**Notes for Presentation**

# Ocean Hero Think Before You Flush

## GALWAY ATLANTAQUARIA, GALWAY CITY: WINNER

World Water Day, on 22 March every year, is about focusing attention on the importance of water. The theme for World Water Day 2018 is ‘Nature for Water’ – exploring nature-based solutions to the water challenges we face in the 21st century. For World Water Day Galway Atlantaquaria, a long-time supporter of the Think Before You Flush campaign made a video highlighting the importance of why you must Think Before You Flush.

## ST COLMAN’S COLLEGE, MIDELTON, CORK

St. Colman’s College, a supporter of Clean Coasts and a previous winner of the Think Before You Flush Ocean Hero award highlighted the benefits of the Think Before You Flush campaign during their open day. Visiting 5th and 6th class students saw how the Think Before You Flush campaign is intergraded in to the school’s Clean Coasts group

## ST LAURENCES SCHOOL, GREYSTONES, WICKLOW

At the February 2018 Green Schools Expo St. Laurence’s National School, Greystones displayed their work on the Think Before You Flush initiative, showcasing their knowledge on the impact of sanitary waste on marine life and the proper way to dispose of items commonly used in the bathroom. They even got a chance to meet Denis Naughten to talk about the campaign, who at that time was Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

# Ocean Hero Beach Clean of the Year

## ‘Havin' a Laugh’ Eco Adventure Sligo:

On Sunday 16th September, ‘Havin' a Laugh’ a mental health charity based in Sligo, ran 3 eco-adventure events in North Sligo.

* Dernish Island – Kayaking
* Trawluath beach – Horse Riding
* Streedagh beach – Trail running

‘Havin' a Laugh’ charity was established to promote positive mental health through life-enhancing activities. They are dedicated to the promotion of life-enhancing activities as essential tools for personal emotional stability and positive mental health. They have been registered as Clean Coasts group since 2014 and in that time have hosted numerous eco-adventures and yoga on the beach activities during Coca-Cola Clean Coasts Week.

The idea for this adventure was to clean hard to reach stretches of coastline during Clean Coasts’ Big Beach Clean.

* A kayak from Milk harbour north of Grange out to Dernish Island and back to mainland was organised. 10 volunteers took part and collected 20 bags of rubbish on the island.
* 10-15 volunteers met on Streedagh Beach and went trail-running while picking up litter. This is also known as plogging and they cleaned 13km of coastline.
* A team of 7 met at Island View Riding stables (also a Clean Coasts group) and went on horseback to Trawluath beach and cleared a stretch of hard to reach coastline.

The most common litter items found were, fishing debris and plastic bottles, lobster pots, ropes, plastic containers, and 20-gallon drums.

The event was organised by the Havin' A Laugh charity and the following activity providers donated their time: Northwest Adventure Tours (Trail-running), Fitness4All (Trail-running), Sligo Kayak Tours (kayaking), Island View Riding stables (Horseriding).

## Beach Clean of the Year: Keep Our Beaches Clean, Co. Mayo

Keep Our Beaches Clean organised an amazing 13 beach cleans in the Westport and Louisburgh areas of Co. Mayo over the weekend of the Big Beach Clean 2018. With some beaches being cleaned on than than one occasion due to the volume of rubbish.

Over 100 volunteers from all walks of society turned up to take part. They collected over 100 bags of marine litter along with an assortment of large items such fish boxes, sand bags, ropes and nets. Most of the plastic and ropes they have collected from the Big Beach Clean is currently in storage and is to be used for an art project.

## Sanofi

Sanofi are one of our new Clean Coasts groups and joined as a business group in 2018. They wanted to hold a company-wide volunteer day to encourage employees to take part in protecting our oceans and decided to host an event to coincide with Earth Day on 22nd April 2018. They organized a mass clean up of 15 Waterford beaches between Cheekpoint and Stradbally with the help of Clean Coasts and Waterford City and County Council.

Over 120 employees took part in the weekend event along with their families and they all had #2minutebeachclean t-shirts on to promote the campaign. They captured some amazing drone shots of one of the cleanups and they organised plastic-free refreshments afterwards to thank the volunteers for their hard work.

# Ocean Hero Business of the Year

## Oceanworld Aquarium is situated in Dingle town in County Kerry.

They have been a Clean Coasts group for many years and have previously won Clean Coasts Group of the Year.

They are constant champions and leaders in the fight against marine litter on the Dingle Peninsula… they organise beach cleans around the Peninsula throughout the year. They engage in education on marine litter – both in the Aquarium and on an outreach basis too.

