishery."

Mark, Local Fisher

"NARC have assisted me on a number of occasions and inspired me to look at a number of adaptations to my gear to ensure any impacts from lost gear are minimised."

Chrysanthos Chormpas and George Spyropoulos Loutraki Divers, Greece

"We loved diving with the volunteers from Neptune's Army of Rubbish Cleaners. After seeing so much debris and man-made litter under the sea here in Greece, we knew we had to do something to help. The team from Wales has shared their experience with us and we know this is only the beginning of a great unique partnership."

Fiona Howie, Campaign for National Parks Chief Executive

"We have had some excellent, innovative projects which have shown how working in partnership with others can have a real and lasting positive impact on communities across our National Parks. Neptune's Army of Rubbish Cleaners is tackling an unglamorous and largely unseen but very harmful blight on the littoral fringes of a coastal park."

Kate Lock (Skomer Marine Conservation Zone)

"NARC volunteers do a superb job of clearing the sea bed of litter including miles of angling line, bucket loads of lead weights and fishing pots. The litter if not cleared kills and damages marine life. In the Skomer Marine Conservation Zone we are particularly grateful of the efforts of NARC where the quantities of lost tackle below popular angling sites is of concern."

David Jones, (Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum & NARC Secretary)

"As someone who not only enjoys and appreciates the marine environment in my spare time I'm lucky in that my career involves me in Coastal Management. Marine policy and projects can take a long time to develop, where the outputs and outcomes are often time consuming and difficult. One of the many things I love about volunteering with NARC is that your work is instant, gratifying and really does make a difference. In just one dive you can free entangled wildlife and improve the habitat. I'm really proud of our partnership working, especially with the Welsh Federation of Angling Coaches in producing site specific tackle tips leaflets for anglers."



4. 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Pembrokeshire Marine SAC – April 15 & 16th

6 volunteers.

Hen & Chicks – 2 volunteers – 1 metre viz = nothing found.

Brandy Bay – 2 volunteers – 1 metre viz = 1 lobster pots. Animals released = 5 crabs.

Soldier Rock – 6 volunteers – 2 metre viz = 13 lobster pots / 30m of rope. Animals released = 6 lobsters / 12 edible crab / 1 ballan wrasse / 5 velvet swimming crabs

Stackpole Quay & Barafundle – May 13th

7 volunteers.

Barafundle – 3 volunteers – 5 metre viz = 10 angling weights / 20 hooks – lures / 50 metres of angling line / 1 reel / disposable vape / 60 metres of plastic cord / 2 metre strip of aluminium. Animals released = 1 spider crab

Stackpole Quay – 4 volunteers – 6 metre viz = 50 weights / 64 hooks / 500 metres of angling line / 1 reel / 2 tin cans. Animals released = 2 spider crab

Skomer Marine Conservation Zone – May 14

10 volunteers.

Wooltack point – 8 volunteers – 5 metre viz = 50 weights / 68 hooks / 300 metres of line.

High Point – 4 volunteers – 5 metre viz = 6 lobster pots. Animals released = 8 edible crab / 16 spider crab

Milford Haven Waterway – May 25

7 volunteers.

Dakotian – 7 volunteers – 5m viz = 1 angling weight / 6 hooks / 100 metres of angling line / 100 metres of rope / 2 lost lobster pots / Electric cable. Animals released = 5 lobster / 8 edible crab.

Castle Head – 7 volunteers – 5m viz = 6 lobster pots. 100 metres of angling line / 30 metres of rope / 5 plastic bottles / boom plate / plastic handle. Animals released = 6 lobsters / 13 edible crab / 8 spider crab / 1 ballan wrasse

Skomer Marine Conservation Zone – May 26

6 volunteers

High Point – 6 volunteers – 6 metre = 48 metres of rope / 13 lobster pots. Animals released = 7 lobsters / 13 edible crab / 32 spider crab / 1 fish.

Skomer Marine Conservation Zone & St Brides Bay – June 24

The Douglas – 5 volunteers – 2 metre viz = 1 lobster pot / 25 metres of rope.

Stack Rock – 3 volunteers – 2 metre viz = 1 bait box.

Low Point – 4 volunteers – 5 metre viz = 45 weights / 45 hooks / 550 metres of rope.

Milford Haven Waterway – June 25

6 volunteers.

The Collier – 2 volunteers – 1 metre viz = 3 angling weights / 5 hooks /



200 metres of angling line / 1 beer bottle / prawn pot insert / 16 metres of rope.

Stack Fort – 2 volunteers – 1 meter viz = 2 anchors / 5 metres of rope / 3 meters of chain / grapnel hook

Skomer Marine Conservation Zone and Milford Waterway – August 26

8 volunteers.

