

Plastic Free Exmoor

January 2024

Newsletter No 3



Welcome

Welcome to our latest newsletter. As you will see below, 2023 was an incredibly busy year for the Plastic Free Exmoor team and in this newsletter, we will be highlighting the actions and events that we have been involved with in our efforts to raise awareness of the impact of single-use plastics on our local environment. Welcome too, to Plastic Free Porlock Vale who from 2024 have been assimilated under the Plastic Free Exmoor banner. Over the coming weeks all of their existing Plastic Free Business Champions and Community Allies will be added to the Plastic Free Exmoor Dashboard, and we are looking forward to collaborating with them all into the future.

Beach Cleans

Throughout 2023 we organised and led several beach cleans along the West Somerset and Exmoor coastline.

On February 18th we joined up with Plastic Free Minehead to lead a “Winter Walk and Beach Clean” between Minehead and Dunster. Around one hundred volunteers joined us as we collected large amounts of ocean debris and litter. The event, which featured on that evening’s BBC Points West, was supported by Community Ally and Plastic Free Business Champions, Dunster Beach Holidays Ltd.



On August 18th eighteen volunteers joined us for a beach clean at Greenleigh Sands near Minehead. Over the course of two hours 150 plastic bottles, eighty tin cans and enough fishing line, nets, and ropes to fill another sack were collected. Surprising finds included a fridge, a tent, a sleeping bag, a motorcycle crash helmet, a pack of unused socks and numerous plant pots. It is estimated that in total over 150 Kg of debris was recovered. A huge thank you to Exmoor National Park Ranger, Charlotte Wray, who came along with a Land Rover and trailer to help remove everything that we found.



On November 4th we were joined by some of the Exmoor Young Rangers for a beach clean at Glenthorne...one of Exmoor's remotest beaches. Getting to Glenthorne involved a 320-metre descent from County Gate on the Somerset and Devon Border. Items found on the beach included a lobster pot, a tyre, lots of fishing line and net and several large pieces of rubber. The climb back up to County Gate carrying everything that we had collected was tough going!

Plastic Free Exmoor and the Refill Campaign

Over the past twelve months we have continued to build an Exmoor wide network of free water refill stations. These are places where people can get their water bottles refilled with drinking water...therefore removing the need to buy single-use plastic bottled water.

New water refill stations to sign up to the scheme included The Ramblers Rest Tea Room at County Gate and The Harbour House Coffee Shop at Porlock Weir.



We now have over twenty water refill stations across Exmoor.

A huge thank you to all those businesses across Exmoor and West Somerset who are supporting the Refill Scheme.

For further information on the refill scheme visit: [Home - Refill - find more than 280,000 Refill Stations globally](#) To join the refill revolution and find your nearest refill station you can download the free refill app from the above website, and you need never be without access to free drinking water.

If your business or organisation would like to get involved and provide a refill station, then contact me at plasticfreeexmoor@gmail.com and I will be able to help you get registered and also provide you with promotional materials.

Plastic Free Schools

Towards the end of 2023 we started to work with three Exmoor schools to hopefully inspire and help them to become Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Schools. Children from Exford, Cutcombe and Timberscombe joined us for two beach cleans at Minehead and Dunster, where they found out about how single-use plastics and other litter end up in the sea.



The beach cleans were followed up by school assemblies where the children listened to a story about a plastic bag that got lost in the ocean and found out about the Plastic Free Schools programme.

Thank you to the children and staff from the three schools for their interest and desire to help make a difference. Thanks also to Chris Blazey from Exmoor National Park's Generation Exmoor project for his support with the beach cleans.

Plastic Tree Guard Clearances

Plastic tree guards are an increasingly familiar sight in our countryside and woodlands, particularly with woodland generation projects. Unfortunately, most of these tree guards are made from plastic and despite manufacturers claiming they are biodegradable or photodegradable, in reality they are not...with most of them remaining long after the trees that they were designed to protect have outgrown them. It is true that plastic free alternatives are more expensive, and some would argue less effective, however without good woodland management "plastic" tree guards are often left on the woodland floor or clinging to trees that they once protected. Collecting tree guards once they are no longer needed and reusing them on new tree planting projects could be the way forward...better for the environment and much more cost effective.





On April 18th at Langridge Woods, near Roadwater and again on June 12th in Yearnor Woods near Porlock, Plastic Free Exmoor organised and led two plastic tree guard clearances. As you can see in the picture from Langridge Woods the amount of tree guards collected by our volunteers was incredible. The tree guards were over twenty years old and the vast majority of them showed no signs of deteriorating. Thank you to all of the volunteers who helped with these events and to Fountain Forestry and Exmoor National Park for their support in helping to remove the tree guards that were collected.

Do get in touch if you know a woodland near you where old plastic tree guards need removing!

