

Horsham Society

with Richard Pratt



Why buy it – refill it – for free...

There has been much in the media recently and in people's thoughts about plastic waste and in particular plastic water bottles, witness the extraordinary ocean film scenes portrayed by David Attenborough in *Blue Planet 2*.

We can do something about plastic water bottles by acting locally to reduce or even avoid usage.

Many bottles are of course recycled through local authority waste management but far too many find their way into landfill or into our oceans.

Single use bottles are expensive to produce and use up valuable natural resources in manufacture and transportation leading to additional CO₂ and NO_x emissions which can be avoided.

How much better is it to avoid throwaway bottles altogether and invest in a reusable bottle or at the very least refill your plastic bottle?

In September 2015, City to Sea launched a campaign called Refill Bristol after its founder was inspired to do something about the increasing volume of plastic bottles being washed up along the banks of



the River Avon. Refill UK was subsequently formed to promote free, and easily accessible tap water fountains in shops, cafes and restaurants in Bristol with such success that word spread and there are

now over 1,600 Refill points around the UK across eight similar schemes in New Forest, Durham and North East, Dumfries and Galloway, Norwich, Henley on Thames, Bicester and Banbury and, closer to home, Brighton and Hove.

Subsequently, on 25 January 2018 Water UK, representing the water companies in England, launched a new national drinking water scheme to cut plastic water bottle use by millions by building on the Refill UK initiative.

Their aim is that people will be able to refill water bottles for free in tens of thousands of places in England in an ambitious plan through a network of high street retailers, coffee shops, businesses and local authorities offering free tap water refill stations in every major town and city.

The first business to join the scheme is Whitbread plc which has pledged to offer free drinking water refills for customers and passers-by in each and every one of its Costa Coffee and Premier Inn locations from March 2018.

There are over 3,000 such locations across the country so adding significantly to the 1,600 points already inspired by Refill UK.

How to find these locations? There is a smartphone app for iOS and Android phones from which locations can be searched. In Brighton and Hove for example there are some 170 Refill points registered. There will be more as knowledge of the initiative spreads and people start to use and ask for water refills.

Contrast this with Horsham which currently has 1, yes ONE, free tap water point registered. Some way to go yet, although it has to be recognised too that there will be other places happy and willing to refill your water bottle for free but that are just not yet registered on the app.

Perhaps it's time for greater awareness here and also maybe an initiative by Horsham District Council to promote the scheme in our district to include public buildings, libraries and leisure centres.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who shares these concerns. For more information, visit the website www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 259038.