

YOUNG OCEAN ACTIVISTS FIND MICRO PLASTIC POLLUTION

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We Swim Wild brings micro plastic research to the Pembrokeshire Coast

The pilot session of Pobl Dwr was filmed for an upcoming episode of ITV's Coast and Country series with Sean Fletcher and pupils from Castle School in Haverfordwest explored marine and environmental issues affecting the waterways in Wales.

A pupil from Castle School said "I found 22 pieces of microplastics in one cup of sea water".

Created by the Wales non profit We Swim Wild, Pobl Dwr has made children aware of the microplastic pollution crisis, while giving them a chance to explore the beautiful coastline and deepen their connection with the ocean environment.

We Swim Wild aims to educate and empower the younger generation on environmental action and micro plastic pollution.

A pupil from Castle School described their experience as

"the biggest eye opener ever".

The project gives pupils an opportunity to learn about the marine life on our coasts through an immersive snorkeling programme, wellbeing activities such as breathwork and meditation, citizen science microplastic analysis that actually feeds into We Swim Wilds national microplastic database with Bangor University.

We Swim Wild founder Laura Owen Sanderson says " We have been highlighting the issue of microplastics for the last few years, through adventure activism campaigns and U.K wide citizen science projects to map for microplastics.

The education programme gives young people the opportunity to experience the magic of wild waters safely, equips them with the skills and tools to analyse water for silent contaminates and the opportunity to see the scale of the problem in real time".

The project in Pembrokeshire is in collaboration with The Big Retreat Community, the non profit arm of The Big Retreat Festival in Pembrokeshire, one of the top adventure and wellbeing festivals in the UK.

Festival founder Amber Lort-Phillips says "Wellbeing in nature is at the heart of everything we do. As a result of the pandemic, we know that young peoples' mental health has suffered significantly. We want to give them the skills to improve their own mental and physical health whilst learning how to protect the planet for generations to come, and there is no better place to do it than in our home, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park."

"Plastic can commonly be found in our water, soil and air," explains Laura. "Crucially, we now know

it is in our bodies as we breathe in, eat and drink plastic particles every day. As plastic production grows, so does our exposure. There is growing concern that it may be harming our health.”

Laura adds “We know that the presence of microplastic and nano plastic in our bodies can't break down and is associated with chronic disease and pressure on our immune systems, such as arthritis, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The truth is there is currently not enough money invested in Plastic research and its impact on our health. Our citizen science campaigns and education programme go some way towards mapping current UK levels for this emergent contaminate”.

We Swims Wild's ultimate goal is to get the UK government to start testing regularly for microplastic levels as an emergent contaminate and to put greater restrictions on plastic production and its use.

A group of MP's including MP Mike Penning has also called on the chancellor to commit to a 15 million pound fund to examine the potential health impacts of plastic.

The Pembrokeshire project has been sponsored by the National Lottery community fund. We Swim Wild will be bringing this programme to coastal communities across Wales over the coming months.

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