



SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

JUNE 2024 – MAY 2025



ABOUT SEA LANES

Sea Lanes, the National Open Water Swimming Centre, opened in June 2023. At its heart is a 50m, 6 lane accessible outdoor heated swimming pool, operated by South Downs Leisure, supported by 19 local fitness, health and wellbeing, food, and beverage businesses.

Sea Lanes took a vacant and unloved parcel of land on Brighton seafront and transformed it into a year-round hub for physical and mental wellbeing.

The regeneration team behind Sea Lanes is based locally and is made up of open water swimming enthusiasts with a passion for physical and mental wellbeing as well as environmental sustainability. They include swim coach Andy White, Copsemill Properties, QED Property and SwimTrek.

FOREWORD

Our vision is to be at the heart of open water swimming and supporting the well-being of the community is central to this.

At Sea Lanes, our commitment to being regenerative drives everything we do. This report highlights the positive impact we have made over the past year through the work we do with the local community to highlight our commitment to sustainability and beyond. We strive to create meaningful change. From reducing our carbon footprint, generating our own energy, to fostering inclusive environments and supporting local initiatives, we believe in leading from the front.

This report serves as both a reflection of our achievements and a reminder of the work still ahead as a strive to create meaningful change in the hospitality leisure sector.



Ross Gilbert,
Managing Director



GOALS

Social impact is built into our business.
In partnership with South Downs Leisure,
we are committed to ensuring:

All our facilities are single-use plastic free by:

2026

Our dry side facilities are net zero by:

2030

Our pool is net zero by:

2040

Impact of all facilities on nature and biodiversity:

NET POSITIVE

Within our community we promote healthier
and happier lifestyles, support and encourage
local charities and social enterprises, and
provide lifelong learning opportunities in
swimming and water safety.



OUR ENVIRONMENT

Building a privately funded swimming pool on Brighton seafront which is publicly accessible, open air, heated and environmentally friendly was a huge challenge. There were no other models to follow, but by taking the environmental challenges seriously, sharing our data and developing objectives a new formula for others to emulate has been created.



1,009,191.5 kWh

of total gas consumption¹



52.78%

reduction on design baseline to heat the pool



394,549.24 kWh

of total electricity consumption²



100%

of electricity from renewable sources



6%

of total electricity consumption generated by onsite solar



99%

of solar-generated electricity used on site



184.6 tCO₂

Carbon Footprint³



1,050

trees planted



15

species of vegetated shingle plants



12,499 m³

Total Water consumption⁴

1. (01 June 2024 – 31 May 2025) to heat the pool

2. (05 June 2024 – 27 May 2025), of which: Swimming Pool & Sauna represents 40%, Food & Beverage 34%, Common Areas 12% and Partner Businesses 14%

3. (Scope 1 & 2 emissions 05 June 2024 – 27 May 2025)

4. (05 June 2024 – 27 May 2025), of which 75% is Swimming Pool & Sauna

ACHIEVING NET ZERO

Progress has been made towards the net zero target through utilizing extensive energy monitoring to reduce the pool's energy usage by over 50% against the final design estimate.

Operating a heated outdoor swimming pool all year has financial and environmental considerations. 70% of the pool's heat loss is driven by evaporation. This evaporation is directly related to the speed of the wind across the pool's surface. Following Sport England methodology, enhanced swimming pool tank insulation U Values, an insulated pool covers and a 1.8m high screen around the pool were installed, reducing heat loss by 35%. These energy saving measures resulted in a 44% reduction in estimated energy consumption. All our learnings can then be applied to the design and operation of future sites.

Using a custom-made energy management system, the data monitoring equipment tracks energy consumption and the related weather conditions in real time. Using this data refinements can be made on a regular basis. The data is invaluable to make continual improvements.

The next step in our journey to net zero is finding a carbon-free heat source for the pool. We're evaluating each option based on feasibility, efficiency, and long-term sustainability to make sure the pool runs with minimal environmental impact. Potential solutions include capturing excess heat from a data centre, as well as technologies such as water-source or air-source heat pumps with or without solar PV, and hydrogen.