This year they were fundamental in the development of Clean Coasts GLAN (Green Local Area Network) programme which is a peer led environmental programme for businesses. They have dedicated their time and resources to making this a success with over 130 businesses across the Peninsula pledging to make at least 3 environmental improvements to their business.

They engage with Clean Coasts and marine litter education tirelessly and enthusiastically – churning out excellent education material and information stands. They are a regular feature in the Clean Coasts Roadshows in Kerry. They are fundamental to the success of Clean Coasts in Kerry and we are very grateful!

## Marine Harvest Ireland – Business of the Year (Shortlisted)

Co-ordinated by Michelle Hay in their Rinmore office, Marine Harvest Ireland joined as a Clean Coasts Group in 2014. Since then they have carried out cleanup activities at their various sites around the country when there is a bit of space in their busy operations. This year they have supported the formation of the new Fanad Clean Coasts Group, a very important step in bringing the peninsula together to tackle coastal environmental issues, and held a nationwide cleanup event. This took place during Coca-Cola Clean Coasts Week 2018 and cleanups happened in 9 different locations around the country, collecting a staggering 2,815 kg of litter. They also became one of the first businesses to get behind the Think Before You Flush campaign in Donegal.

## Dive Academy (Ocean Hero Business of the Year Winner)

Dive Academy organised 2 successful beach clean events: 101 dive site on 2nd June as part of Coca-Cola Clean Coasts Week events and White Strand beach on 15th September as part of the Big Beach Clean. The business collected around 200kg of debris during these events.

The group filled over 20 sacks (140kg) of refuse during the Big Beach Clean, along with several large objects (a metal fence-post, a tangled mass of rope, a car battery, plastic panels and sheets). The group took these objects to the local council facility for processing. The volunteers were invited back to the Dive Academy for tea and coffee, in reusable mugs, and biscuits. The Dive Academy then showed short videos from Clean Coasts and Project Aware on the problems of plastic and how to address these problems. The Dive Academy also gave free dives to two young volunteers in their pool.

The business holds “Dive Against Debris” dives (an initiative from Project Aware) where they collect any underwater debris from some of their favourite dive sites in the Atlantic. The business now includes information on underwater debris collection during their dive briefings and they encourage divers to collect underwater debris and return it to their dive centre for disposal.

# Ocean Hero School of the Year

## Newpark School

The Dublin based school and its “Plastic Out of the Park” campaign which reached national coverage this year when it's transition years students launched it in March of 2018. The aim of the campaign was for the school to be the first ever single-use place free campus in Ireland. As part of the campaign the students took a five-fold approach to achieve this.

Firstly, all new student of the school would be supplied with a reusable water bottle which would reduce the need for single use plastic bottles. The students then negotiated with local shops to offer discounts to people who used reusable cups and also to reduce the amount of plastic wrapping in food items. They removed all plastic milk containers and replaced them with Tetra Pak. In the canteen they encourage students to bring their own lunch which would reduce the need for plastic packaging. As part of their welcome pack to Newpark, all new students to the school will be given information on the issue’s plastic and its effect on the environment and steps on how they can reduce their plastic foot print.

Students of the school have also undertaken some beach cleanups locally. They have continued to build on the campaign keeping a very active social media presence online. The “Plastic Out of the Park” campaign has gone on to inspire many other school and clubs around the country to go plastic free.

## St Michael School

St Michael's School have been involved with the Clean Coasts programme since 2016 which they joined as part of their Green-Schools Project. It was the school's proximity to core area of the Dublin Bay Biosphere reserve that was the impetus for the students to establish the group, they wanted to be involved in protecting its unique coastal habitats.

Throughout the 2017/2018 school year, no matter what the weather the school has undertook monthly cleanups along Sandymount Strand. The cleanups have been open to both students, teachers and parents. In order to make more of an impact, recently the school has decided to adopt the area around Shelly Banks beach in Poolbeg. St Michael's has also, recently extended an invite to other local schools to join on their monthly cleanup.

