

Confused about Plastic? Ask us Anything

Invited to the Autumn Eco Fair in St Ives, Cambridgeshire on Saturday 19th October with the bold statement “Ask us Anything” Charpak Managing Director, Paul Smith, and Head of Technical Design, Kate Robinson joined Cambridgeshire residents to help reduce confusion about plastics and recycling.

They outlined what a [circular economy](#) is. And explained how Charpak reuse the County’s recycled plastics to manufacture new packaging again and again. The bottles and clear plastic trays Cambridgeshire residents put in their recycling bin aren’t being exported overseas. This was enlightening to many. In six months Charpak have manufactured over 8 million new pieces of packaging from Cambridgeshire’s [collected, cleaned and recycled plastic](#) ‘waste’.



Kate and Paul explained the OPRL UK-nationwide [symbols on packaging](#) that are designed to help people understand what they can recycle. Paul Smith said

“Everyone we spoke with wanted to make better choices and recycle more. There was a lot of confusion about what they could put in

their recycling bins. We know from our work with [RECAP](#), and local authorities, that contamination is one of the biggest recycling challenges.

Gary Smith, Charpak Technical Director, added

“So what does contamination mean? Reducing contamination means helping people understand what they can and can’t put in their recycle bin. It’s so crucial more is recycled and less goes to waste. That challenge alone is far bigger than plastic. Questions included what to do with sandwich packs and cling film, cardboard and food and juice containers, childrens’ toys and plant pots, and even toner cartridges.”

Many residents weren’t aware of Recycle Now’s [Recycling Locator](#). The Locator is so easy to use. By putting in the item you want to recycle and postcode, it immediately tells you what can be recycled in the area you live in.”

The family event included live music and even gave away free oak trees. Activities to get everyone involved included recycling textiles and clothes. Oak trees were given away to encourage more replacing more in the natural environment. Making Bug Hotels from recycled plastic bottles was a fun highlight for the children, with help from their parents too.

Kate Robinson said

“We were asked about why we needed plastic packaging at all. It was really interesting to see people’s reactions. We explained why plastic packaging has an important role to play in protecting products, reducing waste. It also reduces carbon footprint and greenhouse gases. With food packaging, which is what most people think of, when food ends up in landfill, it rots. This produces methane gas, one of the most damaging greenhouse gases.

Many people were surprised to know that when a cucumber is wrapped in plastic film it can last in the fridge for far longer. It's 'life' extends from 3 to 14 days and meat and steaks for up to 10 days more. That's a lot of food waste prevented."