

Swanage is Awarded 'Plastic Free Communities' Status as it Takes Action on Single-Use Plastic.

Swanage has joined a network of communities across the UK who are leading the way to tackle throw away plastic at source. The town has been awarded Plastic Free Community status by marine conservation charity, Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), in recognition of the work we have done to start reducing the impact of single-use plastic on the environment.

Local group 'Sustainable Swanage' was formed in May 2019 with one of its first targets to achieve the Plastic Free status. The group is made up of a range of stakeholders including Swanage Town Council, Litter Free Coast and Sea, Swanage Chamber of Trade and Commerce and local residents.

Registering with the SAS Plastic Free Communities movement, the group identified a range of great work that was already being done in the town and pulled these together to enable this fantastic achievement. The objectives include; setting up a community led steering group, instigating the SAS Plastic Free Schools education programme, gaining 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.

"I'm delighted that Swanage has achieved the Plastic Free Community award. It's a significant first step in addressing our concerns about environmental damage and climate change.", explained Avril Harris, Swanage Town Council Deputy Mayor, who is also a member of the Steering Group.

Swanage was provided with a target of five businesses to become 'plastic free' in order to achieve this award. Each business must eliminate at least three items of single use plastic and work to eliminate all others. While we have achieved five, we have given ourselves a target of 50 businesses. If you would like to be part of this scheme please contact one of us at Sustainable Swanage.

Dean Storey, a local business owner who runs Quay Desserts, by the Stone Quay and a founding member of the Steering Group says he "is proud to be a Swanage plastic free business" and encourages all other business to follow his example.

A range of events to enhance the sustainability of Swanage and to promote the plastic free message regularly take place in Swanage and are free to attend. These include, for example, regular beach cleans run by Litter Free Purbeck and Sustainable Swanage are now running a series of presentations and feedback sessions to provide information and advice.

"We are so pleased that Swanage has achieved this status," said Sarah Spurling from 'Litter Free Coast and Sea', "however this is just the start of a long journey and we recognise that the purpose of 'Plastic Free Swanage' is to get people motivated to make a difference in this fantastic community.

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 Officer, said: "It's great to see the work that Swanage has done to reduce the availability of avoidable plastics, raise awareness and encourage people to refill and reuse.

"We have over five 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:

Culvin Milmer, Community Lead, Plastic Free Swanage: c.milmer@swanage.gov.uk 01929 766030

Plastic Free Communities: www.plasticfree.org.uk

Surfers Against Sewage: www.sas.org.uk

Sustainable Swanage: www.litterfreecoastandsea.co.uk/sustainable-swanage

Sustainable Swanage Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/sustainableswanage/>

Sustainable Swanage Steering Group is an independent partnership made up of the following organisations although it works directly with many other organisations across the area:

- Swanage Town Council
- Dorset Litter Free Coast and Sea
- Swanage Chamber of Trade and Commerce
- Plastic Free Purbeck
- A range of residents representing different organisations and skills

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.