

TIDY-UP: Town council and scuba club clash in Beachwatch Challenge – but they'll be working tog

Battle of the bin bag

by Claire Port
The News

IT was set to be a battle to clean up the beach – as two teams went head-to-head in a giant litter pick.

But when the sides realised they were both working to save the seaside they vowed to work together to tidy up our coastline.

On Saturday and Sunday teams of volunteers will be clearing debris from Eastney to Clarence Pier in Southsea as part of the Marine Conservation Society Beachwatch Challenge.

And as they go they will be trying to find out who is responsible for causing most of the pollution.

Southsea Town Council and Triton Scuba Club, in Southsea, both took up the Beachwatch Challenge – but it was not until this week they realised they were both competing.

Southsea Town Councillor Irene Strange says this will not be a fight to the bitter end because they are both working for the same good cause.

She is also hoping the combined effort, which Southsea Town Council are undertaking with Portsmouth Friends of the Earth and the Blue Reef Aquarium, will bag Southsea the Clean Beach Seaside Award from oil company Shell.

She said: 'We entered into negotiations with Portsmouth City Council last November in an attempt to get the Blue Flag last summer but due to "troubled waters" we didn't get it.'

'So in an attempt to try to get the Seaside Award next summer we thought we would put our hand in and clean up the beach. Organisers are hoping to attract a huge team of volunteer beach combers to tackle the rubbish collection.'

Helpers will be put into teams and provided with bags and a list to record all of the undesirable items they remove from the shingle and surf. Triton Scuba



Cllr Irene Strange and divers Matt McKean, left, and David Jones, right, of Triton Scuba, prepare for the clean up at Southsea

PICTURE: MICHAEL SCADDAN

ba is taking the effort one step further and will dive into the waves in search of unwanted waste.

Triton director David Jones said: 'A lot of people in Portsmouth make a living from the sea or come to visit it, so we should all look after it.'

Alison Conway, from the Marine Conservation Society, says the annual Beachwatch event will take a 'snap-shot' of the seafront as part of a nationwide survey. She said: 'It was a shock to us that two teams were going to be working on Southsea beach but this is definitely not a bad thing.'

Volunteers for Saturday's litter pick should meet at Clarence Parade car park, Southsea, at 9am. Triton Scuba divers are also welcoming other diving clubs to meet them at their base in Highland Road, Southsea, at 9am. For more information call (023) 9283 8773.

Participants for Sunday's crackdown on rubbish can join Southsea Town Council on the West side of South Parade Pier, Southsea, at 2pm or Portsmouth Friends of the Earth on the beach near Eastney Swimming Pool at 4.30pm. For more information call Cllr Irene Strange on (023) 9286 1674.

CLEANING UP BRITAIN'S SH

BEACHWATCH organisers the Marine Conservation Society are hoping that this year's event will be just as successful as last year's.

■ In 2001, almost 2,000 volunteers collected 2,127 black bags full of rubbish from Britain's beaches.

■ Last year the main seafront polluter was found to be tourists.

■ Volunteers covered

more than 87 miles shore line around the country in one day effort to clean up the marine environment.

■ The total number of items that were bagged up during Beachwatch 2001 was 222,704.

■ Almost 60 per cent of the rubbish collected last year's effort was sent to four main pollution hotspots: tourists, fishermen and sewage outlets.