

# THE COMBROKE EC<sub>H</sub>O

**MAKING COMBROKE EVEN GREENER!**



## **CCCC hold first meeting!**

**OCTOBER 2019**

Thank you to everyone who came to the inaugural meeting of the Combroke Climate Change Club (aka CCCC) held on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October. The first meeting focused on plastic, and we talked about ways to reduce our plastic consumption, and learned a little bit about our recycling system. We talked beeswax wraps, dog poo and compost (amongst other things!)

Litter-picking at the beach? Photograph credit Friends of the Earth

## **Plastic – what’s the problem?**

Unless you have already decided that earth is doomed and have relocated to an alternative planet, it is impossible to have missed all the talk about plastic lately...so what’s the problem? And why the sudden interest from the world’s press?

Well David Attenborough must be thanked for bringing the issue of plastic in our oceans to our attention.

The success (or otherwise) rates of recycling have also been highlighted. In short, the human race has created an inordinate amount of plastic since the start of mass production back in the 1950’s, and the fact is that much of it is still around...in landfill, in our oceans, in our wildlife, in our bodies...Plastic does not go away. Ever.

Continued on page 2

### *IN THIS ISSUE*

**RECYCLE – IF YOU MUST**

**YOUR PETS CAN HELP SAVE THE PLANET TOO!**

**WHAT’S GREAT ABOUT BAMBOO?**

## PLASTIC, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Continued from front page.

Most of the plastic that has ever been made in the world is still here, somewhere. Some of it has been recycled but not very much at all really. In fact only 9% has been recycled. Some has been burned, the rest is still sitting around somewhere, much of it in our oceans, in whales' stomachs, in the world's fish (some of which we eat), and in landfill.

Meanwhile we are still producing the stuff at an alarming rate. 320 billion tonnes per year in fact.

Plastic is made using fossil fuels – bad news. It uses a lot of energy to be made. It gets everywhere. It's in our toiletries (and not just in the packaging, until relatively recently, some cosmetic and toiletry manufacturers used microbeads of plastic as 'exfoliants' in their products. These get washed down the plughole and into our waterways.

The list goes on. But enough bad news, this is supposed to be a positive news newspaper! Thanks to all the coverage, it made sense to make plastic the focus of our first Climate Change Club meeting, and we came up with lots of little ideas that together can make a big difference. Have a look above for some of them....why not pick one (or more if you're feeling keen) and make one small change? Try to choose something that you can easily incorporate into your life. There's no point in resolving to visit the farm shop for all of your fruit and vegetables if it's a 10 mile trip out of your way. Enthusiasm will soon wain if it's a hassle....and don't forget to tell us all about it!

## Don't let your pets miss out on the chance to reduce their carbon pawprint

### Pet food

Single servings of cat and dog food wrapped in plastic-aluminium pouches are really convenient. But billions of them are ending up in landfill each year. (Fewer than 1 in 20,000 food pouches are recycled.)

Buying paper-wrapped dried food in bulk is a better option, or wet food in recyclable aluminium trays and tins instead of pouches.



### Use biodegradable poop bags!

There are approximately 9 million pet dogs in the UK. They produce 1,000 tonnes of excrement a day...that's a lot of poo – which means a mountain of plastic poop bags. So should you buy biodegradable and compostable ones? The easy answer is yes. They're immediately more environmentally friendly because they're made from plant starch instead of climate-changing petroleum. However biodegradable bags need oxygen and light to break down, (of which there is very little in landfill where most poop bags end up), so they will still be around for ages. There isn't a perfect solution right now, but these are much better than plastic.

## REDUCE, RE-USE AND AS A LAST RESORT, RECYCLE

Given that we are creating plastic considerably faster than we are safely disposing of the stuff, it makes sense to try to reduce our use of it in the first place. By buying less, we are lowering demand and if everyone demands less, then eventually (hopefully sooner rather than later) less will be produced. It's our demand for plastic and the convenience and financial savings that it provides that has created the problem in the first place.



Join the slow ketchup movement and go back to glass!

### REDUCE:

Is there an alternative packaging available for the same product, for example tomato ketchup in glass jars instead of plastic?

Take your own container to the fresh fish or meat counters rather than using single use plastic trays.

### REUSE:

Can you find another use for the plastic pot that your favourite hand cream comes in? Your new shampoo bar maybe? (Thanks to Louise for this idea!)