South Skomer Pinnacles – 3 volunteers – 6 metre viz – = 1 lobster pot. Animals released = 4 lobsters / 8 spider crab / 6 edible crab / 1 Bullhuss

The Collier – 4 volunteers – 6 metre viz = 25 metres of rope / 20 metres of net / 1 lobster pot. Animals released = 3 edible crab / 1 ballan wrasse

Behar – 4 volunteers – 6 metre viz = 3 lobster pots / 30 metres of rope. Animals released = 6 edible crab / 1 Bullhuss / 1 Rockling / 1 lobster

Castle Head – 2 volunteers – 6 metre viz = 2 lobster pots / 20 metres of rope. Animals released = 1 lobster / 4 edible crab / 4 velvet swimming crab

Stackpole Quay & Milford Haven Waterway Aug 27

7 volunteers.

Stackpole Quay – 7 volunteers – 8 metre viz = 80 angling weights / 105 hooks / 1000 metres of line / 4 cans / 1 bottle

The Collier – 2 volunteers – 5 metre viz = 1 lobster pots / 30 metres of rope. Animals released = 3 lobster / 3 velvet swimming crabs / 1 rockling

Skomer Marine Conservation Zone & Milford Haven Waterway Sept 9

6 volunteers.

Wooltack Point – 2 volunteers – 4 metre viz = 11 weights / 21 hooks and lures / 4 metres of rope / 200m of angling line

Lockshiel – 2 volunteers – 2 metre viz = 20 metres of rope / 200m angling line / 3 lobster pots. Animals released = 1 lobster

The Collier – 2 volunteers – 3 metre viz = 1 lobster pot

Skomer Marine Conservation Zone – October 23

6 volunteers.

Low Point – 6 volunteers – 4 metre viz = 180 angling weights / 184 hooks / 1600 metres of angling line / Umbrella / 5 bottles / 6 cans / sunglasses

2023 Totals

We dived at 26 dive sites and recovered 4.8 kilometers of monofilament angling line; 430 lead weights; over 500 hooks; 300 metres of rope and over 50 lobster pots. We released over 200 marine animals.

4.1 OTHER WORK IN 2023

Displayed boards and information at a number of events.

Continue to contribute to the International network on ghost fishing.

Increased education work with schools throughout the year.



5. PROJECT FINANCES

5.1 Income

Funder	Amount
Balance Jan 2023	£15404.74
Donations	£7593.59
Total Amount	£22998.33

5.2 Expenditure

Service	Amount
Boat Hire	£9750
Insurance	£645.06
Publicity and Marketing	£458.52
Equipment	£363.01
Misc (Bank Charges)	£90
Total Amount	£11306.59
Balance Jan 2022	£11691.74

Neptune's Army of Rubbish Cleaners Trustees 2023. Registered charity number: 1174029

Registered address 4 Richmond Crescent, Haverfordwest, Wales, SA61 1EH

NARC trustees for 2023: David Kennard, (Chairman) / David Jones, (Secretary) / Blaise Bullimore, (Data Officer) / Andy Davies, (Treasurer) / Miles Bettridge / Mari Williams / Mark Collins

The NARC constitution can be viewed on the website <http://www.narcdiving.org.uk/other-stuff/policies/constitution/> which details how the trustees manage the CIO. Potential trustees can be nominated or self-nominated for a term of 2 years passed by a resolution at a convened trustee meeting.

Annual Report by David Jones

6. PLANS FOR 2024

We hope this report shows our existing sponsors the value of NARC's work and how their contributions are actioned throughout the year.

NARC plans to celebrate its 19th year with a continued programme of clean-up events and to continue our collaboration with local fishermen. There will be an update and reprint of the tackle tips leaflets aimed at being proactive in reducing lost tackle using education and a website refresh.

NARC will continue to raise awareness of marine litter and its impacts using associated social media platforms and continue to collect and add underwater footage to our library.

Clean-up events	Education and awareness	New schemes
10 events booked with more TBC	Reprint angling tackle tips leaflets and new general leaflet	Update awareness raising videos
Funded dives to recover lost commercial fishing gear	Update website with images and video rich improvement	Work with other initiatives around the UK
	Continue to increase social media and communications. Work with schools	ID relevant recycling projects, particularly for monofilament line

7. THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The group would like to thank all the sponsors, funders and members of the public who donated money and support in 2023.

Lastly and most importantly many, many thanks to all the NARC volunteers who freely give up their time for this good cause. Thanks to everyone for another fantastic year!



