

## **Newton Abbot bags Award for reducing Single-use Plastic- simply Fantastic!!**



<https://www.facebook.com/plasticfreenewton/>

HURRAY we've done it! Plastic-Free Newton Abbot (PFNA) is Awarded 'Plastic Free Communities' Status for our action around Single-Use Plastic by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), a marine conservation charity. Good old Newton Abbot has joined a network of over 700 communities across the UK leading the way in tackling throw-away plastics at source. A truly community-wide effort in Newton Abbot has helped us achieve this accolade. A massive thank-you to everyone supporting us along the journey from 2019, through COVID to May 2021. Not easy times to be campaigning, however, we carried on, our efforts have now been rewarded.

Our campaign kicked off in June 2019 when a group of local campaigners, along with Town Development Manager Sally Henley, and the indefatigable Ben Bryant of Community Action Devon signed up to the SAS Plastic Free Communities 5 point plan. Buoyed up by the success of other South Devon groups already accredited, we saw the positive impact on their communities. The SAS plan pulls together key organisations and businesses initiating a community led steering group, the SAS Plastic Free Schools education programme, local council commitment as well as working with local businesses, organisations and community groups to spread the word and minimise the amount of disposable plastics they use.

Local businesses were already on a mission to find alternatives to damaging throw-away plastics. We simply needed to acknowledge on-going efforts and support them in the next phase of the challenge. We are working with Westaways, who during the campaign received a prestigious recycled packaging award for their innovations. Market-based owners of the Stoneman's Deli and Cressicks became two of our early business champions for their efforts on reducing plastic. Other champions are: Express Pasta Company; Pharmacy Café; Indulgence Tearooms; The Country Table; The Other Cup; Coffee#1; No Limits Community Cafe & Hub; Lemon Jelli; The Waffle Inn; Glebe Cottage Studios. We will be featuring them individually in the next few months.

How did we do it? Well via our popular litter picks, featuring kayaks as well as dry-land collection!, joined by local councillors, local journalist John Balment, of the Mid-Devon Advertiser, featured the issue in his regular column, after joining us on a pick at Decoy, stalls in the town centre, many talks to local organisations, film showings, joining University Technical College (UTC) students in plastics initiatives at the college, plus a Mass Unwrap event at local supermarkets were all part of our extensive programme. One early highlight was the visit of SW author, Ellie Jackson to a number of local primary schools. Children were captivated by the story of the turtle Duffy who swallowed plastic rubbish thrown into the sea. Don't worry she survives the ordeal!

Shout out to Alison Hannah at the UTC for offering the college and its facilities as a hub for the PFNA activities, getting the campaign rolling, to Sally Henley for her on-going support, our Steering Group for guiding us throughout, special mention for Emily Farrell of the CIC for all her super support. To TDC and DCC councillors Jackie Hook and Alistair Dewhirst for their encouragement, and not forgetting Lizzie Turner Recycling Officer at TDC. Finally to staff at Community Action Group Devon for their support.

We are simply over the moon to receive this award on behalf of the town. It recognises the strength of feeling and work being done in Newton Abbot to stem the vast tide of single-use plastics. Co-ordinator Betina Winkler says, *“so impressed by the engagement from so many people in our town. Well done Newton Abbot , take a bow! Of course this is just the start. We are all determined to do much more .”*

Betina emphasizes, *“ It was vital to have the backing of the national SAS Plastic-Free Communities campaign. Their programme framework helped shape our local campaigning. Some great materials and plenty of guidance are on offer too. An excellent programme we could recommend to any community thinking of going down the same route.”*

More information:

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Surfers Against Sewage: [www.sas.org.uk](http://www.sas.org.uk)

**Plastic Free Communities** is an ambitious community initiative designed to unite and empower individuals, small businesses, local government and community groups to reduce their collective plastic footprint and protect the environment together. Driven by inspirational local volunteers, we are building a new and exciting community movement tackling single-use plastics and plastic litter in our villages, towns, cities and rural locations. This highly inclusive initiative, created for all ages and backgrounds, is designed to get the whole community active and do something positive to reduce the amount of plastic in the local environment. We believe that united communities lead to cleaner beaches, streets, parks and riverbanks.

The Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Community network aims to free the places where we live from single-use. Using the five point plan the aim is to empower communities to kick start local grassroots action, which can then be built upon.

The marine conservation charity, based in St Agnes in Cornwall, says it wants to unite communities to tackle avoidable plastic from the beach all the way back to the brands and businesses who create it. It says it is not about removing all plastic from our lives, but kicking our addiction to throwaway plastic and changing the system that produces it.

Rachel Yates, SAS Plastic Free Communities Project Manager, said: “It’s great to see the work that Newton Abbot has done to reduce the availability of avoidable plastics, raise awareness and encourage people to refill and reuse.

“We have over seven hundred communities across the UK working to reduce single use plastic and the impact it has on our environment. Every step those communities and the individuals in them take is a step towards tackling the problem at source, challenging our throwaway culture and encouraging the habit and system changes we need to see.”