### RECYCLE:

Carefully and considerately – see opposite.



Recycle as a last resort



## Recycling - It's a minefield!

WHILST THE FACT that recycling rates are increasing is good news – most of us diligently fill our blue bins with 'recyclable' items - our good intentions don't always produce the results we might expect - only 9% of all plastic made has ever been recycled. So how can we improve the situation?

Firstly, we need to wash or at least rinse all remnants of food, toiletries etc from the items we are recycling. Contamination is a major problem – an unwashed yoghurt pot can contaminate a clean cardboard box rendering it unrecyclable and so destined for incineration or landfill. Secondly, leave bottle tops and jar lids on, even if they are made from a different material. Loose lids fall through the machinery at the material recovery centre and don't get recycled, or worse, jam the machinery. Open bottles or jars allow other materials to get inside (eg a cardboard tube might get inside a plastic bottle) creating a 'mixed material' again meaning that neither item will get recycled. Glass and metal have much higher rates of recycling than plastic because they are simpler to recycle. Lastly, don't be fooled by plastics described as degradable, oxo-degradable or photo-degradable. They are still plastic and they don't go away, they just break down into even smaller pieces. Instead look out for biodegradable, compostable or home-compostable items.

## SMALL CHANGES MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

### *What has Combroke been doing to help?*

Lots! This is what we've heard about so far, please feel free to tell us about any other ideas!

In the kitchen we have been...

- Getting our milk delivered in glass bottles (Milk and More deliver to the village on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays)
- Using beeswax wraps to store leftover food.
- Using a fizzy drinks maker with concentrated syrups to make drinks including tonic water and cola. This has saved 400 plastic bottles for one household!



In the bathroom we have been...

- Using re-usable rather than disposable razors
- Using reusable sanitary products
- Using soap and shampoo bars rather than bottles of shower gel and shampoo. The bars do work! In another household this has reduced plastic bottle usage by 100 bottles per year.



In the garden we have been...

- Using reusable growbags that can be refilled year after year rather than buying new plastic bags each time.



Imagine how much less plastic Combroke could use just by making a few small changes! Have a look at the '25 ways to reduce your use of plastic' at the back for more ideas. How many can you tick off?

## WHAT'S EVERYONE ELSE DOING?

### *Eat crisps for charity, and take up origami!*

Walkers crisps have teamed up with the specialist recycler Terracycle to help recycle the 11million crisp packets that Brits get through every day. There are collection points at Gaydon Village Stores, Ettington Primary School, Barford Community Shop, The Bodyshop in Stratford-upon-Avon, amongst others and they will accept any brand of crisp packet. Points are earned according to how many packets are collected, and the charity chosen by the collector will benefit. Points are awarded per kilo of crisp packets, with a minimum of 5 kilos of empty packets needed to earn £10 (that's quite a lot of crisps!)



Nestlé Japan has announced it is launching recyclable paper packaging for its KitKat products in a bid to tackle plastic waste. Japan is the biggest market for KitKats and, according to reports, around 4m KitKat Minis are sold across the country every day, so the impact of millions of plastic wrappers accumulating in landfill has been enough to persuade Nestlé to reconsider the way it packages its most popular product.

As a result, the confectionery company is discontinuing the use of plastic packaging and replacing it with a paper version that is both environmentally friendly and fun.

The updated versions will also come with instructions on how to make an origami paper crane - as well as being creative and possibly kick-starting a new hobby, Nestlé has estimated that the new initiative will help to reduce the brand's plastic waste by approximately 380 tonnes per year.

Source: Independent online

## ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

### *Bamboo – is it as good as we think?*

BY WWW.EARTHHERO.COM

*We are hearing lots about bamboo lately – from coffee cups to toothbrushes to socks, we are being told that's it's a great resource. So is it? This article taken from [www.earthhero.com](http://www.earthhero.com) helps answer the question.*

“Growing bamboo is about as easy as it gets. As a grass, bamboo is extremely adaptable and resilient. Couple that with its rapid growth rate and self-regeneration, and it's a farmer's dream come true! Bamboo doesn't require petrochemicals or artificial pesticides, making it both cost effective and toxin-free. Growing at an impressive rate of up to 3.5 feet per day, it's truly a renewable resource. ... meaning the bamboo plant grows over 1,000 times as fast as oak and most other hardwoods!



