

Plastic Free Ferring

It is hard to imagine that anyone was not totally shocked by the recent David Attenborough series Blue Planet and the horrific evidence of plastic pollution in our oceans. The scale is so vast it can be hard to imagine what we as individuals can do. Certainly prompt and meaningful action by governments and manufacturers is essential, if we stop producing plastic bottles and packaging then it can't be dumped in the environment. There is some heartening evidence that measures such as bottle return schemes, and bans on microbeads along with plastic straws and cutlery are going to be introduced soon.

But ultimately the responsibility rests with us, the consumer. We purchase the single use plastic drink bottles, water bottles, milk cartons, pre packed fruit and vegetables etc. Hopefully most of us are responsible and recycle them, trusting that our local authority dispose of them in the proper manner. Sadly not everyone does, the evidence is lying around in the rife and on our beach. The Pantiles ditch is regularly used as a dump for plastic bottles despite being just 2 metres from a bin. The village green, arguably the heart of the community, is constantly strewn with bottles, beer cans, fast food packaging, sweet papers and cigarette ends

Living in a fairly small village does offer a very real advantage, it is entirely possible that we as residents can take matters into our own hands and eliminate single use plastic from our community. Independent businesses are far more likely to respond to customer pressure and stop stocking single use plastic bottles if we refuse to buy them. There are plenty of soft drinks that come in glass bottles, cans or tetra packs that can be recycled. Bottled water is a complete waste of money and as recent tests has shown that many well known brands are contaminated with micro particles of plastic. Buy your family reusable drink containers and use tap water, you have already paid for that! We can train ourselves to use alternatives to single use plastic bottles.

Ferring is fortunate in still having milk deliveries, so consider getting your milk and fruit juice in glass bottles delivered to your door. Glass is recycled on average 25 times before being melted down and reused.

Our local cafes and pubs can be asked to stop serving drinks with plastic straws ahead of any national ban. Our independent shops can be asked not to use plastic bags to wrap meat and vegetable, there are already cellulose based materials on the market which can be composted. You can always take along your own reusable plastic container when visiting the local butcher. Even supermarkets such as Tesco's and Morrison's are happy for you to use your own container at their deli counters. Yes, some of these changes may cost us a little more, having your milk delivered costs a few pennies more than supermarket milk, compostable packaging may add 1-2 p to your shop but how much is it worth to stop filling our seas with potentially toxic non biodegradable rubbish.

We are very fortunate in Ferring that the Conservation Group, the Scouts and the Bluebird café all carry out beach and Rife cleanups. The point though is that no-one should have to do this if it wasn't for our love affair with single use plastic items. People are now in the habit of taking a reusable shopping bag with them and no one seriously misses plastic carriers, we manage perfectly well without them. The regular Ferring Market is an excellent example of this as everyone brings their own shopping bag.

In the near future the Parish Council are hoping to have drinking water taps / water fountain installed on the village green and at the beach, so there will be no need for bottled water.

Ultimately we could aim to become a plastic free community, joining the growing number of other UK villages who have decided to take this route. The Parish Council will be discussing how we might take this project forward and we would love to hear from people about their ideas to make the elimination of single use plastic a reality. Please email us on ferring-pc@btconnect.com if you are interested in participating.