



**PLASTIC FREE
COMMUNITIES**
SURFERS AGAINST SEWAGE



BUSINESS TOOLKIT





WELCOME!

Welcome to your Plastic Free Communities Business Toolkit! First of all, thank you! If you're reading this it's because you've made a decision to remove single-use plastic from your business or organisation, or are seriously considering it.

Plastic pollution and tackling society's throwaway, excessive and unnecessary single-use culture has become a top priority for Surfers Against Sewage. From surfing to swimming, beach holidays to wildlife watching, plastic is now an inevitable and unwelcome part of the experience. Plastic pollution is also evident inland, blighting our lanes, paths and hedgerows and inevitably ending up in waterways.

Globally, we are producing nearly 300 million tonnes of plastic every year. Of that, it is estimated that up to 13 million tonnes of plastic leaks into the global marine environment annually. This has adverse implications for wildlife, the economy and human health.

Your business can help reduce plastic pollution in the environment. Reuse, recycle and find plastic-free options wherever possible.

How to use your Toolkit

This toolkit provides the information you need to make your business plastic-free.

Start fighting plastic waste and the pollution it causes by eliminating single-use plastic from your business and committing to alternatives. Remember that by banishing at least three avoidable single-use plastic items from your business you will also be helping your community to achieve Plastic Free accreditation.

1. Plastic Bottles



Plastic bottles last hundreds of years in the marine environment slowly breaking down into dangerous microplastic particles. Offer refillable alternatives.

2. Coffee Cups and Lids



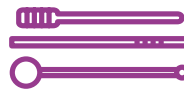
In the UK we throw away 7 million single-use coffee cups each day. Encourage customers to refill instead.

3. Plastic Bags



Plastic bags kill marine life through unintentional digestion or inhalation. Ban them from your business. Offer reusable paper, cotton or jute bags instead.

4. Plastic Straws and Stirrers



Used for only a few minutes, plastic straws are one of the top polluters of the marine environment. Offer paper alternatives instead.

5. Plastic Cutlery



Food and drink related plastic items make up one in every five pieces of litter. Stock washable cutlery or plastic-free alternatives.

6. Balloons



Don't use or sell balloons. They can entangle and kill marine wildlife.

Don't stop there! Think about eliminating plastic cups, bathroom plastics, 'on the go' plastic food packaging, condiment sachets and single-use promotional items.

BECOMING A PLASTIC FREE BUSINESS

Step One:

- Champion the plastic-free cause and register your business with a local Plastic Free Communities team if you have one.
- Complete an audit of your business. What single use plastics do you use?
- What have you already got rid of or replaced?
- What can you easily stop using and providing to customers?
- What are the things you will need to phase out more gradually?
- If you really can't do without some items, are there sustainable alternatives on the market?
- What are the things you feel you have no control over e.g. suppliers and how they provide/send goods?

Step Two:

Pick one item at a time, starting with the easiest. You know what will work for your business, so we leave those decisions to you. Our suggestions here are based on other businesses who have gone plastic free successfully. They include:

- Stop giving out straws and keep a small stock of paper straws in for those who really need them.
- Stop selling bottled water and offer a Refill Service instead. Could you join a Refill scheme in your local area?
- Encourage coffee refills by selling re-usable cups and offer a discount to people who use them. Brand them up and let everyone see what you are doing.
- Ban carrier bags and encourage customers to bring their own. Sell a jute or cotton bag for customers to use. Again, brand it up.
- Stop providing stirrers and put stainless steel spoons out for customers to use. Could they add sugar/sweetener in your shop?
- Stop providing milk sachets and provide a jug of milk for customers to use. Again can they add their milk while in your business?
- Stop giving out sachets and provide a sugar/sweetener shaker, glass bottles of sauce or sauce dispensers instead.
- Ban biscuits wrapped in plastic and opt for 'nude' biscuits.
- Use paper bags instead of plastic bags.
- Stop giving out serviettes as standard. Make sure the ones you do give out are fully compostable. Swap to washable serviettes for non-takeaway customers.

What Then?

There may be some single use items you need to phase out gradually and there may be some you can't do without. In this case look for sustainable alternatives, which are now widely available through regular suppliers. Ideas include:

- Swap plastic takeaway cutlery for wooden cutlery.
- Swap polystyrene or plastic food trays/boxes for home compostable bagasse or cardboard.
- Swap bubble wrap for collapsible cardboard protective packaging. Start up a bubble wrap swap with other businesses to re-use packaging.
- Encourage coffee refills to reduce the number of single use cups you give out/buy.
- Switch to glass bottles or canned drinks. Again widely available through suppliers.

If you are a service based business or office, think how can you encourage staff to go plastic free while at work.

- Ban plastic water bottles and disposable coffee cups from the building. Ask staff to use refill bottles and cups instead.
- Encourage plastic free lunches. Share food once a week to cut plastic ... and team build!
- Remove all avoidable, single-use-plastic food and drinks packaging.
- Replace single use tableware with re-useable items.
- Ensure appropriate recycling routes are available to capture plastic.
- Encourage staff to make sustainable food and drink packaging choices and incentivise a workplace recycling system.
- Avoid the use of and release of balloons at your events.
- Swap to milk in glass bottles.
- Use pencils more often to cut down the number of plastic pens you buy.

When you do your audit you'll be surprised at how big your plastic footprint really is!

Trial things out, do your research, ask other plastic-free champions for advice and talk to your suppliers. Talk to your Chamber or BID group. Can you get a bulk buy scheme going involving other plastic-free businesses? Don't worry if you can't tackle everything right now or can't find an immediate solution – the steps you CAN and DO take will still make a big difference.