Photo credit : [www.earthhero.com](http://www.earthhero.com)

#### **When we love it...**

In its raw and un-manipulated form, bamboo is an awesome alternative to the slower growing, higher maintenance hardwoods. It's ideal for kitchenware products like cutting boards, trays, and serving utensils, as well as fences, furniture, hardwood floors, and much more. Unlike wood, bamboo has no rays or knots, allowing it to withstand high amounts of pressure. The dense fibers in bamboo can give the plant extreme flexibility, allowing it to bend without breaking. This also leads to pest-resistant qualities, thanks to the high silica content that makes the material difficult for pests like termites to digest. No pests allowed!



Photo credit : unknown

#### **When it's not so great...**

We love bamboo as a raw material, but not all bamboo is created equal. Have you seen bamboo t-shirts? What about bamboo bedsheets?

Bamboo can be turned into fabric through a few different ways. Some companies mechanically comb out the bamboo fibers, then spin those into a wearable, malleable fabric. This fabric is typically more expensive than we'd like, and it doesn't have that smoother feel that we've come to expect. So, some companies turn to more drastic measures...

In order to produce soft, comforting fabric, bamboo has to undergo a serious chemical process. In this process, the bamboo stalk is dissolved by a toxic chemical that transforms the stalk into long cellulose strands which then create bamboo textiles. These are used to make bamboo-based rayon and viscose—two popular fabrics in the cloth industry advertised as being “green”.

Unfortunately, this process is indeed as scary as it sounds... toxic, and .... notorious for evaporating into the air and running off into waterways, contributing to global pollution. So, while growing and harvesting bamboo might beat cotton and other conventional fabrics, we're not a fan of what it has to go through afterwards. Next time you're shopping, don't simply accept products that are “Made from Bamboo”, and say no to bamboo-based rayon and viscose. Instead, look for recycled or organic materials like cotton and hemp!”

## QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS...

*At our first meeting we learned lots from each other about how to reduce our use of plastic, but we also had some questions...*

### **Q. Where does Combroke's waste go to?**

**Answer:** The contents of our blue bins go to the Materials Recovery Facility at Ettington.

The contents of our black bins go either to the landfill site at Bubbenhall or to Coventry to be incinerated for energy recovery.

### **Q. Which is better for wrapping food, foil or greaseproof paper?**

**Answer:** The answer seems to be foil. Whilst in the past, greaseproof paper (also known as parchment paper) was greaseproof because of the pulp being 'beaten' to make the paper more resilient to food and grease, nowadays it is much more likely to have a plastic, silicone or chemical coating of some sort, which can not be recycled, so foil would be better (or a reusable beeswax wrap!). It's a similar story for waxed paper, or paper that appears to be waxed, as it has often been laminated with plastic.

### **Q. What should we do with used cooking oil?**

**Answer:** Cooking oil and fat shouldn't be poured down sinks as it can cause blockages. Small amounts of cooking oil, fats, or plate scrapings of fatty food can be added to your food waste. Otherwise, put it in a sealed container and place in the general waste bin.

### **Q. Can we put tissues and kitchen roll in our recycling bin?**

**Answer:** No. Tissues although made of paper, are made from very short fibres making them unsuitable for recycling. Put them in your black bin. The same goes for cotton wool, it is not recyclable. Used sheets of kitchen roll should be placed in your rubbish bin, although some councils will allow you to put a small amount of kitchen towel in the food waste bin.

### **Q. Where can we recycle old plant pots?**

**Answer:** Non-black plant pots can be put in our blue bins with other plastic pots and trays. Many Sainsbury's stores (The Shires, Leamington Spa, Saltisford, Warwick) as well as Asda, Sydenham, Tesco, Emscote Road, and Morrisons, Leamington claim to accept plant pots for recycling, although sadly not the Wellesbourne store. Please check before making a special journey! Lots of people were able to offer an even better solution that reuses rather than recycles the pots - they can be donated to Wellesbourne tip shop where Warwickshire Age Concern offer them for re-use.

### **Even the Village Hall is going green...**

The Village Hall Committee are helping too! The old LPG gas heater is being retired, and 3 new electric heaters have been installed. The village hall moved to a sustainable electricity supplier a while ago, so now all of the village hall will be heated sustainably – hurrah!

