**Zero Waste Street Food in Haddenham**

A project to encourage the use of reusables rather than disposables at the village’s monthly street food event, as well as maximising correct recycling and food waste collection.

**Timeline**

June 23 – First contact with event promoter, inspired by a Facebook post

Jan 24 – Discussion with Bucks Council Waste Prevention team leader

Feb 24 – grant agreed with Bucks Council for 6-month pilot

March 24 – first zero-waste event

**The event**

A number of traders set up in the village hall car park. Inside there is a bar and tables for people to eat, with musical entertainment. The hall also has a kitchen with a commercial dishwasher providing scope for a quick turnaround of washing up.

**Our first zero-waste event**

A team of four of us (one volunteer had to drop out) set up the ‘Zero Waste Hub’ at the kitchen hatch, with bunting and a sandwich board for visibility. Four food waste caddies were positioned beside the regular waste bins. Traders had been alerted we would be offering proper plates and cutlery, the initial idea being that people would collect their plate first and queue up at the stalls, where the traders could serve directly onto the plates. Some traders came back with issues regarding the system and its compatibility with their way of working, so didn’t want to participate. In practice those who did want to take part were supplied with a stack of plates in advance in order to offer them to customers. Take-up of this was generally low, however, due to busyness, habit etc.

Alex, the promoter, is supportive and wants to make the event as green as possible.

**Stalls**

Good discussions with all of them. All were supportive of the aims.

Bokkie – South African curries (run by event promoter’s wife). On the night, they had a new team with the usual stallholder at another event, so declined to participate as they didn’t want to introduce any more complications. In practice they ran out of disposables at the end, so found our plates very useful!

The Wheatsheaf Kitchen (pizza) – told us plates wouldn’t work, as they wouldn’t be able to use their pizza cutter on them, they have a no shatter policy, would find it hard to keep track of who wanted a plate vs box as they take orders in advance, and also need to be able to stack boxes waiting for people to collect orders.

Burgervore – small prep area can take 8 of their boxes, whereas switching to plates would only allow them to prep a max of 3 at a time.

Baja Cantina (Mexican) – happy to take a stack of plates for quesadillas, but most of their dishes need a bowl-shaped receptacle, so uptake low. They also have a stock of wooden forks that we could have swapped for reusables, but say only about 5% of customers ask for one. They are careful always to ask eat in or take out, as the closed takeaway boxes are more expensive.

Oh So Dough (donuts) – happy to take a stack of plates from us

**Learning**

* We weren’t that visible as people tend to queue up outside first and get food before going into the hall. Some people did take plates etc to divide up food afterwards.
* A model where the traders have our reusables ready to go would work better, but would have to offer different containers to adapt to their needs
* Food waste collection worked ok (c. 2 kg collected, which will easily go into one domestic bin). It appears not much is wasted as the food is good! But some must have found its way into the general waste.
* Sorting of recycling is a disaster due to widespread confusion/lack of interest (mainly confusion I think – the people we talked to want to do the right thing)
* Get info from traders about what packaging they use and whether it’s recyclable
* Plates were cold, but there is a warmer we could potentially use. I had naively thought a high throughput through the dishwasher would mean they would already be warm.
* At the level of usage we had, it wasn’t worth turning on the dishwasher, but would be different with glasses.

**For next time**

* Reusuable glasses would work well for the bar – they only hand out pint and half pint, so we will use some of the grant to buy a stock for the village hall
* Complete rethink of the waste system, with a separate container for each waste stream to make it impossible (???) to get wrong. We can use our repurposed banner to clearly mark everything. Suggest two ‘waste stations’, one in the main hall, one in the foyer (will need a rethink for summer months when most people eat outside). Remove any general bins/mixed recycling bins for duration of event. Suggested categories: food waste (include paper napkins?), liquids, cardboard boxes, paper, bottles, crockery, cutlery, glasses (or just one ‘washing up’ container for the last three?), residual waste (hopefully very little)
* Keep going with the plates, but identify other types of containers that could better fit with traders needs.
* Encourage people to bring their own containers for take-away. Could we have a stock to lend out?

**Impacts**

* More recycling collected (and therefore less general waste), according to Pete (village hall manager). Hard to put a figure on though
* 2 kg of food waste that otherwise would have been in general waste
* c. 120 pizza boxes given out, we recycled a higher proportion than usual.
* 200-300 disposable glasses used on average per event. We can cut that to zero with reusables

**Longer term**

Can we make it sustainable, i.e. a contribution from traders to recognise money saved on packaging that would at least cover a meal for each volunteer? If we buy more reusables, can we loan them out for other events for a fee?