

Hi there!

First update of 2010, and we have had such a splendid start. This is a little more wordy than our usual missive, but please read through, it's all good news!

Our launch at the Bingham Hotel was well and enthusiastically attended, including generous, inspiring and committed support from Susan Kramer MP, Zac Goldsmith Conservative candidate for Richmond, and Serge Lourie leader of the Richmond council, to name only a few. Dr Richard Thompson, Reader in Marine Ecology at Plymouth University and co-author of a treatise on Plastic and Health lent his support to the Greener Campaign (full text on request). We really feel we can go forward with this backing.

It was also great to meet people and put faces to the names of signatories to our petition, and heartening to hear about their own initiatives, like local Sea Scouts, who said, "The recycling firm representative came to Scouts last night. Scouts made a fabulous banner from recycled materials." This kind of thing changes behaviour for generations.

And there was the first screening of our infomercial "Plastic: Where do you think it goes?", link to this coming soon. Watch this space.

Holland & Barrett - and this deserved to be more widely reported - on 1st January joined the small group of responsible retailers by introducing a No Plastic Bags policy in their stores, as an addition to their excellent comprehensive policy on packaging.

Rebecca Hosking, well-known for turning her home town Modbury, in Devon, into the first plastic-bag-free town in the UK, was awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours. Well deserved and very good news, though it does raise the question: If the Government values her initiative in Modbury so much, why doesn't it do more to make the whole UK plastic-bag-free?

We had a brief flurry of excitement when it was reported in The Times that Boris Johnson wanted London to be plastic bag free for the Olympics. Unfortunately that wasn't quite the case http://www.london.gov.uk/view_press_release.jsp?releaseid=24718, but Boris did send us a message of encouragement, which was read out at the Bingham. We understand his political constraints and feel sure he supports us in his heart of hearts!

And our first batch of bags (courtesy of lottery funding) arrived. These were distributed at the Bingham to all guests. {Photos in album}

The badges arrived in time for us to give lots away at the Green Guardian Awards on 25 January at Kingston's Rose Theatre, where there were more eager takers for our Greener bags, and where our own Marilyn, who started PlasticBagFree Kingston, now linked with GreeneruponThames, was Highly Commended Green Champion in the Greener Guardian Awards, and winner of an apple tree. Jolly well done, Marilyn!

Finally, an answer to

What happens to those plastic bags we return for recycling?

According to Sainsburys Customer Service department, most of the "150 million bags that are recycled through us... are turned into black plastic refuse sacks." Plastic bags to plastic bags (possibly via China where much of this is done) - maybe not so virtuous!

And John Lewis Partnership / Waitrose tell us: "Carrier bags brought back are returned to Bracknell, one of Waitrose's distribution centres, where they are sent for recycling in the UK along with other polythene generated at the distribution centre. The mixed plastic are converted into small pellets which are then melted down to make boards that are, for example, typically used as hoardings and for cable protection. Some of the material is also used in the production of outdoor furniture such as benches."

More answers to your questions about plastic bags at <http://www.greeneruponthames.org/#/faq/4535984817>.

The top and bottom of it is, plastic bags don't work for the world. However lovely, clean, shiny, useful, seductive they are, they **really** don't work. Forward into 2010, and let us **this year** get the government levy in place.

Thank you again for staying with us.
b/rgds, Carole