### **We want to hear from you!**

Let us know about the changes (big or small) that you have made to help the planet. We can then share these ideas with others to help make Combroke even 'greener'! What would you like us to discuss at future meetings? What would you like to know more about? We are considering trialling Padlet, an app that allows users to 'stick' virtual post-it notes on to a noticeboard for other users to see? Any thoughts? Would you use it?

Email [parish-clerk@combroke.co.uk](mailto:parish-clerk@combroke.co.uk) or see our display in the village hall.

Please note these are the editor's best attempts at answers. Not definitive, all E&OE. No products or companies mentioned in this newsletter are endorsed by CCCC or the Editor.

Q, U, E, S, T, I, O, N, S

COME AND JOIN US AT OUR  
NEXT MEETING IN COMBROKE  
VILLAGE HALL, DATE TBC

## 25 Ways to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle Plastic

See how many of these ideas you can tick off for your household! Some are easier than others, and some are just plain random!

1. How many items can you buy in alternative packaging (glass, paper...) to avoid plastic?
2. Get your milk delivered in glass bottles.
3. Take your own containers to the fresh fish or meat counters rather than using their single use trays.
4. Use a refillable water bottle (if you don't already!)
5. Oh yes, and a refillable coffee cup if you buy a lot of takeaway hot drinks.
6. Get yourself a bamboo toothbrush.
7. Switch to a good old-fashioned bar of soap (they mostly smell quite nice!) instead of plastic bottles of handwash.
8. Try a shampoo bar (available from Lush, Holland & Barrett and Waitrose amongst others)
9. Buy loose fruit and vegetables where possible, many supermarkets have now switched to paper or re-usable bags.
10. Buy in bulk! Go for the largest bags of pasta, flour, rice that you can find/afford/store!
11. Same goes for washing liquid or powder...
12. Or try a refill store, and take your own clean, empty containers to stock up on dried goods such as pasta, rice, spices, as well as household cleaning products.
13. Stop laminating! Your signage really doesn't need to last for a thousand years!
14. Try to buy clothes made from natural fibres, they don't shed microplastics into the waste water from your washing machine.
15. Use a Guppy Friend to wash your polyester fleeces in. It will stop those microplastics going down the drain.
16. Try to reduce or eliminate your use of cling film and plastic freezer bags, by storing food in foil, glass jars or beeswax wraps.
17. Wait! Beeswax wraps deserve an entry of their own – they're great! Use them to wrap the other half of your lemon, any cake that didn't get eaten, sandwiches to take to work or school...they're fine in the freezer too.

- ❑ 18. Check your teabags! Many of them contain plastic so opt for a plastic-free version, or go loose-leaf and get your teapot out.
- ❑ 19. Use a non-disposable razor – yes they take a bit of getting used to, but think of the planet! (actually, best to concentrate 100% on the job in hand when using one of these...think of the planet later)
- ❑ 20. Hopefully your normal brand of cotton wool buds now use cardboard rather than plastic sticks – please double check, they crop up time after time on beach cleans and are dangerous to wildlife
- ❑ 21. Have a look at the increasing choice in non-plastic sanitary products, those containing plastic are one of the worst offenders at turning up on beaches
- ❑ 22. Next time you are buying growbags for the garden try to source reusable ones (available from Charlecote Garden Centre)
- ❑ 23. Wet wipes are notoriously bad in many ways. Many of them get flushed away and end up blocking pipes and drains. Most of them contain plastic and so do not degrade. Try to use less of them if at all. Try a dishcloth or damp flannel instead!
- ❑ 24. Use a fountain pen! Biro's just cannot be recycled because of their composite nature (different materials stuck together) so they end up going to landfill or being incinerated. Maybe you don't get through that many biro's in a year, but every little helps!
- ❑ 25. Christmas is coming...choose your gift wrapping carefully. Shiny metallic papers and ribbons cannot be recycled. Opt instead for matte wrapping paper, and paper ribbon.

**Good Luck!**

*Last word. As this is our first edition, if you have a paper copy you may wish to put it away somewhere very safe, (along with your Royal wedding souvenir newspapers) for possible presentation at a future Antiques Roadshow. Alternatively you could pass it on to someone else to read, use it to make a paper aeroplane, or use it to light a fire. At the very least, please put it in your recycling bin. Thanks for reading!*