

Plastic reduction in Cittaslow UK towns



'Plastic Beach' an assemblage of found plastic objects by Peter Mearns

Cittaslow towns across the world are grappling with the global problem of plastic pollution and how to reduce our reliance on plastics and recycle those plastics that are used. Here in the UK, the Cittaslow network of small towns - Aylsham, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Llangollen and Mold - share their experiences of how to improve environmental sustainability with one another. The Plastic Free Llangollen group is working with several retailers in their town to offer plastic free shopping, and are advising Mold on simple ways to reduce the use of single-use plastic bottles, such as refill schemes. The Sea of Change group is now registered to lead on Plastic Free Berwick, you can read more about their plastic-free options in this newsletter.

The following article written by students George Hinson and Theo Pagan for Aylsham High School's 'Present Tense' magazine, gives an insight into the way some young people in Aylsham would like to reduce plastic contamination.

The last straw

Is it too late to end plastic pollution? Our planet is under a huge environmental strain due to the colossal consumption of single-use plastics and burning of fossil fuels which contribute to the ever-rising levels of CO₂. Since the 1950s, a staggering 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic have been produced, leading to contamination of the oceans and land. Even so-called 'biodegradable' plastics are constructed from minute particles of plastics held together with organic plant starches. When this rots, the starch decomposes and releases the plastic particles into the environment. These micro plastics are consumed by primary consumers such as plankton, which in turn are consumed by larger organisms in the life cycle. Gradually, the concentrations of plastic build up in predators, with detrimental effects on the animals' health.

According to a 2016 report by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, it is estimated that there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish by 2050.

We need to start making changes for the benefit of future generations by asking ourselves if the plastic straws, cotton buds, disposable cups and the colossal amount of food packaging we use daily are really necessary. Plastic straws alone are thought by the campaign group Refuse the Straw to take over 200 years to decompose; 8.5 billion straws are consumed by the UK alone each year! The total plastic waste the UK produces in a year is 31 million tonnes. We can all help reduce this by making small changes to our everyday lives: avoid using plastic bags, bottles, disposable cups, cotton buds, plastic straws, and instead, use the widely available alternatives.

At Aylsham High School, all events cutlery and crockery is reusable, we have biodegradable coffee stirrers and recyclable coffee cups, while plastics are recycled whenever possible.

A drastic change needs to take place in this world. Discussing these issues simply isn't enough anymore, we all need to take action, even if it is as simple as using a paper straw.



Speakers at a plastic reduction event - Sarah Pratt (Mold), Mair Davies (Llangollen), and Hannah Blythyn AM (former Welsh Environment Minister)

IN THIS ISSUE

Aylsham celebrates pancakes.....	2	Meet the Producers' event, Llangollen	3
Mold Spring Clean.....	2	Plastic Free Berwick.....	4





Enjoying delicious pancakes in Aylsham

Aylsham celebrates pancakes

It may have been the classic lemon and sugar, or the maple syrup, maybe honey, or chocolate spread, lemon curd . . . or even sprinkles, but they all loved the Pancake Breakfast organised by Cittaslow Aylsham with help from their Slow Food friends.

Despite a downturn in the weather, people flocked to the monthly Farmers' Market in the Town Square and popped in to the Town Hall where Slow Food and Cittaslow volunteers helped prepare and serve scores of pancakes to families and shoppers.

Children particularly took advantage of the three toppings option and 'built' their pancakes around marshmallow towers or puddles of chocolate spread. Many 'young at heart' had their own ideas but the most popular was still the traditional lemon and sugar.

Patrick Prekopp, Chair of Slow Food Aylsham said it had been a thoroughly enjoyable and successful morning. "So many people turned up, despite the rain, that we had run out of pancakes by 11.30am. But I think everyone went away happy and it was great to be involved in an event which appealed to all ages."

Mold Spring Clean – Springy's 10th birthday

The annual Spring Clean in Mold this April will celebrate the 10th birthday of Springy, Mold Town Council's much loved Spring Clean mascot. There will be a special birthday focus during the four-day event to encourage more of the community, especially young people, to get involved.

Every year the initiative has seen over 700 volunteers taking part, along with many businesses, which is very encouraging. Last year around 80% of Mold was cleaned, with over 300 bags of rubbish collected. The Spring Clean goes beyond litter picking, it is about pride in the town, with street furniture being repaired and refurbished, flower beds planted, edible herbs planted in barrier baskets, and scrub clearance.

Volunteers representing all parts of the community are involved including schools, local groups, businesses and residents of Mold. They go out in groups with opportunities for everyone to participate.

Financial constraints on Flintshire County Council (FCC) mean that it no longer has the resources for big environmental projects like the River Alyn clean ups. Which makes the efforts of willing local volunteers even more



Springy, Mold Spring Clean mascot and Dave Hill, Mold Town Manager

important in tackling some of the 'grot spots', assisted by FCC, Keep Wales Tidy and North Wales Wildlife Trust. The generous time given by the volunteers makes Mold Spring Clean financially sustainable for Mold Town Council to organize.

Residents and businesses can say where they'd like cleaning through an annual environmental audit. People are encouraged to suggest sites through publicity in local newspapers, the Cittaslow newsletter and market stall, web sites and social media. And those that can are also encouraged to join in!

Mold Spring Clean is a useful way of engaging with local schools, with practical examples of how we can all play our part in protecting our environment from pollution and making the town a pleasant place to live, work and play in.

