

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

**Cotgrave** 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 it has done to start reducing the impact of single-use plastic on the environment.

Brenda Ainsley, Plastic Free Community Lead started the campaign early in 2020 after becoming increasingly concerned about packaging and single-use plastics finding their way into the environment.

Registering with the SAS Plastic Free Communities movement, Brenda pulled together key organisations and businesses in the town to put in place a five-point plan. The objectives include; setting up a community-led steering group, instigating the SAS Plastic Free Schools education programme, getting 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.

“It has been brilliant to see so many groups and businesses from our community coming together with a common, environmental purpose.

“Businesses have eliminated all sorts of single-use plastics for example in changing their packaging, in their back-room activities such as introducing recyclable printer cartridges and right across their activities.”

Plastic Free Cotgrave have held a variety of events (often online during the restrictions of the pandemic), including the creation of a ['Green Man Rubbish Sculpture'](#) in April 2022, a talk by Greenpeace and joining with Allies such as the Cotgrave Community Garden and The Friends of Cotgrave Country Park at their events.

Organisations across Cotgrave have linked up with Plastic Free Cotgrave – and with each other. These include Cotgrave WI, the Patient Participation Group, Cotgrave Library, the Community Kitchen and all three local schools.

“Achieving plastic free status has been a real community effort. So much of what we did in the first year, was almost entirely online; it has been fantastic lately to get out there in person and meet our supporters face-to-face. Our recent creation of the Green Man Rubbish sculpture has exemplified how we work right across the community. All three schools are now involved; many children and young people are knowledgeable - and concerned – about plastics in our environment.

“Clearly, we can't eliminate all plastics. Some plastic, especially in health care, is an essential part of life. But needless packaging is a modern-day scourge.

“After over two years of hard work, we are delighted to be awarded plastic-free status. We will continue to keep this 'on the agenda' in Cotgrave, as we all work to reduce single-use plastic.

The Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Community network aims to free the places where we live from single-use. 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 Manager, said: "It's great to see the work that Cotgrave has done to reduce the availability of avoidable plastics, raise awareness and encourage people to refill and reuse.

"We have over six 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:

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Plastic Free Communities: [www.plasticfree.org.uk](http://www.plasticfree.org.uk)

Surfers Against Sewage: [www.sas.org.uk](http://www.sas.org.uk)

Plastic Free Cotgrave: [Plastic Free Cotgrave](#)

**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.

