

DISPOSING OF THE DISPOSABLES

Convenience food and eating on the go is an integral part of our daily lives – and not something that is likely to change any time soon.

The waste generated by our contemporary lifestyle has however been the subject of much media attention recently – this update aims to provide our customers with some useful background information.

PAPER CUP RECYCLING *Going from strength to strength*

Here in the UK we are using around 2.5 billion cups a year. Back in 2016 just 1 in 400 of these cups was being recycled.

Thanks to an inspiring example of industry collaboration we celebrated a figure of 1 in 25 in 2018 – and this year it is estimated that 1 in 12 cups will be recycled. Times are definitely changing.

- PE lined paper cups can be recycled by stripping the polymer lining, with both elements being used to produce new products.
- Five reprocessors are accepting these cups with a total capacity to recycle all the 2.5 billion cups the UK is using each year.
- What still needs improvement is how the used cups are collected and sent to the reprocessing plants.

Cup material is extremely high quality and recent initiatives mean that it is now more financially attractive to collect cups. 21 waste collectors are now actively participating in a national scheme to transport them to reprocessors. Initially this figure was just 2.

Waste collectors will assist you to manage waste from your own site – however unless your customers make use of your own recycling bins you have no control over what your customers do with cups once they take them away.

A very big step forward has therefore been the agreement with ACE UK which means that not only can waste contractors deliver used paper cups direct to ACE UK's recycling facility, the company's network of Bring Banks is available for consumers to recycle cups themselves.

ACE UK has been running the beverage carton industry's recycling programme for over a decade with the result that today a massive 92% of local authorities collect beverage cartons through either Bring Banks or kerbside collection.

The long term focus of the agreement aims to achieve the same outcome for cups and it appears to be working. 115 local authorities now collect paper cups alongside cartons and 9 councils have started kerbside collections.

Research confirms that a high percentage of consumers say that they would be encouraged to recycle cups used on the go if there were more bins in public places. These are now beginning to appear in city centres, transport hubs, service stations and office complexes.

 *Read on for information regarding compostable cups and useful websites.*



THE ROAD TO RECYCLING



Café Connections is a major food packaging distributor working with the food-2-go sector.

Since we first opened our doors in 2002 we have always taken the environmental impact of disposable packaging seriously. We select products with this in mind and we follow industry advances to ensure our range keeps pace with new developments. We buy British whenever possible to keep the carbon footprint of our goods low and we are committed to providing our customers with clear information to help them make informed decisions.



INDUSTRY COLLABORATION

Many of our suppliers are playing a major role in tackling the waste management issue. The message is however clear – we all have a role to play if recycling is to reach its full potential.

COMPOSTABLE HOT CUPS

A number of our manufacturers are able to supply compostable hot cups certified to standard EN13432 and which perform well. Whilst these are more expensive than the standard PE lined cups, prices have dropped considerably allowing compostable cups to now become a more viable option.

The PLA lining is derived from plant material rather than oil and therefore can be seen as more sustainable. However, contrary to most people's expectations, these cups need to be composted within a controlled environment – and there are few such facilities in the UK.

In reality most businesses using compostable packaging dispose of it in the same bin as their food waste. For the majority of the UK the usual method for dealing with food waste is via Anaerobic Digestion (AD) which is the government's preferred disposal method as it offers superior carbon savings when compared with In Vessel Composting (IVC).

Due to strict PAS100 regulations, AD plants cannot risk anything which is not food or is not compostable getting through into the digestion unit – which means all packaging is removed (whether compostable or not) and sent to an incinerator to be burnt to make energy.

At the present time, the path for composting your hot cups is therefore less clear than recycling.

EDUCATING THE CONSUMER

It is important that we do not forget the crucial role that the hot cup user has to play. Whether cups are to be recycled or composted it is important that they are not thrown away containing residue liquid or filled with rubbish (many people use them like mini waste bins). McDonalds have tackled this issue with the recycling units they have rolled out to 1200 of their restaurants.

Where facilities do exist for used cups to enter the waste management chain we need to help consumers get used to which bins they should use.

Confronted by well meaning but often sensational press stories, consumers are understandably pushing their providers to resolve the environmental issue. We do hope that the information in this leaflet assists you to explain the current situation to your customers and allay their fears about the packaging you use.

LIDS

The majority of cup lids are made from polystyrene which we have until now classed as 'non-recyclable'. Whilst this is still accurate in the general sense, an increasing number of waste management companies are now recycling these – check with your own contractor for details. PLA lids coming onto the market are more reliable than their predecessors; however length and temperature of storage remain real issues. Like other PLA products they are compostable but only in a controlled environment.



USEFUL WEBSITES

FOODSERVICE PACKAGING ASSOCIATION (FPA)

• www.foodservicepackaging.org.uk
Café Connections is a member of this body which represents manufacturers and distributors of food-2-go packaging. The FPA's support for PRN reform makes interesting reading.

PACK2GO EUROPE

• www.pack2go-europe.com
This is the European Association for convenience food packaging of which the Paper Cup Alliance is part. Recycling is a challenge facing the whole of Europe.

THE PAPER CUP RECOVERY AND RECYCLING GROUP

• www.pcrrg.uk
Brings together organisations from all parts of the supply chain – manufacturers, retailers, waste contractors and reproprocessors to work towards a common aim. The PCRGG has been extremely proactive in making recycling a reality.

ACE UK

• ace-uk.co.uk
Visit the ACE website to learn more about local authority involvement and the location of Bring Banks. Interestingly ACE's paper mill goes on to use recovered wood fibres to produce high-strength paper products such as cores and tubes for consumer and industrial use. The polymer layers are used to make items such as garden furniture, children's play mats and construction materials.

JAMES CROPPER

• www.cupcycling.co.uk has the capacity to recycle 500 million cups generating zero waste. 90% is turned into beautiful papers and boards with 10% plastic being sent on to be recovered into plastic products..

D S SMITH

• www.dssmith.com/recycling
This major packaging manufacturer has the capacity to recycle 2.5 billion cups a year – the UK's entire annual usage. Their website underlines the need for collaboration and the prime challenge of getting the cups to them for processing.

SIMPLY CUPS

• www.simplycups.co.uk was the UK's first nationwide cup collection and recycling scheme. Interesting to note they also handle polypropylene (PP), polystyrene and PET cups.

VEOLIA

• www.veolia.co.uk
Major waste management operator who is set to recover 120 million cups this year.

RECYCLE MORE

• www.recycle-more.co.uk
Useful resource for information on recycling cups – as well as paper, batteries, plastic, electronics, food and steel.