



Newsletter June/July 2018

June was a busy month!

We achieved Plastic Free status from Surfers Against Sewage. We celebrated Plastic Free Chepstow Week with the first Plastic Free Market in Wales, with talks from Andrew Cross on alternatives to oil-based plastics and from Martin Dorey on making a difference in two minutes, and with a litter pick along the Coast Path.

We received wide press coverage – locally and, unexpectedly, from places as far afield as Miami and Hong Kong, as well as the BBC and the national press – as the banner captured people's imagination. Though the headlines poked fun, the articles themselves helped to raise awareness of what has been our position all along – that plastic is an extremely valuable material precisely because it is long-lasting, which is why it is good for many applications but disastrous when used once and discarded. The banner has been taken down now in order to display the festival theatre programme, but will be going up again later in the year.

We saw Monmouthshire County Council commit to seeking Plastic Free status – one of the first counties in Wales to do so. This is great news because it will greatly increase our scope for working with the other communities in the County who are hoping to become Plastic Free. We were also awarded a small grant by Chepstow Town Council which will help to cover running costs until March next year.



We saw the first entries in the Schools Art Competition coming in and are looking forward to even more imaginative and inspiring creations. They will be judged by Ellie Jackson, author of the Wild Tribe Heroes series. Charlotte and Shari had the pleasure of attending an assembly at St Mary's Primary School.

Last, but not least, our anti-litter poster designed by Damian has been distributed to (almost) all the supermarkets, convenience stores and takeaways, and is also on display on the town noticeboards.

What next for Plastic Free Chepstow?

Being awarded Plastic Free status was our first big milestone. But really, the hard work starts now! Our priorities are to help individuals to cut down on plastic and to make it easier for businesses to find more sustainable alternatives to single-use plastic. We want to put pressure on the supermarkets to make plastic-free shopping easier. We are delighted that Monmouthshire County Council is hoping to become one of the UK's first Plastic Free Counties and we want to work with them to encourage recycling and responsible disposal of litter. And last, but definitely not least, we want to change the culture so that it's just not acceptable for anybody to drop litter. Anywhere.

Events coming up

Plastic Free July, supported by the Marine Conservation Society, approaches and we would love to hear from anyone who is planning to cut out single-use plastics entirely.

The next meeting is on **July 5th** and will focus on arrangements for judging, celebrating and displaying the schools Art Competition. (Greenman, 7.30 pm)

There will be a Plastic Free Market on **July 8th** – do come along and support the market.

The next Litter Pick will be in **mid July** – details to follow.

On **July 21st and 22nd** Art Competition entries will be on display in the Tourist Information Centre and at 10 Hocker Hill Street. Volunteers are wanted to sit with the display and engage with members of the public.

(Contact – Charlotte)

There will be a Plastic Free Chepstow/Transition Chepstow stand at Chepstow Show on **August 11th**. Volunteers wanted to help on the stand **(contact – Graham)**.

Together with the other plastic free campaigns in Monmouthshire, we will have a stand at the Usk show on Saturday **8 September**.

We plan to take a break from meetings during August and, subject to confirmation, will hold the next Plastic Free Chepstow meeting on Thursday **13 September**.

Looking further ahead

We hope to hold the following events during September/October. We need help with planning and organising these events. **(Contact – Graham)**.

- Meeting with supermarkets – to find out what they can do to make plastic free shopping easier.
- ‘Litter Summit’ – involving all interested organisations, including schools, town and county councils, Chamber of Commerce, community groups

Working with businesses and organisations

We have 20 businesses signed up to Plastic Free Chepstow and we want to increase this to 30 by the end of the year. We now have samples of various packaging using alternatives to oil-based plastics, although it needs to be emphasised that many of these will break down only with commercial composting and are not currently recyclable, so these products do not provide an instant solution and there is a need for dialogue with the County Council and others as to the best way forward. Please get in touch if you would like to talk to businesses about reducing their single-use plastics, or if you would like to get involved in taking this dialogue forward. If you are involved with any local groups, from Art to Zumba, please encourage them to think about their use of single-use plastics, and if they are already taking steps to reduce them (or have cut them out completely), please let us know so we can celebrate.

Working with households

We need to persuade as many people as possible to act on the first three of the ‘5Rs’ – refuse unnecessary plastic, refill containers, replace plastic with more sustainable options – effectively to change their

shopping habits. Working with supermarkets and independent businesses to improve plastic-free options is part of this, but we also need to engage households directly. Our ideas so far include:

- a presence outside supermarkets, say on a Saturday morning;
- a 'Chepstow Challenge: cut your plastic', with households committing to a target, e.g., halving single-use plastic, one day a week plastic free.....
- if we can secure funding, 're-usable Chepstow bags' for loose vegetables, bread, etc.;
- a monthly prize for the best plastic-saving tip;
- spreading the word through a range of media, organisations and workplaces.

Once again, we need people to make it happen! If you would like to get involved in a small group to take these ideas forward, or have other ideas, please get in touch.

Tackling Litter and promoting recycling

Our mini-consultation at the June 10th market, and afterwards on Facebook, raised a raft of issues concerning litter hotspots, design and location of bins, issues with recycling and the need for education and culture change. We have shared these with Monmouthshire County Council. The Council has produced a draft litter strategy on which it has invited comments – if you would like to see and comment on this, please contact us. More and more people are picking up litter, which is good, but the million-dollar question is HOW DO WE MAKE IT SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO DROP LITTER? Answers on a postcard..... Our proposed Litter Summit aims to take this forward.

And finally..... housekeeping

We are a small group with big ideas. We need fresh ideas and willing hands in the following areas... and possibly others that we haven't thought about yet!

- Developing our website and providing content
- Developing our campaigns with households
- Applying for funding
- Helping out with social media
- Contacting schools and engaging with teachers and pupils, especially at the secondary level
- Monitoring new science/technology developments
- Press and PR
- Helping businesses go plastic free

So please get in touch.

Contact us on plasticfree@transitionchepstow.org.uk

Facebook Plastic-free Chepstow

<http://www.transitionchepstow.org.uk/groups/plastic-free-chepstow/>