

**Environment and
Sustainable Communities
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

6 October 2022

Single Use Plastics Project - Update



**Report of Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods
and Climate Change**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide members of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a progress report on the work to reduce the use of Single Use Plastics in Durham County Council and across County Durham.

Executive summary

- 2 Members will be provided with information relating to progress made against the Single Use Plastic (SUP) action plan to date.

Recommendations

- 3 That Environment and Sustainable Communities OSC (ESC OSC):
 - a) Receive this report and action plan and comment accordingly.
 - b) Receive an update on the SUP agenda as incorporated into the Waste Management presentation delivered by the Neighbourhood & Climate Change Directorate.

Background

- 4 The Committee has previously agreed to monitor progress in relation to the SUPs action plan and has received several update reports, presentations and briefing notes regarding this agenda.

- 5 When considering its work programme in July 2022, the ESC OSC agreed that an update on the action plan should come to a formal meeting of the committee to be held in October 2022.

Detail

- 6 Since 12 November, 2018, in advance of Government legislation being introduced, the SUP task group (consisting of both internal and external partners) has made significant progress towards the reduction of single use plastics across County Durham which has attracted both national and local publicity. Work to date has included the following:
 - The adoption of a bespoke County Durham SUP pledge where residents and organisations can join a growing army of volunteers to reduce and seek alternatives to SUPs. 308 individuals and organisations have signed the pledge since March 2019 (which has celebrity endorsement as featured by Matt Baker from the BBC's One Show).
 - A 90% reduction in the use of single use plastic catering supplies used across DCC and its partner organisations e.g. plastic stirrers have been replaced with reusable ones where possible and the use of 'Vegware' introduced as an alternative to SUP.
 - A DCC reusable cup has been introduced and promoted to DCC staff – over 850 have been sold to date.
 - Schools across County Durham have been promoting 'plastic free' days and eliminating the use of SUPs across their catering functions by washing, returning and reusing meal trays (St. Bede's, RC Primary School at Sacriston, BBC, One Show, media coverage). St Joseph's RC Primary School at Ushaw Moor received local media coverage including T.V. coverage on Tyne and Tees TV in February, 2020 in relation to their single use plastic reduction efforts.
 - Initiatives to reuse plastic containers has been introduced within Durham University catering premises and discount incentives on purchases has been promoted to students (over 600 reusable containers have been issued to students for reuse).

- Partners have been promoting Northumbrian Waters 'Refill' initiative, which have grown in number from 83 to over 300 Refill stations now located across County Durham in bars, restaurants and public locations. Residents and staff across County Durham are encouraged to carry a reusable water bottle at all times.
- Trials of using 6.5 tonnes of unrecyclable plastic within Highway road schemes has been introduced on A689, near Sedgfield, County Durham.
- The Gala Theatre in Durham City has prevented throwing 750kg per year of SUP confetti into the audience per year at the end of each performance by introducing paper confetti as an alternative.
- Leisure Centres across County Durham have stopped providing blue plastic overshoes at the poolside which has saved 2.4 tonnes of SUP going for disposal per year.
- Introduced trials of crisp packet recycling in County Hall via the Walker's crisp packet recycling scheme – over 10,000 crisp packets have been collected and sent for recycling since the scheme was introduced in January 2019. Partners who also supporting this scheme were e.g., Beamish Museum and the Land Registry. Unfortunately, this national scheme has now ceased as collection system trials within supermarkets has superseded this scheme.
- Introduced additional trials of on street recycling containers within Durham City Centre. This is currently being reviewed and new improved on street recycling across the city/ county is being considered.
- Adopted a SUP logo for Partners and suppliers to give public recognition of their commitment to reduce SUPs across County Durham.
- Established a web based information hub in relation to the work of the SUP task group available at www.durham.gov.uk/singleuseplastics

- Delivered over 100 community talks and roadshow events across County Durham in relation to reducing SUP's and offering waste awareness advice since the start of the project.
 - Encouraged the supply chain via DCC's procurement processes and the North East Procurement Organisation to encourage contractors and suppliers to prevent or seek alternatives to SUPs.
 - Shared examples of best practice across the Country and regionally to assist others reduce SUPs.
 - Won both a 2019 local County Durham Environment Award and a national Local Authority Recycling Committee (2019 LARAC) award (Waste Prevention and Partnership categories).
 - Incorporated the SUP pledge into Durham University's reward app for students.
 - Worked with Durham Youth Council to deliver awareness initiatives within secondary schools regarding preventing SUPs which will be rolled out further to primary school children.
 - Continued to deliver countywide communications regarding preventing SUPs via our internal and external channels (DCN, Buzz magazine etc) and we also continue to work with our partners to deliver such messages across County Durham.
- 7 The Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions associated with it halted much of the activity of the SUP task group however despite this progress was made in relation to reducing SUPs across County Durham during this period. The SUP task group (chaired by Victoria Burrell, Waste Strategy Team Manager) continue to meet quarterly post pandemic with the last meeting being held on 14th July, 2022 to discuss and monitor progress against the 2021/23 action plan. The SUP Task group is keen to regain the momentum relating to this topic and build upon its successes it gained pre pandemic.
- 8 Work in relation to this area has included procurement of goods and services, trading services, DCC policy changes and communications. Appendix 2 details the SUP action plan work during 2021/23 in relation

to reducing SUPs across County Durham. This work is carried out locally in County Durham against the backdrop of government waste policy proposals to the significantly reduce single use plastics in England via the Resources and Waste Strategy for England, 2018 proposals.

Conclusion

- 9 This report and attached action plan (appendix 2) provide a comprehensive update on how the actions to reduce single use plastics across County Durham have been and are being achieved.

Background papers

None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

The reduction of single use plastics supports the Climate Change agenda.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Not applicable

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable