

NEWS

PLASTIC ATTACKS GO VIRAL

sparked off protests all over the world



Unhappy shoppers at Sainsbury's in Winterstoke Road with unwanted wrapping, left, and protesters, right



Coupe, going on national TV and vowing to investigate.

And although sadly the boss has so far failed to restore the coconut to its natural state – it is still being sold wrapped in plastic – it helped trigger an army of plastic attackers to band together and do ‘mass unwraps’ at staged events across South Bristol, at branches of Asda, Sainsbury, Aldi, and further afield at Waitrose, Morrisons and Tesco.

Action groups who teamed up to demonstrate included members of Bristol campaign group #OneByOne, Bristol Greenpeace, Bristol Friends of the Earth, BS3 Plastic Free, Action Greater Bedminster, Plastic Free Bristol and a similar group called Keynsham Plastic Re-Action. A video of a plastic attack in Keynsham has now had

18 million views on Facebook.

The protests have been copied by frustrated shoppers in more than 100 towns and cities in the UK, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Italy, Holland, Belgium, Portugal, Austria, Norway, Canada, Peru, Australia and China. Many of them got in touch to tell us we inspired them to take action.

One news report in France published by Bioplastics News website likened the plastic attacks to “the bullet that started the First World War” and called it a people’s revolution.

Well-known people have helped shared the message on social media, including comedian Jennifer Saunders, Adrian Utey of the band Portishead, actors Jim Murray and Liam Bergin, and authors Sean Taylor and Suzy Davies. Musician Billy Bragg turned up at one store to join in with a mass unwrap.

Belgian singer-songwriter Frédéric Sioen, who is known across Europe, saw the Bristol protests on social media and decided to spread the movement to the Continent. He encouraged his followers to join him in plastic attacks, with fellow musicians and street performers.

Protesters have signed two petitions – one calling for a Bristol city-wide ban on single-use disposable plastics; and a second petition by Greenpeace asking stores to move to plastic-free. The latter has half a million signatures.

Greenpeace research claims UK supermarkets generate 800,000 tonnes of plastic

packaging each year. Millions of tonnes of plastic litter end up in the ocean each year, with devastating consequences for wildlife.

#OneByOne’s own analysis from plastic attack results shows that the majority of plastic we’ve handed back has been supermarket own-brand. This unnecessary single-use, mostly non-recyclable packaging is generated at a rate that would fill 10,000 trolleys per hour. We have hundreds of photographs of needless plastic wrapping.

There is evidence that much of the food wrapped in plastic could be sold and kept fresh without it, and food waste would not necessarily increase as a result.

The current system makes plastic cheap and easy for UK supermarkets and producers. They pay less than any other

European country towards collecting and recycling waste: tax payers meet 90 per cent of the bill.

A new code of conduct, UK Plastic Pact, is being promoted by the industry and Government think-tank Wrap UK. But we think it is too slow, too voluntary, not bold enough and largely passes the onus on to consumers, not producers. Wrap UK has criticised our campaign, and insists plastic is best in many cases, but we believe this is not founded on sufficient independent evidence. Efforts to research alternative ways of packaging have been inadequate. We believe that Wrap UK’s claim that the industry can achieve ‘100% sustainable plastic’ is an oxymoron, and is very unlikely to be achieved in the foreseeable future, under current policies.

We believe change will happen faster if there is increased public pressure and awareness, more regulation, incentives and penalties to make supermarkets think differently, a move away from the cheap and easy plastic model, more lateral thinking, habit change and greater pressure for innovation.

Several UK supermarkets have told us they are listening to our campaigners, and that the protests by customers have shown them they must do more.

- The next peaceful protest will be a plastic attack at Lidl in Sheene Road, Bedminster, on Sunday, July 8, 1-3pm. All welcome.

You can see a film of one of the Keynsham protests here: tinyurl.com/plasticprotest



Unwanted: Plastic wrapping