PLASTIC FREE COMMUNITY STATUS

Once you have made three changes and have a plan to tackle others in the business, let your local Plastic Free Communities group know and become a 'Plastic Free Champion'!

You'll be promoted locally as a plastic-free business so people know where to shop to support a plastic free lifestyle. Window stickers are available and you'll get a certificate when your location achieves SAS Plastic Free status.

Then what? Take another look at your business/organisation. What can you do next? Are there other ways you can reduce plastics in your business and in your town? Can you encourage and mentor other businesses? Can you put pressure on suppliers? Stay in touch – we're building a community resistance and your experiences will help others.

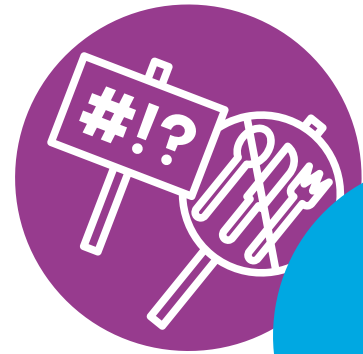
Single-use plastics are present in our world in staggering numbers. Even small, gradual changes can make a significant difference.

TELL THE WORLD!

Put your business on the plastic-free map by sharing your efforts with the community through social media, websites and business directories.

Display your window stickers, posters and certificates with pride! Share your story in your community and on social media. Get involved in local plastic-free events. Tell your customers, tell fellow businesses, tell your networks!

Remember to use these hashtags on social media:
#PlasticFreeCommunities #PlasticFreeCoastlines



BIOPLASTICS AND COMPOSTABLES

Compostable bioplastic packaging made from sustainable plant based materials like wood, sugarcane and corn starch are becoming increasingly popular as replacements for oil-based plastic products.

Beware of greenwash in bio-based food and drink packaging, especially any 'marine friendly' claims or statements that items made from PLA plant starch are easily home compostable or friendly to the natural environment. Generally nothing is 'good for landfill' either!

Know the Score:

1. There is no mandatory legislation that covers the use of the terms biodegradable or compostable in food and drink packaging.
2. As a business buyer you could be "sold" on the environmental benefits of a product alone without enough accurate information on product disposal to make an informed decision.
3. Businesses are led to believe that because a product is compostable or biodegradable it poses little negative effect on the environment. This is untrue! Most compostable materials require specific processes and heat conditions to break-down. Put into normal household waste, landfill or littered they can be just as resilient as oil-based plastic!

Properties of Different Bioplastics:

PLA (Polylactic acid) a bioplastic made from corn starch commonly used for bags, cutlery, cold cups, hot cup/container lining and straws. PLA must be "hot" or industrially composted. It's not going anywhere if you put it in your garden compost or food waste collection.

Bagasse is recycled sugarcane used for takeaway boxes. It's not bioplastic, just pressed sugarcane. This can be "cold"/home or "hot"/industrially composted. However, some commercial bagasse is not accredited for home composting.

CPLA is a form of PLA that is heat resistant and must be "hot" or industrially composted.

RCPLA is 'Recycled CPLA'. Again this can only be composted in "hot" or industrial processes.

Cellophane is a wood pulp cellulose based material. Like other bioplastics it must be "hot"/industrially composted. There are dissolving wood pulp cellulose based materials on the market that can be "cold"/home or "hot"/industrially composted.

It is always worth checking with suppliers and manufacturers how sustainable alternatives are disposed of. Pick compostable over bio-degradable but be aware that many compostable products are not home compostable and need to go to special composting facilities, of which there are very few in the UK.

The bottom-line is check what you are buying and its waste journey. **SAS don't endorse or recommend specific products. Our message is to avoid single use as much as you can, by encouraging elimination, reuse and recycling.**

Pollution Stats:

- The UK uses a staggering 38.5 million single-use plastic bottles every day. Of which fewer than 60% are currently recycled!!
- Only 1% of the 2.5 billion paper coffee cups used in the UK each year are recycled.
- Used for just 20 minutes, once discarded a straw can last in the environment for 100s of years. Straws Suck!
- Plastic bags fragment in 100-300 years depending on thickness and size, but will remain at large in the environment indefinitely.
- Millions of toothbrushes are discarded every year in order to preserve our dental health. Sell a non-plastic toothbrush to ensure they don't pollute our environment post use.
- Single use plastic utensils are often not recycled due to contamination with food and cost of recycling per unit. Refuse to stock them, provide sustainable alternatives and reduce this unnecessary plastic addition to landfill.
- Nearly 24 cotton bud sticks are found for every 100m of UK coastline! These are incorrectly disposed of down the toilet and can last for 100s of years in the environment.
- Each person in the UK generates around 175kg of packaging waste every year.

THANKS FOR READING!

Surfers Against Sewage is a marine conservation and campaigning charity inspiring, uniting and empowering communities to protect oceans, waves, beaches and wildlife. Plastic pollution in our oceans is the 'new sewage'. Blighting our beaches and strangling our seashores it reaches every part of our oceans. It is one of the biggest global environmental threats of our age and fighting it together is our priority issue.

To Combat Plastic Pollution, we will:

- Stop the problem at source
- Clean up pollution from our beaches

Plastic Free Communities is a movement to engage and connect individuals, communities and businesses in the collective effort to reduce the flow of single-use plastics into the marine environment.

This project is made possible thanks to donations by our members

www.plasticfree.org.uk
www.sas.org.uk

