

Fairtrade in Suffolk

Over the last 18 months, like Fairtrade groups all over the UK, those of us in Suffolk found ourselves unable to do all our usual activities to promote Fairtrade – such as school visits, coffee mornings, stalls & special events.

One potential casualty was the 2020 conference of SAFT – the Suffolk Association of Fairtrade Towns. SAFT was formed in 2016, following a successful tour of Suffolk by Patrick Kaberia (organised by the Fairtrade Foundation). We have held a summer conference, hosted by one of our nine Fairtrade Towns, each year since then.

Not wishing to miss out, we arranged a 'virtual conference' via Zoom. We asked Mike Gidney, (Chief Executive of the Fairtrade Foundation) and Patrick for short video clips to use – but they both went one better and joined in the conference live. The conference was a great success with about 40 people attending. An edited version can be seen on this website.

Inspired by the success of this link we decided to be even more ambitious and offer a link to Patrick in Kenya to all Suffolk schools during Fairtrade Fortnight 2021. Unfortunately, the resurgence of Covid 19 and the closure of schools meant this had to be cancelled. Instead, we have arranged a special Suffolk Fairtrade Fortnight from 9 – 22 October 2021 with a focus on schools and young people. The highlight is a live link, via Zoom, to Patrick in Kenya when a panel of six local children will put questions to Patrick on aspects of Fairtrade. Other schools in Suffolk have been invited to take a feed of the Q&A session using 'webinar' technology.

Patrick will be familiar to some of you from his visits to the UK in 2016 and 2017. Others will recognise him for his contribution to the educational videos produced for the Fairtrade Foundation. Patrick is a Fairtrade tea farmer from Michimikuru in Kenya. He also works for the local tea co-operative, advising smallholders on how to improve their yields and follow good conservation practice. He has been active in explaining the effects of climate change on his local area and what steps have been taken to mitigate some of its effects – such as crop diversification and tree planting.

To support the live link, we have made a range of educational material featuring Patrick available via our website. Much of this has been produced by the Fairtrade Foundation but there are also some 'home videos', produced by Patrick, of his tea nursery started on his return from the UK in 2016.

We have two more initiatives in the programme. The first is a writing competition with £100 in prizes donated by the East of England Co-op.

The other is a Q&A session with Mike Gidney via Zoom during the second week of the fortnight. Pupils will be able to put questions direct to Mike on the role of Fairtrade in promoting Fairtrade and supporting farmers and other workers.

We hope to put an edited version of the session with Patrick on this website in due course.