

Experts share tips for tackling plastic pollution in Portsmouth

Behaviour change is the focus of an online plastic pollution workshop being held for Portsmouth communities today (Monday 8 February).

The interactive event, jointly hosted by the Environment Agency and the University of Portsmouth, is aimed at representatives from zero waste groups and plastic free communities who want to encourage local people to stamp out avoidable plastic waste in their lives.

Experts believe around 10 million tonnes of plastic waste enters the ocean every year, which is equivalent to a bin lorry load every minute.

Jonathan Harvey, from the Environment Agency's Plastics and Sustainability Team, said:

Bringing together experts and sharing their valuable skills and experience with Portsmouth communities will provide encouragement, confidence and reassurance that local organisations can make a real difference.

If we are going to improve the quality of our environment, it is important to get everybody involved. Today's workshop supports communities with the latest tools, knowledge, and evidence to change behaviours and tackle plastic pollution within their patch.

We're encouraging everybody to re-evaluate the things that they buy and consume – to step away from single-use items and choose more reusable, repairable, and sustainable alternatives.

Whatever you do, small steps will contribute towards creating cleaner communities and marine environments.

Attendees will also have the chance to discuss the barriers they have faced in trying to change people's behaviours, how to engage hard to reach groups, and how they can apply behaviour change theory to their own work.

Professor Steven Fletcher, Director of Sustainability and Environment at the University of Portsmouth, said:

The University of Portsmouth is delighted to be working with the Environment Agency, our community partners, to support actions that are better for people and the planet. Community-based action is critical to building healthy and sustainable communities.

The workshop is the second plastic pollution event aimed at Portsmouth communities as part of the EU-funded Interreg Preventing Plastic Pollution project – a programme to understand and reduce the impacts of plastic pollution in river and marine environments. The first workshop took place in October and encouraged communities to form a network, access resources and collectively start taking steps to tackle plastic pollution.

Preventing Plastic Pollution: Working in partnership with 18 organisations from across France and England.

Preventing Plastic Pollution (PPP) seeks to understand and reduce the impacts of plastic pollution in the river and marine environments. By looking at the catchment from source to sea, the project will identify and target hotspots for plastic, embed behaviour change in local communities and businesses, and implement effective solutions and alternatives.

PPP is a €14million funded EU INTERREG VA France (Channel) England Programme project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund which works mainly across East Hampshire, Test and Itchen, Poole Harbour, Medway, Tamar, and Great Ouse, Brest Harbour, Bay of Douarnenez, and Bay of Veys catchments.

The event also supports Revolution Plastics – a project launched by the University of Portsmouth to find solutions to the world's plastic problem by bringing together teams of scientists, business-leaders, campaigners and citizens who share an ambition to transform the way we make, use and dispose of this polluting material.

Experts will share tried and tested engagement methods for inspiring change, including:

- Sohvi Nuojua from the Behavioural Science Team at the University of Plymouth. Sohvi is sharing evidence-based techniques that can be used to reduce littering, encourage recycling and cut down use of plastics by disrupting habits, highlighting environmental consequences and other methods.
- Clare Seek from Plastic Free Portsmouth. Clare will be talking about her experiences and challenges working with community groups in Portsmouth, including litter, children's experience of nature, and repair cafe fixes.
- Dr Daphne Kaklamanou, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology, at the University of Portsmouth.

To find out more about the workshop email plasticsandsustainability@environment-agency.gov.uk.