The national award winning scheme shares best practice with other smaller community councils, and Mold Town Council will lend them equipment to carry out their out clean up campaigns. But Springy stays at home in Mold!



PSA staff ready to litter pick with Springy



A new food waste revolution comes to Berwick

The Northern Soul kitchen is a Berwick-upon-Tweed project converting waste food into delicious and affordable meals. Edible food is saved from going into the bin and turned into tasty buffets, canapes and nutritious meals.

So, what is it all about? Every year the UK throws away 10 million tonnes of food. Not only is that a terrible waste of food but it also costs households a fortune, not to mention the increased pressure on waste and recycling plants. Much of this food ends up in landfill producing harmful methane gas and adding to the problem of global warming.

Local businesses are continuing to support the venture by donating their unsold food. Other support has been given by local

contractors who helped to transform a former retail shop into a popular café. Not only helping the environment, offering a welcome and affordable place to be enjoyed, but also occupying what was an empty shop. Grants from organisations and a successful crowdfunding campaign enabled the necessary transformation to take place and the kitchen to open on schedule.

The kitchen is seen as a community hub offering a friendly space to enjoy a meal and share food and money saving tips. Everything cooked in the kitchen is made from waste food and is offered on a pay as you feel basis meaning that everyone can afford a hot and healthy meal. An envelope comes with your food and the diner places whatever cash is felt to be appropriate into the envelope for their food and possibly the food of other participants too.

Northern Soul also offers workshops for local groups on subjects such as healthy eating on a budget and making the most of leftovers.

It continues to be a popular venue and with the skills of the staff, the volunteers and local tradesmen making it a special place.



A warm welcome at the Northern Soul kitchen

Meet the producer event in North East Wales

Over 100 local hospitality businesses of all sizes attended a Blas Lleol Meet the Producer event, organised by the Llangollen & Dee Valley Good Grub Club and the Clwydian Range Food & Drink group in early March. The two food groups work together to increase the availability and visibility of locally produced food and drink across North East Wales, supporting Cittaslow efforts in Llangollen and Mold to promote local produce and products.

This year's event was held at Ruthin Castle Hotel and funded by Flintshire and Denbighshire County Councils. It provided an opportunity for regional restaurants, pubs, cafes and food retail businesses to sample food and drink produced by Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham businesses. This year 24 food and drink producers hosted stalls showing off traditional baked goods and gluten-free variations, meat products, a range of vegan options, locally produced ciders, beers, gins and liqueurs, ice-cream and more. Business support organisations including Business Wales, Development Bank of Wales and Welsh for Business also hosted stands, providing producer and hospitality businesses with the opportunity to discuss ideas for growth, development or diversification. Robert Dowell-Brown, head chef at Nant Y Felin Restaurant and demo chef for the event kept buyers' mouths watering throughout showing off locally sourced ideas for breakfast, lunch and canapes.

Robyn Lovelock, one of the organisers from the Good Grub Club and Chair of Cittaslow Llangollen, said "It was a fantastic event that truly showed off the range and quality of products we have in our region. Whether buyers were looking for large, long-term contracts or just to replace a few key products with a locally-sourced alternative, we've been able to get them talking and doing business with the producers themselves - helping keep more money in our local economy".



Mouth watering produce at a Meet the Producer event





Llangollen Cittaslow meetings

The Cittaslow Committee of Llangollen Town Council has been reaching out to clubs within the town to learn more about their work and plans, to re-engage them with Cittaslow, and to better understand what support they would like from the Cittaslow committee and the Town Council.

The Committee has hosted two of three community networking evenings each based around two Cittaslow themes, bringing together groups interested in those themes. The third will be held in April. Both evenings so far have been well attended with enthusiasm for the idea of Cittaslow acting as an “umbrella” for town groups. Support requested included help securing funding for town projects, and Cittaslow providing space for networking, innovation and coordination. Cittaslow members will meet in April to discuss how to take these introductory meetings forward.



Plastic Free Berwick Campaign is launched

The Sea of Change group, which operates on either side of the Scottish border, is supporting an initiative by a Berwick milkman to re-introduce glass milk bottles and the traditional milk round.

Milk will be delivered to the door twice a week and the empties collected and carted away to be recycled in the traditional way and no plastic cartons or bottles to throw away!

After a talk given to Berwick Town Councillors Sea of Change is now registered to lead on a Plastic Free Berwick. The idea of going plastic free is overwhelming because plastic is everywhere. The positive responses from local businesses, local shops and the library is encouraging. For this campaign to be successful it is necessary to engage with schools and local communities to build awareness and help people to make small but incremental changes and a plastic free Berwick will be achieved.

Pancake fun in Mold

Over twenty teams raced in the Mold Pancake Races on Shrove Tuesday, with an enthusiastic crowd watching and cheering them on. The extra strong pancakes, donated by Spavens, were tossed – and dropped – onto Daniel Owen Square during the relay style races.

Runners had to toss their pancakes three times, whilst running a length of the Square, before passing their pan, pancake and apron onto the next person in their team.

Tate and Lyle were the fastest adult team at 51 seconds, and Team Six from Ysgol Glanrafon won the children’s races with a time of 1.06 minutes. The event was organised by Cittaslow Mold and Mold Town Council with help from Mold and District Rotary Club.