## St. Colman’s Community College, Midleton, Cork

St. Colman's Community College has been a recipient of the Ocean Hero School of the Year Award in previous years and their dedication to the coast continues to grow and inspire others:

* The current beaches under their care are: Ballynamona West, Ballynamona East, Ardnahinch, Garryvoe, Silverstrand, Ballinwilling, Ballycroneen, Ballybranagan, Pilmore, Redbarn, Claycastle and The Front Strand in Youghal.
* They are also working and engaging with other local schools – mentoring Coláiste an Chroí Naofa, Carraig na bhFear, and brought 80 of their students and teachers out beach cleaning with them raising further awareness. They are continuing to mentor other schools and spread the message.
* They are constantly promoting coastal care. Recently their “Love your Beach” message made the front page of the Examiner and other publications – Evening Echo, East Cork Journal & Marine Times.
* They have supported the town of Midleton to help tackle litter and prevent it from entering the rivers in the town. 75 TY students took part in this and approximately 25 black bags of litter were removed from the town each day they went out; as we all know, 80% of marine litter starts on land.
* Their support of the Think Before You Flush campaign is ongoing – both in the school and in the surrounding area.

A special mention has to be given to their teacher Prionsias Ó Tuama who has led this school tirelessly in their efforts to tackle marine pollution.

# Ocean Hero Individual of the Year

## Seán Ferguson – Wexford

Seán can be seen cleaning beaches along the Wexford coast every morning all year round. He combines his beach cleaning with daily swims and walking his dog early before he starts work. This year he took part in the Big Beach Clean in September and covered 7 beaches in total including Ballymoney North and South, Cahore, Seafield, Tara Cove, Kiltennel and Saleen.

Seán often takes the bags of rubbish he collects to his front garden to sort and make sure that as much as possible gets recycled. He also collects all the beach toys he finds, washes them and distributes them to charities and local creches in Gorey. Seán is a big supporter of our #2minutebeachclean campaign and his Instagram captures his daily finds along the Wexford coast and inspires others to get in on the beach cleaning action.

## Liam McNamara (Ocean Hero Individual of the year Nomination)

Fanore local Liam McNamara is an amazing beach cleaner/comber. Liam lets Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers know which parts of the coast around Fanore need a good clean up and he very generously allows them to pile the collected rubbish in his front garden until the council can come and take it away. Liam will do anything he can to help Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers in their efforts to keep the Burren coastline clear of rubbish and even recruits a tractor driver on occasion to help them move the rubbish to the collection point! Liam also runs a very interesting Facebook page called “[Burren shores – Beachcombing & more…](https://www.facebook.com/Burrenshores/)”.

## Olive Gilsenan

Olive Gilsenan has been the driving force behind the Portrane and Donabate Clean Coasts Group since its inception at the start of 2016. In that time the group has gone from strength to strength hosting numerous monthly cleanups at both Portrane and Donabate beaches. Not only has Olive encouraged people to undertake cleanups she has always tried to engage the public around the educational aspects of the coastal area and the importance of protecting it.  The group has held several community days which they have fused education with fun activities for all ages. Through their work they have been fantastic at promoting Clean Coasts campaigns like the #2minutebeachclean and Think Before You Flush.

Recently, through Olive's hard work and drive, the group was granted funding from Flag and BIM which enabled them to purchase a quad bike and a trailer. This equipment has allowed the group to expand its cleanups away from the beach to include cliff walks and estuaries. Olive has also worked hard in lobbying local politicians for improvement in beach management in the Fingal area.

## Proinsias Ó Tuama

Clean Coasts Ballynamona has been taking care of the local and surrounding marine environment in East Cork since 2015, and have won several Ocean Hero Awards since then. Their founder Proinsias Ó Tuama is inspirational in his work and dedication and indeed won the Ocean Hero Award for Outstanding Achievement last year; a stand-alone award especially created for those who bring the protection of our beaches, seas and marine life to a new level. Proinsias continues to build upon this great work and is a driving force in not only Clean Coasts Ballynamona but also St. Colman’s Community College.

## Peter O’Donnell – Individual of the Year (Shortlisted)

Peter is the main person behind the Clean Coasts Group, ACI Arranmore Cultural Initiative, which was established in 2012. He has been carrying out beach cleans on Arranmore for many years taking part in national events such as Coca-Cola Clean Coasts Week and the Big Beach Clean. Not only does he work tirelessly with volunteers on the island to carry out this work, he is also very involved in the management of the bins on the island, in bringing in new initiatives to rid the island of items such as tyres and paint cans, liaising with Donegal Co. Co. and other stakeholders such as Sharkey Waste for better management of litter on the island and is a driving force in getting everyone to get behind better practices with litter disposal and protecting the amazing environment in which they live.

