

Plastics Know Your Place in the Community

ESP and University of Suffolk sponsored Greenprint Forum Event Report

28.3.2018



98 individuals attended this event. There were 17 stall holders and 13 speakers. It was an inspiring evening.

Three key take home messages:

1. Plastic has its place – plastics form artificial joints and hearing aids they protect things and keep us safe. Thermoplastics PET and HDPE have a value after their first use they can be remelted and remoulded. There is a market for them and the technologies to process them are available, tried and tested. Thermosetting plastics. The chemistry of these means once they have been moulded then they cannot be recycled. They can be used many times but at the end of use have to be burnt – so the key is to keep them is to avoid or keep them in use for as long as possible: Teflon frying pans, kitchen utensils, foam rubber, epoxy resins, polyesters resins, melamine kitchen cupboard doors.
2. Composites e.g. food pouches, refills, crisp packets and some toothpaste tubes are manufactured with a foil – usually aluminium – lining and plastic casing. They require chemical separation by pyrolysis, a specialist technology which tends to treat niche waste streams as it is expensive. These, together with light and bulky plastics such as polystyrene and fast food packaging have little or no value - there is no market for them and therefore no incentive to develop a reprocessing technology anytime soon.

Which is where avoidance or where they can't be avoided energy from waste comes in.

3. Black plastic food trays, once unrecyclable because the sorting equipment couldn't pick them up have now been redesigned with a marker in so they can be autosorted.

The stall holders:

1. [Beach Bonkers](#) - Revealing treasures on the Beach – determined to stop the trash.
2. [Benner's Photography](#) – Turning rubbish into art
3. [Community Action Suffolk](#) - Community Action Suffolk provides advice and support to organisations to create and manage volunteering programmes and to find suitable volunteers for their organisation.
4. [East Suffolk Partnership](#) - The East Suffolk Partnership (ESP) attracts people from local communities, voluntary organisations, public services, businesses and local government and encourages them to work together for the benefit of east Suffolk.
5. [Friends of the Earth](#) – Suffolk Coastal Branch [#Plasticfreefriday](#)
6. [Greenprint Forum](#)
7. [Hodmedod's](#) – Local beans and pulses in plastic free packaging wherever possible. Samples of yellow peas given out to all.
8. [The Oak Tree Farm](#) – growing your own within a community cuts down on plastic and food miles and gives you great tasting food without as much effort as running your own allotment.
9. [Poppy's Pantry](#) - ethically sourced and produced wholefood, bulk buy detergents to cut plastic use and plastic free alternatives
10. [Suffolk Cloth Nappies](#) - The average child uses over 4,000 disposable nappies, you can save as much as £500 by changing to cloth but not all cloth nappies are created equal – talk volunteer mum's that have done it to find their preferences and tips. They can also chat reusable sanitary products.
11. [Suffolk Coast and Heaths](#) – Supporting the Year of Plastic Action through projects of their own including: Beachwatch, Tree Guard removal and a student project.
12. [Suffolk Coastal Norse](#) – Support community litter picks through the loan of equipment and provision of bags and pick ups.
13. [Suffolk Waste Partnership](#) – A strategic partnership of the county, district and borough councils, which works together to continuously improve waste management services throughout Suffolk. Schools can borrow their Waste family, Reggie, Rosie and Robin, Volunteers can access training to become Master Composters, they run visits to Great Blakenham Recycling Centre and provide advise and awareness raising
14. [Transition Woodbridge](#) – An active community group that aims to strengthen the local economy, reduce the cost of living and prepare for a future with less oil and a changing climate.
15. Woodbridge Emporium – Combining a love of pre-loved books and loose leaf tea to help the community lower its environmental impact while enjoying life.

- Avoid fabrics with plastic in where possible
- Wash less – Only wash clothes when they need it. Items that are not worn close to the skin often do not need washing after just one wear. This will also prolong the life of your clothes
- Fill up your washing machine to the max: washing a full load results in less friction between the clothes and, therefore, less fibres are released.
- Use washing liquid instead of powder: the ‘scrub’ function of the grains of the powder result in loosening the fibres of clothes more than with liquid.
- Wash at a low temperature: when clothes are washed at a high temperature some fabrics are damaged, leading to the release of fibres.
- When cleaning the dryer, do not flush the lint down the drain, throw it in the bin.
- Avoid long washing cycles: long periods of washing cause more friction between fabrics, which can result in more tearing of the fibres.
- Avoid using detergents with a high ph and oxidising agents

13. Liz Ferretti, Writer, Research and development of my novel Samphire Man: A Future History of the UK

Questions from the floor

PQ 1: Has anybody looked at separating plastics automatically rather than by hand manually?

Answer: This has already been done, particularly to separate black plastic food containers.

PQ 2: Can bubble wrap be recycled?

Answer: From www.greensuffolk.org/recycling/a-z-of-recycling/

Reuse: You can use it for insulating wormeries (with air holes) or for packaging fragile items.

Recycle: Clean bubble wrap can be recycled in the plastic bag and film container at any Suffolk Household Waste Recycling Centre.

PQ 3: Are you taking bookings at the Material Recycling Facility?

Answer: Our event is fully booked but you can email waste.management@suffolk.gov.uk to go on the waiting list or book a group visit

PQ 4: Is the PET triangle on products useless?

Answer: Used to identify plastics in the early days of development and now it has become confusing and less useful as more plastics have come into circulation. It is ultimately down to

DEFRA to manage how manufacturers develop these plastics and there are no future plans to bring in restrictions.

PQ 5: The coordinator of Rendlesham show, asked if the council could look into improving the provision of waste & recycling bins at events – they need to be decently signed and it needs to be hard to put the wrong thing in the bin. Previously the show has asked that people only put drinks containers in the recycling bins, but people still failed to separate recycling properly and a volunteer ended up manually sorting the waste – which she can no longer do.

PQ 6: Can't we use volunteers to police what goes into the bins?

Answer: It's difficult to maintain control of this during the evening when events go on over night and even at day time events not all volunteers are committed – some are there for the free tickets.

PQ 7: Hard Plastics: How long before you can recycle these at home rather than HWRCs?

Answer: Unlikely to happen in the near future.

PQ 8: Will the MRF system ever be able to deal with contamination to a rate of 100%

Answer 2: It fluctuates, but generally sits around 90%.

PQ 9: Will the amount of plastic in cars ever be reduced?

Answer: A lot of these plastics are there for safety reasons, manufacturers like Jaguar are looking to use more recyclable plastics. An increasing number of manufacturers are researching other options, but the alternatives need to pass safety tests.

PQ 11: With a soap dispenser, can you recycle the hard plastic pump on top?

Answer: No you can't, due to the material and the embedded spring.

PQ 12: Mixed material packaging, can't this be taxed to a greater degree to prevent it from being made?

Answer: This has been proposed already, a coherent strategy regarding these plastics is coming together.

PQ 13: Shouldn't we develop an environmental audit that we should apply to all plastics that means that non reusable plastics cannot be made?

Answer: Measurements are in place and duties have to be paid on certain types of material and there is a monitoring process on the use of plastics. Unfortunately the Environment Agency does not have the resources to be this kind of large scale regulator.