



## Chepstow Litter Summit: Thursday 17 January, 2019

Chepstow Drill Hall 7.30 to 9.30 pm

The Summit was hosted by Chepstow Town Council and Transition Chepstow's Plastic Free Chepstow group, with the aim of identifying practical solutions to the litter problem in Chepstow. More than 70 people, including councillors and council staff, residents and representatives of various local organisations took part. Unfortunately, few businesses were able to attend.

### Welcome

Mayor Tony Redhead welcomed everybody to the event and Plastic Free Chepstow Coordinator Graham Eele emphasised the need to look for practical solutions and to avoid just blaming "others".

### Presentations

#### **Wayne Dixon and Koda – Ambassadors for Keep Britain Tidy: Why we should all take responsibility for litter**

Wayne and his dog Koda are halfway through a walk of the British coastline collecting every piece of litter they encounter – so far they have collected 50-60 tonnes. He observed that governments across the world are waking up to the problem of litter. The problem in the UK is huge – there is a blanket of litter everywhere – and it is one that everybody needs to take responsibility for. The dangers for pets and wildlife are immense. Litter is a result of two 'ignorances' – the people who drop it, and the people who walk by. People are waking up to it – beach cleans which formerly attracted a handful now get 30, 40, or even 100. In his home town of Blackburn, there has been a 'red bag revolution' - where there were 20 people litter picking there are now 2,000, and as a result the community is not just cleaner but stronger.

#### **Jemma Bere, Keep Wales Tidy: What do we know about litter?**

Summarising the results of litter surveys undertaken annually since 2007, Jemma said that litter had generally been decreasing but some categories – notably drinks and fast food – were increasing, with pedestrians the main source. Perceptions can be dangerous as litter tends to be more prevalent but less noticed in more deprived areas. She stressed that there is no single solution; different types of litter need different approaches and a holistic solution is needed, involving education and engagement, working alongside businesses, and an enabling environment. There is no evidence that enforcement alone is effective. There are a number of knowledge gaps, including the outcome of current consultations (e.g., deposit return schemes), dealing with fly-tipping, integrating waste and litter policies and dealing with waste and litter. What works best is engagement specific to the audience, with clear actionable messages.

#### **Gill Bell, Marine Conservation Society: What do we know about litter?**

There has been a massive increase in the number of participants in the Great British Beach Clean as a result of 'the Blue Planet Effect'. Almost half the litter collected is 'non-sourced plastic' (unidentifiable small pieces) and 28% 'public litter' such as coffee cups and crisp packets. About 12% is fishing related and 6% comes from sewage such as flushed wipes and cotton buds. The problem of plastic waste is a market failure because single-use plastic is regarded as having no value. There is evidence that economic incentives do work, and new European legislation about extended producer responsibility is forthcoming. Key messages – RETHINK as well as refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle – and ONLY PEE POO AND PAPER IN THE LOO!

## Sue Parkinson Monmouthshire County Council: Monmouthshire's Litter Strategy

Monmouthshire is the first county in Wales to produce a litter strategy, which aims to tackle the problem at source and 'do more with less'. Its aims are *to make littering unacceptable behaviour* and *to introduce new and innovative ways of dealing with it*. It looks at five thematic areas: education, enforcement, litter picking, bins and partnership. The strategy is now awaiting final revisions and final approval.

### Group Discussions and Feedback

The meeting divided into three groups that contained a mixture of people and addressed the same four questions:

- Why does littering occur and what do we know about litter in Chepstow?
- What can be done to reduce the amount of material that is regularly littered?
- How can we encourage people not to drop litter and how can the recycling and safe disposal of waste be made easier?
- How best can we follow up to see what progress, if any, has been made?

**Group 1** looked at actions needed by central and local government. **Group 2** focused on actions by local businesses and other enterprises, and **Group 3** discussed actions to be taken by schools and other community organisations. Discussion was lively and positive. '*The ideas came tumbling out,*' said one rapporteur. '*All the knowledge and experience we need is here,*' commented another. After the discussion, rapporteurs reported back, and at the end of the evening all participants were allocated five 'votes' that could be allocated between one to five conclusions or recommendations. The number in brackets after a suggested action is the number of 'votes' received, and actions are listed in this order.

#### Group 1: what should central and local government do?

- Colourful/engaging bins which are animal-proof and clearly labelled as to what can go in (19)
- The need for a deposit return/reward scheme for plastic bottles (17)
- Legislation to reduce packaging and to promote the use of materials other than plastics in the fast food and grocery sectors (11)
- Supporting volunteering – for example, introducing a Business Pledge to keep the frontage clear, litter picking groups, campaign groups (9)
- Stronger and better targeted enforcement - including use of CCTV (9)
- Improvements to waste collection system to include better containers, education of both the public and council staff, a community skip scheme (5)
- Training/supervision of litter pickers – e.g., with coordinating with grass cutting (5)
- Education – especially in secondary schools, building on the Eco Schools initiative and linking to the citizenship curriculum (3)

#### Group 2: actions needed by local businesses and other enterprises

- Levy on single-use cups (13)
- Introduce a 'rating' system for restaurants/takeaways (11)
- Local media should be an enabler – reminding us that it's not 'the council's job' (6)
- Incentivise businesses by offering a reduction in business rates to those who deal responsibly with packaging/litter (4)
- Change the culture e.g., through deposit return schemes (3)
- Monitor progress by collecting data whilst litter picking (2) and looking at the amount of litter the day after major local events (1)
- Get businesses selling packaged goods to accompany litter picks (1)
- Business sponsorship of areas/litter picks
- Signs reminding the public of the damage caused by litter

- Employ a Litter Warden

### Group 3: what should schools and other community organisations do?

- Licensing and planning applications of takeaways should include the requirement to promote safe disposal of waste and use of recyclable materials (24)
- Schools need to join together in initiatives such as the Green Flag (12)
- We need a structured approach taking these ideas forwards (10)
- Make sure there are enough bins of the right kind in the right places, and regularly emptied (9)
- 'Litter begets litter': focus clearing on 'hot spots' and bad routes' (5)

### Discussion and Closing Remarks

During a final period for questions and comments a local litter champion stressed the importance of litter picking and others suggested that the local press had an important role to play in helping people to take pride in their local area.

The facilitator closed the meeting by saying how encouraged he was by the attendance and the quality of participation and stressing that there is no simple solution – litter affects all of us and we are all responsible.

### Next Steps

The Summit has been just a starting point and it will be important to follow up with a practical action plan and to keep up the momentum we have generated. Transition Chepstow will continue to work with Chepstow Town Council and Monmouthshire County Council, but will also be trying to engage more directly with local businesses and community groups. We will also try to liaise with all other agencies and organisations that are interested and involved in dealing with the litter problem in our town and its surroundings. One possibility is to launch a campaign to reduce litter throughout Chepstow as part of the Spring Clean Cymru from 22<sup>nd</sup> March to 23<sup>rd</sup> April that is being promoted by Keep Wales Tidy (<https://www.keepwalestidy.cymru/Event/spring-clean-cymru-2019>). We will follow up with as many local organisations as possible to discuss this and to agree on how best to proceed.

In addition to monthly litter picks in Chepstow (19<sup>th</sup> January and 16<sup>th</sup> February are the dates for the next two) Plastic Free Chepstow will be holding a public meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March and everyone with an interest in reducing single-use plastic and litter in Chepstow is invited to attend. For more information please consult our Facebook Page (Plastic-Free Chepstow) or contact us by email ([plasticfree@transitionchepstow.or.uk](mailto:plasticfree@transitionchepstow.or.uk)).