

Somerset – moving forward in fight against plastic

14th May 2018

Background

Public concern about plastic consumption and, in particular, waste plastic polluting the natural environment has been increasing for some time. In 2017 David Attenborough's Blue Planet carried striking images of marine life affected by waste plastic, which heightened awareness still further.

While most plastic pollution of the kind seen in The Blue Planet emanates from poorer countries with less access to the kind of waste management infrastructure we take for granted, there is much we can do. SWP, along with our partner authorities, are proud to be able to take a leading role in reducing Somerset's plastic consumption.



SWP has already responded to this concern by making plastic waste a key focus of the recently launched Schools Against Waste programme, which funds 90 half day specialist education sessions for primary schools in Somerset.

This briefing outlines our next steps, including three new progressive initiatives that will enable local residents to act against plastic waste.

Working in Partnership

The response to the plastic problem from Somerset's Local Authorities has been uniformly positive, with motions adopted to reduce or eliminate single use plastic and a commitment to working collaboratively to tackle the problem. Guided by our Strategic Management Group, consisting of a senior officer from each partner authority, SWP is supporting these initiatives by co-ordinating waste related media coverage and ensuring messages compliment rather than compete with each-other, to foster a single, consolidated Local Authority approach to tackling waste plastic in the county.

Strategic Communications

SWP has developed a Communications Plan, with a horizon of the end of the year, which takes a community based approach to optimising our messages. We have identified 12 stakeholder groups with varying interests in the issue and will target communications at each of them to encourage reduction in consumption and increase in recycling.

New Initiatives

This strategic communication approach is being launched with three new key initiatives:

- All sixteen Recycling Centres in Somerset now accept food and drink Pots, Tubs and Trays (PTT) for recycling.
- SWP has launched a new *Pledge Against Preventable Plastic* to steer residents towards some of the easy, every day changes they can make to reduce the amount of plastic they use.
- SWP has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to become the local co-ordinators for the national Refill Campaign.

Pots, Tubs and Trays (PTT) at Recycling Centres

This difficult to sort and recycle plastic can now be deposited in the same skips as plastic bottles at all 16 Somerset Recycling Centres, providing concerned householders with a convenient solution while we await the launch of Recycle More kerbside collections (due to roll out from 2020).

Pots, Tubs and Trays Q and A

Why are we doing this?

With Recycle More on the horizon (scheduled to commence roll out from early 2020), bringing wider recycling to kerbside collections, and people more concerned than ever before about the impact of plastic on the natural environment, SWP is keen to offer a solution for residents who want to do more now.

Not only will these facilities offer people the opportunity to recycle a wider range of plastic at a convenient, local recycling site, it will also give them the chance to see what a dramatic impact recycling pots, tubs and trays will make on slimming their bins.

Signage is being installed at all sites and media releases and social media promotion will begin week commencing Monday 14th May.

What plastics can you take to Recycling Centres for recycling?



As well as all household plastic bottles (including drink bottles, bathroom bottles and bottles for household cleaning products, as collected at kerbside) the centres will also accept food and drink pots, tubs and trays such as yoghurt pots, fruit punnets and meat trays. This will include hard to recycle black plastic packaging. All should be rinsed free of residues, with tops taken off bottles.

We cannot take plastic film, plastic toys, bottle tops or non-household items like plant pots.

What will happen to the plastic collected?

All of it will be recycled. When the plastic skips are full the materials will be taken to be sorted in Viridor's Taunton Material Recycling Facility before being sent on for reprocessing. As ever our preference is for re-processors in the UK. Some may go abroad but only via reliable and trustworthy routes.

Pledge Against Preventable Plastic

Plastic is so prolific in high street packaging that it's hard for consumers to simply cut it out entirely, leaving many people concerned about the environment and wondering what they can do.

The SWP Pledge Against Preventable Plastic consists of six tips and hints that everyone can do easily today to have a real plastic reduction impact.

The pledge is available either as a postcard sized flier, with the pledge on the front and a handy kerbside recycling reminder on the back, or electronically for inclusion in local newsletters and updates.

To request bulk copies to distribute, or the electronic version (useful for parish newsletters and other community publications), e-mail enquiries@somersetwaste.gov.uk

My Pledge Against Preventable Plastic

- ✓ **Remember your things to bring:** bag for life; reusable water bottle; coffee cup.
- ✓ **Ignore the straw:** sip from the glass.
- ✓ **Choose to re-use:** no plastic cutlery; take condiments from a bottle or pot—never a sachet!
- ✓ **Be a local litter hero:** organise a beach, street or park litter pick in your community; if you see litter on the road proudly pick it up and bin it.
- ✓ **Say yes to less:** only pick the packaging you really need; buy loose fruit/veg; avoid unrecyclable black plastic.
- ✓ **Lobby locally:** let local shops and businesses know what's important to you, ask them what they can do to help.

Do what you can. Every little helps!

*Printed on 100% recycled paper

 Somerset Waste Partnership

Tell us when you've pledged @  /somersetwaste

Refill Campaign

Somerset Waste Partnership has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to become the lead organisation in the national Refill campaign, encouraging shops and other high-street outlets to offer free water refills of reusable bottles. It is hoped this will cut single use plastic water bottles consumption by making it easier to find a free source of refreshing water when out and about.

The Somerset campaign to sign up outlets will be launched in the coming months. In the meantime see the Refill website for more details. www.refill.org.uk