

FAIRTRADE FOR SUDBURY?

Many people will be familiar with the brand name 'Fairtrade', and this is becoming increasingly the norm as supermarkets become more supportive of the initiative. But what is Fairtrade - and how does it affect us here in Sudbury?

I went to see The Rev'd John Boardman, Minister of St. John's Methodist Church in Sudbury, because he is heading the initiative to make Sudbury a "Fairtrade Town". I was amazed to learn that already there are some 500 Fairtrade Towns up and down the country, and so it was an exciting prospect to hear how Sudbury could be part of this hugely worthwhile initiative!

John and his wife Ann moved to Sudbury from the town of Pickering, North Yorkshire, just over two years ago. John was involved in seeking Fairtrade Town status for Pickering, which was successfully achieved but it took about two years to come to fruition. With this experience, he is keen to do the same in Sudbury. As he explained: *"Fairtrade is all about working with farmers and producers in countries around the world encouraging the development of a sustainable system of production for the small, marginalized producers, workers and communities - so that they receive a fair price for their products. Children are not employed as cheap labour and farmers can be sure of stability for their businesses. An additional benefit is that a small contribution from every Fairtrade product sold goes directly to the producer from a 'Social Premium' fund, which is used as an allowance toward that farmer's community to enable them to work towards improving their own social needs such as medicine, roads and education."*

So how does Sudbury become a Fairtrade Town? John explained there are five key criteria which have to be met in order to be accepted, one of which is to have a working party of people on the Fairtrade steering committee who take on various tasks associated with the planning - for example, visiting shops and restaurants around Sudbury to see where people can already purchase Fairtrade products and liaising with schools, churches and other establishments. Furthermore, it is not essential for people to be involved who attend church, quite the opposite; this is a scheme which encourages people from all sections of the community who have a heart for Fairtrade principles.

The criteria require the Town Council to endorse Fairtrade and agree to use its products when serving refreshments at meetings as well as supporting the Fairtrade Town Committee. At least one large public event a year must be staged by the committee to promote the work of Fairtrade, thereby maintaining its visibility within the town. Already many churches and other organisations throughout the town are serving Fairtrade teas and coffees; Kettle & Fish fully supports the scheme by serving Fairtrade tea and coffee and by advertising Fairtrade products for sale, available on a designated stall, which people come into Kettle & Fish especially to purchase.

John was delighted to tell me that, when it comes to schools in Sudbury, Tudor Primary School are very keen on the concept and are, in their own right, going forward for Fairtrade status – almost 500 schools throughout the country have already achieved this position. This is an excellent way in which a partnership between children, teachers and the world can work together to make a real difference. It is also a partnership between the town and the school, both working towards the same objective. As John said: *“It’s lovely to have Tudor Primary School on board as we can help each other towards Sudbury gaining Fairtrade Town status.”*

The supermarkets Waitrose and the Co-op already display a wide range of products and support Fairtrade, and it is now up to everyone else to do the same, as the criteria demand that a range of at least two Fairtrade products be available in the town’s shops, which includes not only supermarkets but newsagents, petrol stations, pubs, cafes and restaurants. Once the required standards have been achieved, an application on behalf of Sudbury will be submitted, and the town will receive its status and be presented with its certificate.

February 28th to 13th March will see **“Fairtrade Fortnight”**, during which time the steering group will be running a Fairtrade stall in the market on Saturday 12th March in order to promote awareness of the campaign. People will be welcome to come along to talk about the scheme in more detail and to collect free samples of some of the products that are available. The committee are preparing a directory of where people may buy Fairtrade products in the town, and this will be available on the day.

For further information and if you would like to join the steering group, please contact John Boardman on 01787 372738. The next meeting takes place at 24 Waldingfield Road, Sudbury on 1st February at 7.30pm. John is also very happy to talk to groups should this be of interest.

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