

Report by Plastic Free Chepstow for 2019/20

Summary

Transition Chepstow launched the campaign for Plastic Free Chepstow at the end of February 2018; it is a Transition Chepstow project subject to the oversight of the Transition Chepstow Steering Committee. In May 2019 we applied to Chepstow Town Council for a grant of £600.00 to cover some of the running costs of the campaign for the remainder of the financial year 2019/20. This followed an earlier grant for the financial year 2018/19 of £880.00 that was awarded in June 2018. This report sets out what the campaign has achieved in the past 12 months and how the grant has been used.

Activities and Achievements of the Campaign

Recognition of Chepstow as a Plastic Free Community

Chepstow was formally recognised as a Plastic Free Community by the campaigning group Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) in May 2018. This required us to achieve the following five goals.

- **To work with and get the support of local government.** Since April 2018 we have worked closely with the Town Council to promote and sustain the Town's plastic free status.
- **To sign up between six and ten local businesses to each remove at least three single-use plastics and to replace them with sustainable alternatives.** We have now signed up about 20 businesses and most have been accepted by SAS and have been awarded certificates and plaques.
- **To demonstrate local community involvement and allies and get at least 50% of community spaces involved in the campaign;** Both Bulwark Community Centre and the Palmer Centre have achieved plastic free status. We have also involved a number of local primary schools in the campaign and the regular street markets in Chepstow, organised by Cotyledon, continue to be plastic free.
- **To have continued to carry out a number of local events, especially community litter picks.** We have carried out monthly litter picks throughout 2018 and have continued in 2019.
- **To have established a local stakeholder group.** We have held seven public meetings and have a mailing list of more than 80 people. We have a Facebook Page with more than 700 followers; individual posts have reached up to 3,000 people. We also have a smaller Steering Group and Cllr Lisset Burrett is the Town Council representative on this group.

Launch of Chepstow as a Refill Town

Following the Welsh Government's decision to declare Wales as the first Refill¹ Nation in the world in May 2018, in 2019 we worked to get Chepstow established as a Refill community. In July 2019 we signed a memorandum of understanding with City to Sea and by the end of the year we had 16 local businesses and other locations registered on the Refill app as places where anyone could get a

¹ Refill is a campaign led by the Bristol based City to Sea charity reduce plastic pollution by making it easy for people to refill reusable water bottles instead of buying a plastic one.

reusable water bottle refilled for free. We are continuing to encourage more businesses and organisations to sign up as a refill station.

The Summer Challenge

Following our successful work with primary schools in 2018, Plastic Free Chepstow launched a Summer Challenge for 11-18 year-olds in June 2019. The aim was to challenge teenagers to create an anti-litter message for their own age group, in the form of a poem, song, video, poster or other medium, to be used in a social media campaign. The competition was open to individuals or teams living or studying in Chepstow (NP16). Support for the Challenge and especially the provision of prizes came from the CTC grant as well as Monmouthshire Country Council. Judging took place in October in collaboration Chepstow Action for Youth and Keep Wales Tidy and a prize giving was held in November. One winning team has since been working with Monmouthshire County Council's professional design team and it is anticipated that their product – a short video – will be available for use in the next couple of months.

Reducing Plastic and Other Litter

A total of 11 community litter picks have been carried out by Transition Chepstow in the past year. In March 2019 we launched Spring Clean Chepstow (SCC) as part of the Spring Clean Wales campaign led by Keep Wales Tidy. As part of this campaign, four community litter picks were organised together with four more that were carried out by specific local groups and organisations.

Date	Location	Partici- pants	Bags collected	Of which recycled	Comments
23/03/2019	Town Centre	30+	45	26	Launch of SCC
05/04/2019	Garden City	11	8	5	SCC
06/04/2019	Thornwell	9	9	6	SCC
10/04/2019	Riverbank	9	2	1	SCC – with Mencap
19/05/2019	Bulwark	15	9	6	
29/06/2019	Thornwell	11	7	4	
21/09/2019	Riverbank/ Castle	11	9	6	Great British Beach Clean
19/10/2019	Piggies Hill/ Bulwark	25	9	5	Joined by Galaxy Cheerleading
16/11/2019	Coast path/ Bulwark		9		
11/01/2020	Coast Path/ Garden City	24	28	14	
08/02/2020	Beachley	35	38	22	Joined by St Johns School and supported by Forest of Dean District Council

Spring Clean Litter Picks also carried out by – The Dell School, St Arvans Community, Bulwark Community Centre and Sedbury Cubs

We had planned to organise a similar campaign, in conjunction with Keep Wales Tidy, to run from 21 March to 13 April 2020. Unfortunately, these plans have been overtaken by the Coronavirus emergency and all organised litter picks have been cancelled until things return to normal. To support further litter picks by local groups, however, Keep Wales Tidy have agreed to provide a set

of litter picking equipment to be left at the Chepstow Community Hub, which can be provided to different organisations on request.

Raising Awareness

The campaign has continued to raise awareness about the problems of single-use plastic within Chepstow and more widely. We have participated a number of events in an around the Town and have liaised with other plastic free campaigns in Monmouthshire. We have also continued to interact with local schools, including Chepstow Comprehensive School. The Summer Challenge has served to raise awareness of the problem of plastic litter among secondary school students.

Plastic Free Chepstow has also participated in various consultation exercises about changes to legislation and raising awareness of the problems associated with single-use plastic. Through our Facebook page as well as a membership list of more than 80 people, we have engaged with issues such as the introduction of a deposit return scheme for plastic bottles and containers and the implementation of extended producer responsibility. We have also raised awareness of various recycling schemes and processes, including those operated by MCC as well as Terracycle.

Some conclusions: looking at what impact we have had and what we should be doing in future

Overall we have achieved quite a lot in the past two years, but it is clear that there is still a lot more that needs to be done. In March and April, together with Keep Chepstow Tidy, we had hoped to promote Spring Clean Chepstow, to make the town welcoming for visitors and residents alike. Unfortunately, these plans have now been abandoned because of the Coronavirus emergency. In the slightly longer term our priorities include:

- Taking forward the conclusions and recommendations of the litter summit
- Developing more Terracycle collection points for items that are difficult to recycle
- Working with local businesses, including supermarkets, to try to reduce litter and the amount of single-use plastic they use;
- Expanding the use of the Refill app in Chepstow and providing water fountains; and
- Reforming and re-energising the Steering Group

We also plan to consult within Transition Chepstow as well as more widely how the work of Plastic Free Chepstow and Keep Chepstow Tidy can contribute more directly to dealing with the climate emergency that has been declared by MCC and CTC.

Graham Eele – Coordinator Plastic Free Chepstow
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