

Chesham to take part in national plastic bag campaign

12:00pm Wednesday 2nd September 2009

By Andy Carswell

CAMPAIGNERS will be taking to the streets of Chesham next Saturday trying to persuade shoppers not to use plastic carrier bags.

September 12 has been declared National Plastic Bag Free Day – with events highlighting the damage they cause to the environment being held in 55 towns across the country.

And the four members of the Chesham CarryAbag group will be setting up a stall in Market Square giving out environmentally-friendly bags as part of the national campaign.

Sally Blackman from the group said: “We've been contacting all the retailers in Chesham to persuade them to not give out plastic bags on the day and support us.

“We've written to all the head offices of all the chains in Chesham to get them to change their policy on plastic bags and get them to make them out of other material.

“The good thing is we have lots of independent stores in Chesham – the problem is the chain shops. You can't get them to make a decision on a local level, it has to be a change in policy at a national level.

“You go into the chain stores and they say we'd love to do it, but there's nothing we can do, all the decisions come from head office.

“That's what the idea of the day is – do we realise there's a groundswell of support across the country for this?”

CarryAbag was set up in 2007 after the four group members – Sally Blackman, Alison Phillips, Julia Brammer and Donna Forbes – saw a groundbreaking documentary on the damage plastic bags have caused to wildlife in Hawaii.

The film, 'Message in the Waves', was made by Rebecca Hosking – who later started a campaign to ban plastic bags in her home of Modbury, Devon.

In May 2007, Modbury became the first town in Britain to completely ban plastic bags.

Speaking of the documentary, Ms Blackman said: “It shows all this marine wildlife dying because it's choking on plastic – but it's not Hawaiian plastic, it comes from all over the world. All the currents bring it together.

“Rebecca Hosking came back and said, 'There must be something we can do' and her town decided to not use plastic bags and all the other campaigns have come from that.

“There will be an event in Hawaii so technically it's an international day.”

She added 15 to 20 retailers in Chesham had already gone plastic free.

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