

Greenprint Forum Plastic Action Felixstowe Event Report

16.3.2018



Thirty people attended the Screening of a Plastic Tide, including the Mayor of Felixstowe. 23 came from Felixstowe, four from Ipswich, one from Trimley St Mary and two from Rendlesham. Speakers included Charlie Zakss from Transition Woodbridge, Dan Wareing volunteer on behalf of the Suffolk Waste Partnership and Debbie Wargate on behalf of the Greenprint Forum.

Thanks go to Sky for supplying the DVD, the Salvation Army for providing the hall, The Bakery Felixstowe for the delicious vegan cookies, Fruit and Flowers for the fruit and the Woodbridge Tea Emporium for the tea. Thanks also to the Town Council, Felixstowe Forward, Plastic Free Felixstowe and all the others who circulated this event and will be circulating the key learning points and most importantly acting to reduce plastic pollution.

Key learning points from the evening:

- Avoidance is best – as long as it does not create another worse form of waste or environmental impact.
- There remains confusion over what can and can't be recycled – people want to do their bit but are unsure exactly what that is. It is therefore vital to communicate locally relevant information and to keep up to date as technologies and opportunities change.
- Keep the conversation alive in all forums but do research the whole environmental and ethical story and ensure messages are locally specific.

If you use social media why not join the Wildlife Gadget Man's #myplasticpromise

- Use less single use plastic

- Go on a rubbish walk
- Encourage others to do the same

And Mark Murphy #planetsuffolk

- A sticker/sign for houses and business to declare Action on Plastic is being taken and why would be useful.
- If a business/organisation has someone who can put out a #2 minute clean up board and keep it topped up with sticks and give bags out the Felixstowe experience is that people do use it and like it.

The questions from the event:

1) What plastic can I compost?

Currently only purely vegetable based that is marked up as EN 13432 and/or that you know all the ingredients that have gone into creating it (remember glue on labels and used to heat seal can be plastic). This standard means: plastics that fully mineralise over reasonable timeframes under the high temperatures and controlled conditions created within industrial composting facilities.

You can only compost it at home and ideally in small quantities in [a hot bin](#) which will reach the higher temperatures needed to break it down. As these are relatively expensive initially you may want to share with neighbors.

Note: It cannot be recycled with other plastics because it is too unstable – so if you don't have a hot bin your best step is avoidance and if you can't avoid it put it in your rubbish bin to go to the energy from waste plant.

2) What is degradable plastic?

Degradable plastic (also called Oxo-degradable) breaks rapidly into little bits of plastic which can then be hard to remove from the environment. It can't be recycled so needs to be placed in your rubbish bin. It must not be allowed to get into nature.

3) What are Biobased plastics? The material or product is (partly) derived from biomass (plants) and partly fossil fuel based. The biomass used for bioplastics comes from corn, sugarcane, or cellulose.

Biobased plastics can either be biodegradable or degradable (see below). For us there is no benefit to either at this time because the product cannot be recycled or composted. These can only go in your rubbish bin to turn into energy from waste

(please do not burn at home as your home fire does not burn hot enough and is not equipped with the advanced removal systems of the energy from waste plant to remove Dioxins, Furans, Mercury and Polychlorinated Biphenyls).

Biobased plastic must not be allowed to get into nature.

4) **What are Biodegradable plastics?** Biodegradation is a chemical process during which microorganisms convert materials into natural substances such as water, carbon dioxide and nutrients. The process of biodegradation depends on the surrounding environmental conditions (e.g. location or temperature), on the material and on the application. The environmental impact depends the former and on the toxicity of additives and the residue that is left.

Note: for products to be used many times or that need a long shelf life you do not want it to biodegrade too soon.

5) **Can you tell when you encounter a starch based plastic, what is the difference?**

No – they feel and look like conventional fossil fuel based plastics. Take Tea Pigs corn starch tea bags for example these feel like plastic but are actually plastic free. NatureFlex looks exactly like other plastic on the market. So ask the question when you buy - or of the manufacturer if the retailer does not know.

6) **Why can't labelling be improved so that we know what to do with the different items?** At this time resource management differs from country to country and county to county: composting, anaerobic or aerobic digestion, energy from waste and landfill etc. The On-Pack Recycling Label ([OPRL](#)) scheme was launched in March 2009 by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) in partnership with [WRAP](#). Under the scheme, packaging is labelled as 'widely recycled', 'check local recycling' and 'not currently recycled'. It uses the well known [recycling arrow swirl](#). This needs looking into further in the context of local businesses.

7) **Is our recycling simply being incinerated?**

No – there is a market for plastics and Viridor make the most of it. They have more value when separated so the council's job is to get it to Viridor at Great Blakenham. This is the first sorting point and after Viridor takes the plastics another site in the UK to be further sorted before they sell them onto the highest bidder for reprocessing. It is a fully auditable process and there are local and global markets for the goods.