REMOVING SINGLE-USE PLASTIC FROM THE SITE

Working with community partner Leave No Trace Brighton, we have embedded sustainability into the way Sea Lanes operates, with a clear focus on reducing and ultimately eliminating single-use plastics.

Since opening, we have transitioned to a system built around reusables, supported by compostable plant-based packaging where necessary. All hot drinks are served in reusable Huskee cups (made from upcycled coffee husks), cold drinks and alcoholic beverages are served in glassware, and food is served on durable crockery with shared cutlery. Where takeaway packaging is required, only compostable products are used.

We have eliminated plastic bottled drinks from site, replacing them with cans or glass, and replaced free sauce sachets with chargeable compostable pots. Even overnight oats are now served in reusable glass jars.

Waste management has also progressed. All on-site waste is now handled by Recorra, ensuring detailed tracking and data analysis to drive improvements. Alongside this, we are trialing a 1.4-tonne hot composting system on site, reducing transport emissions and embedding a culture of responsibility across vendors and customers.

Our goal of being fully single-use plastic free by the end of 2026 remains in place, the changes already made demonstrate the potential for a coastal, multi-vendor site can successfully transition from dependency on disposables to a circular, sustainable model.



SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECOLOGY SYSTEM

Coastal vegetated shingle is nationally and internationally rare, with the UK being a stronghold for the habitat.

A new vegetated shingle habitat has been created between our neighbours' Yellowwave and Volks Railway. This area represents a significant proportion of Brighton & Hove's total area of vegetated shingle – the protection of this habitat and ongoing stewardship is vital. We are pleased to be cultivating rare species like the Yellow Horned Poppy and Viper's Bugloss and providing essential food and shelter for various wildlife, from insects to birds.

Following an inventory of habitat species, we can monitor and cultivate the vegetated shingle, with a plan to increase the variety of species by 10% each year.

In our first year, we partnered with Ecologi to plant a tree for every new member. This resulted in 1,050 trees planted across projects in Madagascar, Peru and Uganda, supporting ecosystem restoration, biodiversity protection, and local community livelihoods.

We also diverted 63.95 kg of waste through our partnership with Leisure Loop, who recycle swimming and leisure equipment into new products such as plastic panels for facilities, ensuring materials are reused instead of sent to landfill.

OUR COMMUNITY

A vibrant sea swimming community existed long before Sea Lanes opened, but over the past two years we've become an established part of it, helping it grow and evolve. Today our community brings together those who train with purpose, those who swim simply for the joy of it, and those who want to deepen their understanding of the water. Sea Lanes has become a hub for health, wellbeing, and connection.

Accessibility remains at the heart of what we do. The pool offers ramped access to the building, level entry through to the changing village and pool, a Changing Places facility alongside an additional accessible toilet, Roman steps, and a poolside hoist. This ensures that the experience of swimming is open to everyone.

"The pool gives me the opportunity to be in the water for an hour each morning doing my exercises and not be in pain. Huge amount of exercise too of the facial muscles from all the lovely people I have met since becoming a member of Sea Lanes! What a reward! To swim in the dark and watch the sun come up or be battered by the rain and wind is such an exhilarating experience. Thank you Sea Lanes."

Sue Hopkins
Sea Lanes Member



1,151

Members



96,814

Swims by member and pay-per-swimmers



£12,333

direct charitable donations



427

people attended our events



275

Participants for the Surf Life Saving Club Schools project



6

beach cleans in partnership with Leave No Trace Brighton



4

Bike checkup sessions from Dr Bikes



PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Government recognises that sport and recreation facilities such as swimming pools are essential social infrastructure. Prior to Sea Lanes opening, Brighton had just 44% of Sport England's recommended swimming pool provision, all of which was in ageing facilities.

Swimming offers a powerful combination of physical and mental health benefits, making it a great activity for people of all ages and fitness levels. The focus of the pool is for training and coaching, to facilitate swimmers and all water users to gain the skills and techniques to start accessing the sea, both safely and enjoyably.

Over the past year, Sea Lanes has strengthened its role as a hub for health and wellbeing. The sauna has become an integral part of the site, particularly through the winter months, supporting both pool and sea swimmers with recovery, resilience, and maintaining year-round engagement with cold-water swimming.

