

Club President JULIA BRADBURY looks at the trend for recycling and recycled products entering the outdoor industry

First lady



IKNOW I've talked about this subject before so apologies if I'm boring you but it affects us all.

Recycling. It's vitally important to us as a species and to the world we inhabit.

So I'm delighted to see so many developments in the outdoor industry where recycling has been placed high on the agenda, from providing environmentally-friendly products to making use of old ones as well as devising clever ways to offset the impact of our pastime on the planet.

First up, however, you'll have noticed this month's magazine came in a new wrapper. It's made of potato starch and can be placed in your home compost bins where it will break down within a year. There's more about this innovation on page 10.

It's one step in a much larger chain, but it's an improvement on the previous plastic bag, which was generally recyclable but, crucially, not via all roadside collections.

That moves me on to my second point. A few weeks ago I interviewed Allison Ogden-Newton on Talk Radio, the Chief Executive of the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. What she doesn't know about recycling isn't worth knowing. It's a horrifying statistic, but the UK is Europe's largest consumer of food and drink on the go, so we end up with a huge pile of convenience plastics in landfill.

Allison talks about lots of figures and none of them are pretty; one third of the 3.4 billion coffee cups we use every year in England alone end up in landfill. According to a YouGov study, one in four of us admits to 'carefully' littering. You know that thing where you pop a can on the side of a wall or on top of a post box and then walk away? (It's still littering by-the-way).

According to Allison, we're sending more aluminium cans to landfill than any other nation. A single aluminium can could power a television for three hours, and it's a resource that is dwindling so it's bonkers that we're throwing this stuff away.

Which brings me back to the outdoor industry. My friends at the Club reliably tell me that many companies have been keen to show off new products lately that have an environmental plus point. They've seen rucksacks, shoes, clothing and other products made wholly or in part from recycled plastics. It's another step in the right direction.

At the other end of the cycle, companies such as Gift Your Gear are springing up; they will take your old unwanted outdoor goodies and pass them on to community organisations to use.

Another is Million Stars, which goes in to festival sites after the event to collect and repurpose all the abandoned tents (they should at least get free tickets hey?!) I also

love the work of www.freecycle.org, but there are loads of other organisations making news doing similar things across the UK. This is excellent, and something we should get into the habit of – reusing things, not dumping them.

We've been institutionalised not to think about chucking things away. These things are convenient to us for a while and we can relieve ourselves of them in the short-term, but in reality they never go away – this so-called 'convenience' will last for hundreds (even thousands) of years and blight us horribly.

Our use of convenience products is a matter of out of sight, out of mind – I mean, when was the last time anyone went to visit a landfill site?

However, this problem is becoming much more visible and landfill sites are expanding. We've all seen the images of waves of plastic washing up around the world. I visited a huge installation of a plastic wave created by Corona beer recently in central London, made up of plastic rubbish to show how much plastic can be found along every two-mile stretch of beach in the UK. I pick up plastic bags of discarded food and drinks on almost every walk I do, and I can't be alone in noticing the increasing piles of detritus sprawled along our motorways these days.

The more we are exposed to recyclables and the more stuff we put into recycling, the more we and our local authorities can fight this tide of rubbish!

So when you're out and about enjoying your camping this year think carefully about the products you buy and what they are made from, and above all, if you can find ways to reuse or recycle them, please have a go. 