Two Minute Litter Pick Boards

There are now Two Minute Litter Pick Boards all along the West Somerset and Exmoor coast as well as at some inland locations. In 2023 Plastic Free Exmoor worked with Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset and the recycling company SUEZ to provide additional litter picking equipment for the Two Minute Litter Pick Boards at Porlock Weir, Channel Adventure at Minehead and Watchet Visitor Centre as well providing a brand-new board for Lorna Doone Valley at Malmsmead (see picture). If you know of a location on Exmoor that would benefit from a Two Minute Litter Pick board do contact us and we will see what we can do to help. We can be contacted at



plasticfreexmoor@gmail.com

Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme Pipes



There are now Anglers National Line Recycling pipes located at Minehead harbour, Dunster Beach car park, Blue Anchor seafront and Watchet harbour. Any fishing line, commercial net and rope debris can be posted in these pipes. Thank you to Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset for organising and overseeing the installation of these pipes.



Litter Picking Equipment

Available To Borrow

If you are thinking of organising a community clean-up for your village or town and would like to borrow some equipment... then do get in touch.

Plastic Free Communities In West Somerset and Exmoor have everything that you need for a community litter pick, including litter pickers, reusable collecting sacks and plastic trugs for sorting the litter. We are also able to help with risk assessments for your event and help you register for the Surfers Against Sewage Million Mile Clean campaign, which will help you make your litter pick really have an impact by contributing to a database of the top brands found in our environment. Contact plasticfreeexmoor@gmail.com if you would like to borrow some equipment.



Plastic Free Exmoor Business Champions

Thank you to all of our Plastic Free Exmoor Business Champions for their ongoing support and for continuing to remove and reduce the amount of single-use plastic that they use in their businesses. It was great to see some of these businesses featured in a special Exmoor edition of the Somerset Life magazine in November.

A full list of the 28 Plastic Free Exmoor Business Champions can be found here: [Plastic Free Exmoor](https://plasticfreeexmoor.org.uk) | [Exmoor](https://exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk) (exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)



The Surfers Against Sewage team have updated their Plastic Free Communities Business Champion Award by introducing a Bronze, Silver, and Gold Award. The initial Plastic Free Business Champion award, that all of our current business champions have attained, counts as bronze...but then as businesses continue their plastic free journey and “deepen” their actions they can achieve the silver and gold standards. To do this they will need to show what they are doing to get rid of the “biggest hitters” of plastic pollution like single-use plastic bottles and plastic bags. They will also need to show how they are supporting local plastic free initiatives and events.



Further information about these awards can be found via the following link [Setting the Gold Standard for UK Businesses - Plastic Free Communities](#) and by logging on to your own Business Champion Dashboard.

If you have any questions or need further help, then contact me at plasticfreeexmoor@gmail.com

Plastic Free Exmoor Community Allies

Thank you again to all of our Community Allies for their help and support in promoting our events and activities and for helping to spread the plastic free word. In 2023 we welcomed Exford and Cutcombe First Schools and Our Precious Earth, the plastic free shop in Minehead as new community allies. We now have 28 Plastic Free Exmoor Community Allies across Exmoor and West Somerset.



Talks and Shows

In addition to the above, over the past twelve months we have also spread the plastic free message by providing talks to a variety of groups and organisations including, The Rotary Club of Minehead, the Alcombers Women’s Institute, England and Wales National Park Volunteer Co-ordinators, The Minehead Over 55 Residents Group and the Exmoor Deanery Synod. If you know of a group on Exmoor that would like to find out more about Plastic Free Exmoor, then contact us at plasticfreeexmoor@gmail.com

We were also delighted to have a stand at Exmoor National Park’s “Seed to Sawmill” event that was held in Exford in September.



... and finally

We would like to thank all of our Plastic Free Business Champions, Community Allies and Water Refill Stations as well as all those people who have helped with and supported our events and campaigns. Together you have all helped us to make a difference and to turn the tide on plastic pollution!

In 2024 we will continue to...

- Organise community beach cleans, litter picks and tree guard clearances
- Continue to build the Exmoor network of water refill stations
- Recruit more Business Champions and encourage existing Business Champions to go for gold!
- Recruit more Community Allies
- Support Surfers Against Sewage campaigns such as the call for a Deposit Return Scheme for plastic bottles, glass bottles and tin cans
- Support and work with other local plastic free communities and environmental groups

Plastic Free Exmoor Steering Group

Volunteers Needed!

We are still looking for people to join our Plastic Free Exmoor Steering Group...particularly representatives from communities across Exmoor, our Business Champions and Community Allies and anyone else who would like to help bring about positive change!

We meet around four times a year.

If you would like to join us, contact me at plasticfreexmoor@gmail.com

Plastic Free Exmoor

Contact Details

Email: plasticfreexmoor@gmail.com

Telephone: 07927 921975