We continue to support the OUTSIDE study, a two-and-a-half-year project led by Sussex NHS Foundation Trust and the University of Portsmouth, funded by the NIHR. Using Sea Lanes as a base, researchers are exploring the effectiveness of outdoor swimming in reducing symptoms of depression, with the potential to shape future approaches to mental health care.

Our programme of events and challenges plays an important role in promoting participation and wellbeing. At the heart of this is Swim Brighton, our flagship open-water event launched in 2024. Delivered with sponsorship support from Zoggs, volunteer involvement from Brighton Tri Club, professional safety cover from Blue Response, and timing services provided by DBmax, the event brought 427 swimmers to the sea. Brighton Tri Club's contribution not only ensured smooth delivery on the day but also helped raise valuable funds for the club through a share of event revenue, while giving their members visibility and experience supporting a large-scale community event. More than just a race, Swim Brighton is designed to help participants transition safely from the pool to the sea, building confidence, resilience, and a stronger sense of community.

Alongside Swim Brighton, highlights of the year included an International Women's Day Swim, the Spring and Autumn Swim Challenges, and hosting Artist Open House. Participation in our Winter Swim Challenge also remained strong, with 262 swimmers braving the colder months to stay active, connected, and resilient.

“What makes Sea Lanes truly trailblazing in our community is their innovative approach to combining business with purpose. They have set a new standard in Brighton by showing that a successful business can prioritise environmental sustainability and community well-being. By fostering partnerships with local organisations like ours, promoting eco-conscious practices, and creating a vibrant hub that brings people together around shared values, Sea Lanes is not just a business — they are a leader in creating positive social and environmental impact. They serve as a model for other businesses in the area, demonstrating that growth and community responsibility can go hand in hand.”

Coral Evans

Founding Director of Leave No Trace Brighton

SUPPORTING LOCAL CHARITIES AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Sea Lanes contributes directly to local good causes through its own charitable giving, with a dedicated annual budget of £10,000. In addition, we provide a venue for fundraising events, enabling local and national charities, including Friends of Brighton and Hove Hospitals, Amaze, Cancer Research, Rocking Horse, and Team Dominica, to raise thousands of pounds through activities hosted at our site.

Work with Leave No Trace Brighton began before opening but has gone from strength to strength with six monthly beach cleans, involving over 160 people from the community removing over 110 kg of waste from the beach.

After each clean, the waste is carefully sorted. Fishing gear collected from the beach is sent via the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme to MyRefactory, where it is recycled into Storm Board, a durable material made entirely from plastic waste. This has already been used in Sea Lanes’ changing area, with elements such as shower cubicles, stalls, and shoe racks built from repurposed plastic originally removed from Brighton beach.

Brighton Surf Life Saving Club, who provide essential sea safety training for all ages, is part of the Sea Lanes community. Each summer they deliver the Schools Surf Life Saving Programme with direct support from Sea Lanes, introducing young people to CPR, first aid, rescue boards, surf swimming, and beach safety. The programme builds water confidence, teamwork, and respect for the sea, while encouraging lifelong participation in outdoor water sports. In 2024, 275 children took part, across 10+ schools, gaining practical life-saving skills under the guidance of qualified Surf Life Saving GB coaches.

SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY

Six local swimming clubs use the pool weekly for training together with swimmers of all levels from pleasure to channel swimmers.

Swim safe courses have been delivered to educate children, parents and carers on water safety, at local schools with support from South Downs Leisure and the RNLI. This is a 6-week programme with schools, with the end goal of getting the children swimming in the sea.

‘It was honestly great!!!’ – James McAdam, Assistant Head Teacher at Aurora Academy

In addition, we have supported active travel and community wellbeing through our partnership with Brighton & Hove City Council’s Dr Bike scheme. Hosted outside the pool, ‘Dr Bike’ offers free bike check-ups and maintenance for visitors and the Sea Lanes community. Over the past year, quarterly free service slots have been provided, helping people travel more sustainably while keeping their bikes road-safe.



LOOKING FORWARD

This year has been both successful and full of valuable learning. We have set benchmarks, introduced new events, created meaningful employment, and worked to strengthen the community. Thank you to everyone who has supported us in building a sustainable community swimming pool and helping us deliver our mission of a happier, healthier Brighton.