# Ocean Hero Group of the Year

## 5th Wicklow Bray Sea Scouts

5th Wicklow Bray Sea Scouts are a new group joining Clean Coasts in 2018. They got straight to work and set up a designated #2minutebeachclean bin at the scout den along with #2minutebeachclean campaign signage in the harbour to promote the message to the wider public. The scout groups often carry out cleanups of the water from their kayaks, do a #2minutebeachclean every time they come out of the water, and have had a number of marine litter workshops in the scout den. They also joined Clean Coasts on the Barefoot Beach Rescue Project held in Bray over the Summer. More recently a number of scouts and leaders went to Malta to the ‘Saving Our Sea’ Erasmus project and shared the #2minutebeachclean campaign amongst other marine litter initiatives with scout groups from England, Malta, Slovakia and Greece.

## Group of the Year: Keep Our Beaches Clean, Co. Mayo

A very new group to the Clean Coasts programme, Keep Our Beaches Clean registered as Clean Coasts group in the summer of 2018. However, in that time the group have been extremely hard-working in their efforts to keep the Coastline of SW Mayo clean. They have collected over 2.5 tonnes of rubbish and gathered 1055 followers on Facebook. Over half of their social media followers to date have either participated in a clean-up with the group or on their own. The group had volunteers on SW Mayo beaches every day from July 1st until the end of the season.

Most of the plastic and ropes they have collected since they were established is currently in storage and is to be used for an art project. All items of clothing collected during the beach cleans have been washed and sent to charity shops. Toys were also washed and collected in a box for the public to use on beaches over the summer, following this they were sent on to local play-schools. The group have also run workshops to raise awareness on waste and recycling.

They are an amazing group who have not only made a huge difference to the beaches of Westport and Louisburgh areas of Mayo, they have also helped to change behaviour of those visiting the beaches through their environmental message.

## Falcarragh Clean Coasts Group (Cósta Glan agus Glas An Fhálcarraigh) – Group of the Year (Shortlisted)

Cósta Glan agus Glas An Fhálcarraigh or Falcarragh Clean Coasts Group was setup in just 2016 and since then have gone from strength to strength in improving the coastal environment around Falcarragh. This group not only carries out beach cleans every month drastically reducing litter issues at Green Coast Awarded Drumnatinney beach and Ballyness beach, they have also inspired many other groups in the county to carry out beach cleans on a regular basis with their awareness raising through the likes of social media. Many visitors to the area are so impressed by how well the beaches are maintained that the group regularly receives positive remarks from them.

Expanding their work this year, they took part in marram grass planting workshop in March, with 30+ volunteers taking part, as they are very conscious of the issues caused by dune erosion and continue to build upon this work as well as maintain and protect the site already tackled.

Their work doesn’t stop there, outside of planned activities many volunteers do mini beach cleans during their walks, help injured wildlife (most recently a seal), make sure the beaches are well maintained on a continual basis and they have even adopted a #2minutebeachclean station for the area.

*‘Is grúpa áitiúil muid a bhfuil an tádh orainn a bheith inár gcónaí in aice leis an cósta alainn seo. We are a group who love, respect and care for our beautiful local beaches.’ -*  Sarah Sayers

## Clean Coasts Ballynamona

Clean Coasts Ballynamona acts as the main network support for many of the East Cork Clean Coasts Groups as well as arranging multiple clean ups throughout the year. They are constantly engaging volunteers, schools, local politicians and businesses in their efforts to keep the coastline of East Cork clean and to raise awareness of marine pollution at both a local and national level.

The group successfully fundraised for a quad and trailer which supports 30km of coastline clean ups in East Cork. They are currently fund raising for a rib to help clean marine litter from offshore areas as well.

Clean Coasts Ballynamona is one of the best examples of a Clean Coasts Group around. Simple!

## Burrenbeo Trust (Ocean Hero Group Nomination)

Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers carried out 3 successful beach cleans in 2018 clearing the Burren coastline of more than 1 1/2 tonnes of rubbish and involving more than 85 different volunteers. They also worked closely with other local organisations and farmers to keep the Burren coastline as clear of rubbish as possible. They often work in hard to access areas along the rocky coast, carrying rubbish over 1km along difficult terrain.

As part of the Big Beach Clean in September this year, the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers held a beach clean at Fanore with just over 45 different people coming along on the day to help. A strategically placed information board at the top of the beach invited casual beach users on that day to find an event leader, collect gloves and a bag and join in even if they only had 5 minutes to spare. This helped to reinforce the message that everyone can make a difference to clean up our oceans and coastline. Many hours were spent by hard working volunteers collecting rubbish and painstakingly removing smaller pieces of plastic from the seaweed in which they had become entangled.