8) How stringent are the rules on shipping?

All exports or imports of waste to or from European Union (EU) countries are governed by the EU Waste Shipments Regulation and regulated by the Environment Agency. If anyone is caught breaching these they may be committing a criminal offence and risk prosecution, financial penalties and/or imprisonment. www.gov.uk/guidance/importing-and-exporting-waste

9) Wouldn't it be a good idea if this talk could go to schools?

Absolutely and indeed to other groups and networks. Indeed variations of this have been given over many years through Sharon Lockhart, the Household Waste Recycling Centres education officer, the Suffolk Waste Partnership and through opening up Great Blakenham Recycling Plant and Energy from Waste plant to visitors including school pupils. However we recognise that more needs to be done. We need to increase the manpower for this with limited resources and the Greenprint Forum is currently drafting a proposal to pilot recruiting and training volunteers to carry out this activity. If you are interested in supporting this please indicate this on our Plastic Action Champion form.

Note: The Felixstowe Youth Forum want to spend their budget on tackling plastic pollution and the Town Council has pledge action.

9) What should we do about shampoo?

Three Options are: [Go shampoo free](#)

Buy solid shampoo – think about wider environmental and health implications when selecting. Also consider how you will carry (if you buy a tin from Lush go square not round as the shampoo get stuck in the tin). Sources mentioned during the night: Lush (Ethical Consumer Score 12 – store in Ipswich) and [Friendly Soap](#) (Ethical Consumer Score: 14.5 – based in Todmorden online only).

Make your own shampoo. – Numerous recipes online

10) What should we do about soap?

Move onto bars – remember they are not all made equal and you need to have a good soap dish to keep them nice. You can get vegan bars from Friendly soap online or Dr. Bronner's Pure-Castile Bar Soaps from the East of England Co-op in Felixstowe. Relatively local goat's milk bars were also mentioned <http://www.fulibrochdairy.com/seasonal/soap/> and www.suffolkcraftshop.co.uk/online-shop/goats-milk-soap/

11) What should we do about washing our clothes?

[Soap Nuts](#) can be purchased locally from Poppy's Pantry – supplement with a white vinegar and bicarb mix or soda crystals for really heavy stains also ensure the washing is hung up straight away, ideally outside, to avoid the musty smell. Some people also run a higher temp maintenance wash every now and then for the machine and a higher temp wash for bedding, towels etc. They do currently come in a plastic bag but last for ages so plastic waste is reduced. If you are really keen and want to cut costs completely and reduce the competition for soap nuts try horse chestnuts (conkers), which also contain saponins.

[Ecoleaf](#) can be purchased at Poppy's Pantry and you can get refills. The same with [Ecover](#) (you can also purchase this at the COOP in Felixstowe the bottle is made from recycled plastic.... But they don't do refills).

12) What bags should carers and other medical staff be putting healthcare related waste in?

Households: check: <http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/waste/waste-collections-and-disposal/clinical-waste/>

Incontinence waste, nappies, soiled pads, catheters and emptied bags, emptied colostomy and stoma bags etc. do not need specialist collection and should be double-bagged and placed in your residual wheeled bin for normal collection.

There are certain types of waste arising from home treatments i.e., home dialysis or infectious waste that requires specialist collection and treatment **The yellow bag waste stream** specifically queried at the event is for waste items that are potentially infectious and chemically contaminated (e.g. dialysis bags and tubes which may have blood in, some samples and diagnostic kits). You can obtain these bags from Suffolk Coastal Norse – call 01394 383789 to make the initial enquiry – they will be dropped off and picked up weekly on a Friday before midday and taken to the incinerator.

Sharps and needles should never be placed in any wheeled bin and should always be securely contained (in a sharps container) for removal by your healthcare provider or returned to your Health Care Centre. Collection by the District Council can be arranged, but may be subject to a charge.

Facilities generating high quantities may want to look to other options on the market such as: http://www.sterimedsystems.com/why_us.html , <http://www.tesalys.fr/en/>,

Aside: What do we do about unwanted NHS provided healthcare equipment?

Unwanted NHS provided healthcare equipment such as crutches and wheelchairs can be taken back to Medequip's collection depots in Bury St Edmunds, Beccles and Ipswich. Contact Medequip for further details or to arrange a collection either by phone 01473 351805 or email suffolk@medequip-uk.com.

In addition to this you can currently take healthcare equipment to three of Suffolk's Household Waste Recycling Centres (Bury St Edmunds, Foxhall and Lowestoft) where they are collected for return to the NHS. Please ask site staff where these items need to be placed.

In 2017 a Suffolk wide month long campaign triggered the return of 8,500 items with an estimated value of more than £800,000.

13) Can we make a plastic sculpture in the town?

