

University of Plymouth Plan for Plastics

1. Introduction

As a world leader in sustainable practices and education, the University of Plymouth places great emphasis on delivering an estate that supports University core business activity whilst reducing our impact on the environment. Our aim is to play our part in creating a more sustainable future, operating in a socially responsible manner through responsible governance, procurement of goods and services, management of suppliers and business activity and use of materials and resources. To achieve that, we have developed an award-winning approach to sustainability that links research, teaching and campus operations.

The University already has an established Waste Management Plan, which has been in place since 2011, and a detailed Environmental Policy. Both of these documents include agreed targets for waste and recycling, of which plastic is obviously a key component.

In addition to this, the University is also delivering world-leading research into plastics and the many and varied threats they pose, in particular within the marine environment. Through its Marine Institute and International Marine Litter Research Unit (both led by Professor Richard Thompson OBE), its mission in this area is to advocate a holistic approach, not only furthering our understanding of the impacts of litter on the environment and society, but to identify the solutions and the pathways necessary to achieve them.

This expertise – which dates from a paper in *Science* in 2004, when Professor Thompson was the first scientist to use the term ‘microplastics’ to describe microscopic fragments of marine debris – has been used to inform government policy in the UK and beyond and its academics have been invited to produce evidence for numerous public inquiries and organisations including the United Nations and the Government Office for Science.

In light of recent increased publicity around the global problem of plastic pollution, and a number of regional, national and international initiatives, a Plan for Plastics has been produced. The aim of this plan is to build on our existing expertise through a number of key avenues.

Together with our partners in Britain’s Ocean City, we believe we are well placed to play a lead role in both scientific and social terms in tackling this growing global problem and driving solutions to it.

2. External drivers

As well as our research agenda and social commitments, we believe there are three emerging external developments that the University can contribute to which have promoted the production of this plan. They are:

- The WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) UK Plastics Pact;
- Plymouth City Council (PCC) Plan for Plastic;
- Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) Plastic Free Coastlines (being led by PCC, Plymouth is currently on track to be the first city to gain the status).

The plan proposed within this document demonstrates the actions required of the University in order to deliver against the requirements of the three initiatives. It incorporates mostly work that is already underway or in current plans, which would not require additional resources, meaning the University is well placed to contribute to these external campaigns.

3. Requirements of the UK Plastics Pact

The following are the requirements of the WRAP UK Plastics Pact and the implications for the University. The pact is aimed at manufacturers, and so not all of the targets are relevant to our activities, but most notably the recycling target of 70% matches our current agreed recycling target.

The overall aim of the pact is to transform the UK plastic packaging sector and help stop plastics polluting the environment by 2025.

WRAP requirements (by 2025)	University implications
Take actions to eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use packaging items through redesign, innovation or alternative (reuse) delivery models.	Addressed in the action plan – looking to remove where possible the use of single-use plastics.
100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, packaging recyclable or compostable.	We do not manufacture packaging or products. Requirements for items sold throughout cafes and the campus shop to be included in supplier requirements.
30% average recycled content across all plastic packaging	As above.
70% of plastic packaging effectively recycled or composted	The University has an existing target to recycle 70% of all waste. Targets align, but

	we do not separate plastics as an individual waste stream but we can report on recycling rates that include plastics.
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Upon signing up to the UK Plastics Pact, the University will be required to:

- Embed the relevant targets of the UK Plastics Pact within our business;
- Work collaboratively with other businesses across the supply chain to tackle the big challenges to meet the collective targets of The UK Plastics Pact;
- Evaluate our performance against the targets - progress year-on-year;
- Communicate to WRAP the evidence of year-on-year progress that we are making to achieve the targets.

The relevant targets for the UK Plastics Pact are already embedded within the University's Waste Management Plan, and the action plan demonstrates measures to be taken to deliver progress against them.

Our researchers are driving forward the debate in this space and will be working in conjunction with businesses and government to deliver change. The University already places environmental requirements on suppliers and this will be reviewed and updated to include packaging and use of single-use plastics.

4. Requirements of PCC Plan for Plastic and SAS Plastic Free Coastlines

The PCC Plan for Plastic aims to drive a citywide effort to significantly reduce the city's use of plastic by 2020, and lead work to achieve the ambition to reducing plastic use to a minimum by 2034. The University is well placed to positively contribute towards, and be a leading member of, this plan.

It details the principles for tackling plastic waste, and there are many where we can lead and/or add great value. This includes the requirement for PCC to support academic and industry research into the development of plastic alternatives; and research and prototyping new methods for removing plastics from the marine environment, including microplastics.

Requirements:

- Be part of an Ocean City Plastics Task Force to develop a detailed and fully costed action plan;
- Sign the 'Plastic Free Plymouth Pledge';

- Sign to become a business pioneer for the Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Coastlines – which involves committing to removing at least three items of single-use plastic which we have identified as the following:
 - All takeaway containers from UCSP outlets to be biodegradable
 - Removal of plastic straws from all UCSP and UPSU outlets
 - Glass bottles used for hospitality.

