



Positives and some negatives for plastics campaigners

By Ruth Anders

Since mid-December, No2Plastics street champions have been walking the length of the High Road in East Finchley talking to shop owners about our campaign to ban single-use plastics from our local shops.



Whilst we have received some encouraging commitments to support us, unsurprisingly we have also met with quite a bit of resistance. It's hard to believe that awareness of the need to banish these environmentally damaging plastic items still needs raising in East Finchley.

Look for the signs

You will soon be spotting these and similar signs (pictured) in shops that have pledged their support. Many shop owners and managers were very positive, suggesting ways in which they could encourage their customers to bring re-usable cups to cafés, refuse plastic straws, and bring used plastic bags to secondhand shops alongside their clothing donations.

Retailers' concerns

One or two wanted nothing to do with the campaign, and others voiced a number of concerns. A few expressed anxiety that doing away with plastic bags and other wrapping would give them extra costs and drive customers away to other shops where plastic carriers are used.

Others suggested that local council and government legislation should be changed before they needed to take action themselves.

It's up to us

No2Plastics have asked shops a raft of questions including why restaurants and cafés need to use plastic containers and carrier bags for takeaway food when they could use cardboard/foil boxes and paper carriers as we happily used to 30 years ago.

Ann Inglis, who launched the campaign with her letter to *The Archer* in May last year, is convinced that shops are only doing what they believe their customers want. She said: "It's the customers who must drive this campaign. Unless we, the public, alter our attitudes and demand something different from our shops, nothing will change."

No2Plastics is asking readers of *The Archer* to lobby our shops and to join those wanting to make a difference. Both retailers and customers need to embrace this change. You can follow the No2Plastics campaign on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram @No2PlasticsN2 or email no2plastics@gmail.com and tell us what you think.



Anything and everything: Nalin Shah amongst the hundreds of items he sells. Photo Mike Coles

Forty years behind the counter in an Aladdin's cave

By Janet Maitland

Galaxy Drug Store is the kind of place you pop into because you've run out of soap powder but leave with a roll of Sellotape, batteries, super glue, a reel of black cotton, and a tube of Polyfilla... and a small bag of compost to save you trekking to the garden centre... and some socks... and a card for your sister's birthday.

The little shop in Church Lane, N2, celebrating its 40th anniversary this month, is known as the shop that sells everything. It's like walking into the Tardis, there is so much inside, 1,800 varieties at the last count.

Nalin's babies

"Customers call the shop an Aladdin's cave, but I call it the Chatter Box because East Finchley residents are so friendly," says Nalin Shah, who founded the shop in 1979 and has run it ever since with other members of his family.

His premises initially specialised in baby products, selling over 250 varieties of baby food and over 10 brands of nappies, quickly expanding to a second shop in New Southgate. Though he now sells something for everyone, Nalin still has a wide range of toys for sale and is proud that many of the babies he catered for have now grown up, been to university, and had children of their own.

The personal touch

Nalin really is an example of a personalised style of shop-keeping. If anyone wants something special he'll always try to get it for them, and wherever he can he'll do a free delivery, even if it's just one light bulb, and change it. For senior citizens



Four decades: Nalin outside his Galaxy Drug Store. Photo Mike Coles.

he helps them do their grocery shopping.

He believes work and laughter are the best medicine in life. "My late parents blessed me with their work ethic and I'd like to pay tribute to them for this," he says. "I'd also like to thank the previous owner Martin Beckworth and his parents.

They gave me such encouragement when I first started."

So, after 40 years behind the counter, what are Nalin's plans for Galaxy? "I want to carry on for as long as I can," he admits. "I won't be retiring in 40 days, 40 weeks or 40 months, but I certainly won't be here in another 40 years' time!"

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