There are many artists creating artwork for all media to raise awareness which is excellent – Locally Fran Crowe has created a [Museum of Beyond](#) to go into schools and [Margaret Wylie](#) is working with the Greenprint Forum to create a sculpture for Art on the Prom. The Wildlife Gadget Man is working with other local artists on the spirit of Beowulf festival in Woodbridge – they are creating a dragon made out of plastics that can't easily be recycled locally – things like cat food pouches, crisp packets and biscuit wrappers.

14) Is anyone approaching the supermarkets to get them to cut waste?

They are facing national pressure. Letter writing from customers, campaigning groups and MPs and competition – with some introducing plastic free aisles and Iceland promising to go plastic free enabling people to vote with their feet.

15) What is our MP Dr Therese Coffey doing? She represents Suffolk Coastal, is Environment Minister and has pledged to cut single use plastic and has started by carrying around a reusable water bottle.

16) What about plastic in our clothes?

Research into this is underway – Debbie Wargate is researching at the moment for herself and then where new items are required slowly switching to organic, fairly traded and animal aware alternatives or recycled plastic for clothes like coats which are not washed regularly and need to be waterproof. They will be more expensive – we currently pay far too little for our clothes and do not value them enough as a result. This means buying less and getting them repaired to ensure they last a long

time. How we pay fairly yet help to make them affordable for those on very tight budgets needs to be explored.

17) **Wildlife Gadget Man** – Woodbridge Spirit of Beowulf festival – Scruff the Plastic Dragon: a dragon made out of plastics – there will be a request from the public for materials to create the dragon on <https://rubbishwalks.co.uk/> once the site goes live.

18) **What reusable travel cup works best?**

Bamboo Cups were mentioned with a mixed audience reaction – some loved them, some had found they did not work, some were concerned about the plastic lids and sleeves (food-grade [silicone](#) (bonded silicon and oxygen).

This needs further exploration.

19) Where did the statistic '**40% of the plastic that is being consumed is single use plastic' come from?** This is a European figure from https://www.plasticseurope.org/application/files/5715/1717/4180/Plastics_the_facts_2017_FINAL_for_website_one_page.pdf

In 2000 it was estimated that half of all the plastic produced in the UK was for single use (Hopewell, Dvorak & Kosier, 2009)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2873020/#RSTB20080311C32>

(Based on 2000 data gathered by [Waste Watch](#))

20) **What can be done to help local businesses cut waste and recycle effectively?**

The Greenprint Forum is currently applying for funds and resources to enable us to work with businesses and support organisations to see if suitable solutions can be found and as this develops we will keep our members informed. As individuals we can support those businesses that are trying to cut plastic waste by shopping there and Plastic Free Felixstowe will be meeting in the next few months to help move this forward.

21) **Are there enough bins on Felixstowe beach?** The ideal scenario is no bins as everyone either does not produce any waste or takes their waste home (certainly I always did) – however as people do want to use bins and don't like walking far there are a great number all along the prom. Personally I think this is more than sufficient.

22) **What are Transition Towns?**

Towns that want to work together to build their resilience to withstand shock from the outside, provide local opportunities and meet local needs locally (food,

materials, energy etc..) and do so in a way that means future generations can meet their needs. They use creativity to catalyse and support rather than own projects.

<https://transitionnetwork.org/>

Local company [Hodemedods](#) was born out of a Transitions initiative in Norwich.

Transition Woodbridge, Greener Fram and Greener Rendlesham all have their roots in the Transition movement and attended training from Transition Totness and hosted by the Greenprint Forum many years ago. They can include action on plastic while taking in much wider into the full social and environmental

At least five people expressed an interest in starting up a local Transition Group. **Debbie Wargate** to forward details to **Martin Catchpole**.

Other issues raised that are not related to plastic but to the wider waste topic:

1) What is happening to the mixed paper?

- First as with everything try to reduce use. Tip from Recycling A to Z: “The Mailing Preference Service will prevent most unsolicited addressed mail by removing your name from marketing lists based in the UK - Visit their website at www.mpsonline.org.uk or phone 0845 703 4599. To stop the Royal Mail posting unaddressed mail to your home, you must opt out of their service. Contact them at: Freepost RRBT-ZBXB-TTTS, Royal Mail Door to Door Opt Outs, Kingsmead House, Oxpens Road OXFORD, OX1 1RX or email: optout@royalmail.com”
- Second ensure that you do not put anything with water or food into your recycling bag as this contaminates paper and card and makes it unsuitable for recycling – think greasy pizza boxes to understand why: grease from pizza boxes causes oil to form at the top of the slurry stopping paper fibres from separating effectively during the pulping process. This can cause whole batches to be ruined wasting resources. To see the process go to: <https://www.recyclenow.com/what-to-do-with/paper-0> - remember no household waste in Suffolk goes to landfill.
- Thirdly do not put shredded paper, hole punchings, napkins, egg boxes, tissues or any other short fibred papers/cards into recycling – why? The fibres are too short to turn into anything useful. Instead avoid, or compost at home, or put in your brown bin, or as a last resort, put in the bin destined to turn waste into energy.