5. Responsibility

Responsibility for this plan rests with the Department of Estates and Facilities, reporting to the Sustainability Advisory Group, Office of the Vice Chancellor, University Executive Group and Board of Governors. University of Plymouth Student's Union is also signed up to this plan and responsible for delivery of their actions.

6. Reporting and monitoring

The aims of the plastic plan will be incorporated into the University's Waste Management Plan and broader action plan. Monthly reporting against our targets for waste and recycling occurs within the Estates and Facilities waste contract meetings, and as part of ISO 14001 Environmental Management System reporting through the Estates and Facilities Safety Committee.

Performance against these KPIs is reported annually to the Office of the Vice Chancellor, Senior Leadership Team and Board of Governors through the Sustainability Advisory Group and the University's annual sustainability reporting.

7. Goals

1. Minimise consumption of single-use plastics (linked to our target to reduce the amount of waste generated to 20kg per student per annum)
2. Recycle all plastic waste (linked to our target to recycle 70% of waste) and ensure correct management of waste
3. Support the economy and our supply chain to move towards the removal of single-use plastics and implementation of alternatives
4. Deliver world leading research to provide robust evidence about the environmental problems associated with plastic, thereby helping society tackle the global challenge of moving towards a plastic free society

5. Raise awareness within the University as well as externally about the issues associated with single-use plastics and waste generation and promote behaviour change

Plastics Action Plan

GOAL	ACTION	WHEN	WHO
Minimise consumption of single-use plastics (linked to our target to reduce the amount of waste generated to 20kg per student per annum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch Ditch the Disposals campaign to provide alternatives to single-use plastics 	Launched	E&F/UCSP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All disposable takeaway containers to be biodegradable packaging 	In place	UCSP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce reusable cup scheme with 10p discount for take away hot drinks as part of Ditch the Disposables campaign 	In place	UCSP/E&F
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the reusable cup scheme reviewing further discounts and initiatives 	2018	UCSP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a bring your own container scheme for cafes offering take away food 	2018	UCSP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the locations of the water fountains 	2018	E&F
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove the sale of drinks products in plastic bottles in UCSP outlets where alternatives are available (items such as milk cartons aim for recyclable plastic containers if no alternatives become available). 	2021-22	UCSP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portland Square Café pizzas to be served on plates when dining in 	2018-19	UCSP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For hospitality bookings mineral water to be provided in glass bottles or tap water in jugs/glass bottles 	In place	UCSP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove remaining water cooler dispensers that use plastic bottles 	2018	E&F
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review system to increase the use of glass wear rather than plastic cups for hospitality through use of reusable plastic cups for locations unable to provide glassware 	2019	UCSP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No plastic straws in use across UCSP and UPSU outlets 	In place	UCSP/UPSU

GOAL	ACTION	WHEN	WHO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct audit of single-use plastics in use with UPSU • No plastic disposable cutlery to be provided in UPSU outlets • Review event programmes for applicant and open days to promote the location of water fountains on campus and encourage visitors to events to refill water bottles • Conduct a review of marketing material giveaways at open days and other events and begin to replace single-use plastic products with alternatives. 	<p>2018-19</p> <p>In place</p> <p>2018-19</p> <p>2018-19</p>	<p>UPSU</p> <p>UPSU</p> <p>ER</p> <p>ER</p>
<p>Recycle all plastic waste (linked to our target to recycle 70% of waste)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct audit on current recycling facilities including number of bins, location and type of signage • Review and update signage on the recycling facilities • Continue to monitor recycling figures with monthly reporting from our waste contractor • Maintain ISO 14001 and internal audits ensuring correct management and segregation of waste 	<p>Complete</p> <p>2018</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>E&F</p> <p>E&F</p> <p>E&F</p> <p>E&F</p>
<p>Support the economy and our supply chain to move towards the removal of single-use plastics and implementation of alternatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce requirements in the supply chain to move away from single-use plastics and waste through first mapping common/high risk areas. • Incorporate plastics requirement within catering contract reviews 	<p>2019</p> <p>2019</p>	<p>Procurement</p> <p>UCSP</p>

GOAL	ACTION	WHEN	WHO
Deliver world leading research into the problems associated with plastic waste and the potential solutions including behavioural change in order to help tackle this global challenge thus moving towards a plastic waste free society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue world leading research on plastic pollution in the marine environment and leading the agenda through the International Marine Litter Research Unit and the Marine Institute 	Ongoing	R&I/Faculty of Science & Engineering
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to use research findings to support policy and industry (e.g. our previous work on microbeads in cosmetics) 	Ongoing	R&I/Faculty of Science & Engineering
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present and promote research externally to disseminate knowledge to wider industry 	Ongoing	R&I/Faculty of Science & Engineering
Raise awareness about the issues associated with single-use plastics and waste generation to promote behaviour change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and educate on plastics use through communications messages, events and promotion Launch communications campaign around Ditch the Disposables, educating on alternative products and how to remove single-use plastics from every day use 	2018	ER/E&F /CSF
		Ongoing	ER/E&F

E&F	Estates and Facilities
ER	External Relations
Procurement	Procurement
UCSP	University Commercial Services Plymouth
UPSU	University of Plymouth Students' Union
R&I	Research and Innovation
CSF	Centre for Sustainable Futures