

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Longstanton and Northstowe lead the way in Cambridgeshire as they are Awarded 'Plastic Free Communities' Status as they take action on single-use plastic.

Longstanton and Northstowe has joined a network of communities across the UK who are leading the way to tackle throw away plastic at source. In a Cambridgeshire first, the area has been awarded Plastic Free Community status by marine conservation charity, Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), in recognition of the work it has done to start reducing the impact of single-use plastic on the environment.

Local campaigner, Chris Poultney started working on this in 2019 after visiting Cornwall on holiday and was inspired by all the actions that were being taken to remove single use plastic and make changes.

Registering with the SAS Plastic Free Communities movement, Chris pulled together key organisations and businesses in the local area to put in place a five-point plan. The objectives included; setting up a community led steering group, instigating the SAS Plastic Free Schools education programme, getting local council commitment and working with local businesses, organisations and community groups to spread the word and minimise the amount of disposable plastics they use.

Chris said "I'm delighted how people have got involved and made a real difference in the local area. There is so much good work already happening to reduce single use plastic in Longstanton and Northstowe. It has been really inspiring to see people out litter picking, businesses and schools making changes, and new businesses starting to offer refill and other plastic free initiatives"

Libby White, the Clerk to Longstanton Parish Council said "The Parish Council is committed to supporting residents, local organisations and businesses to become plastic free. We could not have done this without Chris' determination to get this initiative up and running so quickly. We all know what we need to do, just sometimes we need that extra incentive to get it done and have the support to know we are doing the right thing".

Firouz Thompson, owner of Northstowe Foodies explained how easy it has been to convert the food trucks attending Northstowe to being single use plastic-free. Most truck owners have already started the process of eliminating single use plastic by replacing take away boxes, cutlery and napkins with recyclable/biodegradable options. Their main aim is to work with their suppliers to reduce the avoidable use of plastic within their supply chains. Firouz said "We are very proud to have announced the first 5 nationally awarded SAS champions for food trucks, well done to The Cook's Nest, Nanna Mexico, Pimp my Fish, Pizza Passione and The Wandering Yak for leading the way".

Carole Moss, Headteacher of Northstowe Secondary School commented "We are very pleased that our community has come together on this very important issue that our young people feel very strongly about. This is the start of the journey as we continue to educate, encourage and involve ourselves in reducing and removing single use plastics as our community grows. We are proud of this achievement as it shows what can be done when we all work together."

In December and February, members of a community sustainability group arranged for a pop-up refill station stall in the main Northstowe square to sell cleaning and personal hygiene products in containers costumers brought from home. On both occasions there was a great turn out from residents from the local area and surroundings, helping save about 180 bottles. After such successful pilots, the organisers decided that the refill station should come back on a monthly basis.

Chris concludes: "Obtaining the Plastic Free Community status wasn't easy, it was 18 months of hard work. In some ways it's just the start as there is still plenty to do locally to work with schools, businesses and the community to remove single use plastic. The SAS award has given us a great base to work from and has helped to build a network of people that are keen to make a difference. There's a lot of energy and ambition to take this further, keep connecting people and groups together, and keep moving it on. It's an ongoing journey and of course the area isn't completely plastic free. We'll keep working on it!"

The Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Community network aims to free the places where we live from single-use plastic. 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 Longstanton and Northstowe have done to reduce the availability of avoidable plastics, raise awareness and encourage people to refill and reuse.

"We have over six 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."

More information:

Chris Poultney, Community Lead, Plastic Free Longstanton and Northstowe
plasticfreeLandN@Gmail.com

Plastic Free Longstanton and Northstowe: [Plastic Free Longstanton & Northstowe](#)

Plastic Free Communities: www.plasticfree.org.uk

Surfers Against Sewage: 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.