

Legendary Litter Picker crowned Environment Champion for Spelthorne

Tuesday 6 June, 2023

Spelthorne Litter Pickers volunteer [Neil Maitland Walker](#) has been presented with the award for **Environment Champion 2023**, at the Spelthorne and Runnymede Volunteer Awards ceremony, which took place at Royal Holloway on Monday 5th June. He was presented with a trophy and certificate by the Mayors of Spelthorne and Runnymede. He was described as 'a true legend, who deserves recognition for the difference he is making to the borough'.

Cheryl Wright, one of Spelthorne Litter Pickers Trustees, said "Neil has been litter picking all his life, making the headlines when he managed a hotel in Saudi Arabia. He became something of a local celebrity there by clearing rubbish from a nearby beach and was recognised by the Mayor and the environment agency, even making the national press.

Neil goes out in all weathers and on groups picks is generally one of the first to arrive. We often have to drag him out of the bushes at the end because the rest of us want to go home. He is a real 'Womble', recycling items that he finds whenever he can. He then toddles off with his picker and his carrier bag, to pick all the way home, emptying his carrier bag in each rubbish bin he passes."

Spelthorne Litter Pickers, a borough-wide group of volunteers started during lock-down, have just celebrated their 3rd anniversary and welcomed their 1,000th member. The group, whose mission is to make Spelthorne a cleaner, greener place, was also nominated for the team category of the Spelthorne and Runnymede Volunteer Awards 2023.

SLP's Chair and Co-Founder, Shirley Lunn said "we have been overwhelmed by the response of the local community to the group. When we started, we thought we might manage to recruit 20 volunteers, so to reach 1,000 is just incredible! Most of our members adopt an area near their homes, cleaning up as they walk the dog, do the school run or fetch the morning paper, as well as taking part in group picks to clean up local parks, reservoirs and rivers. We lend equipment to community groups and businesses who want to get involved, as well as supporting Duke of Edinburgh award students to complete their volunteering activity by litter picking. One of the reasons for our success is that we have a close working relationship with our local Neighbourhood Services team and councillors at Spelthorne Borough Council, who provide vital financial and practical support, and we are enormously grateful to them."

If you would like to know more about the group, you can find them on Facebook, or email spelthornelitterpickers@gmail.com.

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