

Climate Solutions discussion group - report for March 2022 by Kate Bailey

We were delighted to welcome new members to the discussion group and enjoyed a lively discussion around eliminating the relentless proliferation of single-use plastic containers and plastic food packaging from our lives. Not an easy task !

Plastic is made from fossil fuels; plastic waste is destroying life in our rivers and oceans; it breaks down into micro-plastics that are everywhere in the food chain, and within all our bodies. The majority of the plastics we in the UK think are being recycled are instead being shipped abroad, burnt, buried, dumped or blown into watercourses, and washed into seas. WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) estimates that globally at least 11 million tonnes of plastic waste leaks into the oceans each year - <https://wrap.org.uk/taking-action/plastic-packaging>

Public, shareholder and consumer pressure for change is making a huge difference and some supermarkets are already attempting to reduce their use of plastic packaging. The group's suggestions included searching out alternative shower, cosmetic and cleaning products, buying products in returnable or refillable bottles and glass containers, making our own non-plastic bags and containers.

Liz suggested an informative link - Beth Terry website, blog and "Plastic Free" book - <https://myplasticfreelife.com/plasticfreeguide/>

Top Tips for April:

- refuse to accept plastic wrapping and containers - take refillable/washable food containers, cloth or cardboard containers, etc; support retailers who sell refills (eg. Cross Lanes)
- buy loose vegetables, fruits etc; empty plastic containers into your own boxes and leave the unwanted containers behind - explain to the shopkeeper/ market holder why you are concerned;
- boycott takeaways whose packaging ends up on the street; join a local litter-pick, kick dog-poo bags into the long grass, collect recyclable rubbish on your walks;

Future Discussion Topics:

The Climate Solutions group is informal and friendly, and offers **an open invitation** to all other U3A members to join in when we discuss something of interest to themselves. For information, future topics will include:

Thursday April 7th [10am]: Global issues - climate impacts, weather patterns, floods and wildfires, soils and biodiversity loss;

Thursday May 5th: Engaging people - influencing behaviour change, demonstrating how individual actions can make a difference to the planet, encouraging others to take responsibility;

Thursday June 2nd: Circular economy - ways to reduce waste, recycle, repair, reuse; helping to safeguard finite natural resources and minimise fossil fuel dependency;

If you would like to join a future discussion please email Kate via the convenor's contact form. We hope to hear from you soon.