



# PLASTIC-FREE EVENT GUIDE



The guide and launch event were made possible thanks to generous funding from the National Lottery Community Fund via Climate Action Fife #ClimateActionFife.



# CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
2. Waste Prevention	2
3. Waste Management	3
4. Communication	4
5. Event Stallholder Guidelines	5
6. Background and Case Study	6





# INTRODUCTION

We all want our local festivals, galas, fairs and sporting events to be fun, bring our communities together and boost the local economy. But events can also generate a lot of waste that damages the environment, generates unnecessary costs for the organisers and results in a poor experience for participants. The good news is that, with a bit of careful planning, there are lots of things you can do to reduce waste at your event.

Plastic-Free Fife has put together this guide to help event organisers plan and deliver events that minimise all types of waste. Tailored to the specific circumstances in Fife, it provides tips about how to run events that are as waste-free as possible, so everyone can do their bit to tackle the plastic and climate crisis.

None of the measures suggested here will prevent stallholders from having a successful day. You must decide in advance how you will deal with non-compliance, including warning of consequences – are you willing to stop people trading on the day or ban them from future events?

# WASTE PREVENTION

Reduce the waste that you will have to deal with and only allow material on site that you want to include in your waste management plan. Send out stallholder guidelines that include information about what is and isn't acceptable (we have attached guidelines that you can edit, see Page 5).

The following are some of the steps you can take to prevent waste:

**X DON'T** allow the sale of **drinks in plastic bottles** (only allow drinks in cans, which are much easier to recycle).

**X DON'T** allow **plastic straws, cutlery, plates or styrofoam food/drink containers** (see Page 6 'The ban on single-use plastic items').

**X DON'T** allow single-use **plastic toys, balloons or glitter** (see Page 6 'Balloons and glitter').



**DO** encourage event goers to **bring their own containers** for hot and cold food, and make sure food stalls agree to serve food to people who do this. Vendors could even offer a discount if you bring your own. Organisers could provide washing-up facilities for the public to clean their containers after use.



**DO** ask food vendors to try and avoid apparently green compostables like Vegware that can't currently be composted in Fife (see Page 6 'Understanding compostables in Fife').



**DO** ask stallholders to **remove bulk packaging materials** before bringing them on site.



**DO** ask event goers **not to bring disposable items** with them (single-use plastic bottles, plastic bags, etc).



**DO** ask them to **bring reusable** water bottles/keep cups/food containers/cutlery. Examples of reusable containers suitable for hot food include tiffins and Tupperware boxes.



**DO** provide a supply of **drinking water** to refill reusable bottles.



**DO** consider **hiring out** reusable food containers and cutlery to event goers. This is best managed centrally by the event organisers rather than asking all food and drink vendors to do it individually. The organisers can purchase (paid for by a grant) or hire reusable plastic cups for vendors to sell hot drinks. Customers pay a deposit when purchasing a drink and this is refunded when the cup is returned to the vendor.

# WASTE MANAGEMENT

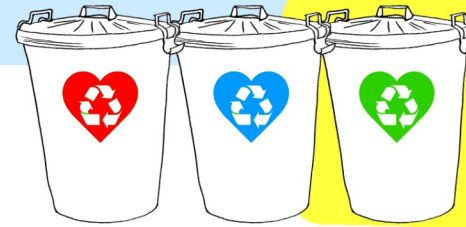
*Even with a good waste prevention strategy, some waste will inevitably be generated at your event. To deal with this, make waste management part of your early planning process, not something added at the last minute.*

## IDENTIFY THE WASTE STREAMS YOU WILL NEED

E.g. food/organic, plastic, cans, cardboard and paper, general waste for landfill/incineration (including compostables). Understand waste quantities and costs. Ideally, all food packaging should be 100% paper without plastic coatings, as any plastic contaminates the paper recycling process.

## ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO TAKE THEIR WASTE HOME WITH THEM

You can reduce the volume of waste you need to recycle by encouraging event goers to take their litter home with them and recycle it there. This can be communicated in pre-event publicity and by event staff during the event. **'Take your rubbish home'** posters can also help.

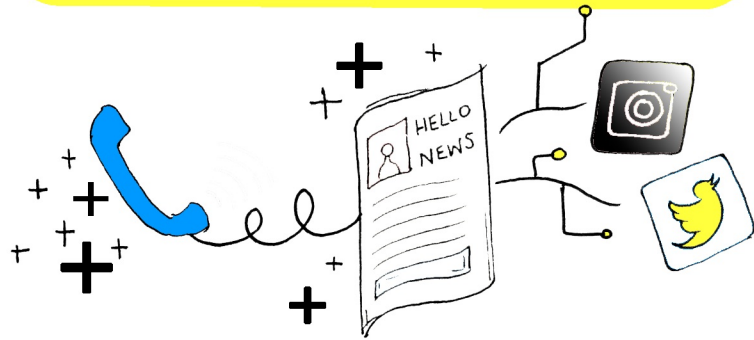


## DEVELOP THE RIGHT 'BIN-FRASTRUCTURE' FOR THE EVENT

- You might need different setups for different areas of the event to deal with backstage/contractor waste and waste produced by the general public.
- Clearly labelled bins are a must so the contents of your recycling bins are not contaminated with the wrong type of waste.
- Clear bin labelling means saying exactly what can and can't go in each bin. Avoid unclear labels like 'mixed dry recycling' – instead, have what can go in, e.g. paper, plastic bottles and drinks cans and what **can't**, e.g. dirty food containers.
- It's a good idea to have a sign at each bin location, explaining the importance of refusing, reusing and only recycling as a last resort.
- Event staff or 'bin monitors' should ideally be on hand to help the public dispose of their items in the correct bin. They can also change bin bags once full.
- Weighing and recording how much waste is collected can help you improve from one year to the next. Although the ultimate goal is a zero-waste event, you won't necessarily achieve this first time out, so aim for progress, not perfection.
- Ask local community groups or Fife Street Champions to help with a post-event litter pick.

Organisers of events in Fife can contact Fife Council's waste management contractor Cireco ([sales@cirecoscotland.co.uk](mailto:sales@cirecoscotland.co.uk)) who will provide recycling and waste bins and arrange for the waste to be collected. Separate recycling bins can be provided for food waste, cans, plastic, and paper and card. There is a charge for this service.

# COMMUNICATION



Before, during and after the event, it's essential to send a clear message to your team, your stallholders and the public that you want to run a successful event **without damaging the environment.**

- **Your event team** needs to understand your ambition to minimise waste, the waste management plan, and what they themselves need to do. This includes helping the public to recycle correctly and recording the amount of waste collected.
- **Contractors and stallholders** need to be made aware of what waste facilities are available to them, any restrictions on materials that they can bring/use/sell and why (see Page 5 'Event Stallholder Guidelines'). They can also be encouraged to take their own waste away with them and recycle it themselves.
- **Event goers** need to understand what you are trying to achieve, why, and what their role is. This needs to be advertised in the run-up to and during the event (ask them to bring their own water bottles, reusable cups, food containers, cutlery, shopping bags, etc.) Don't be apologetic about it – be out and proud, get people excited about attending an event that puts the environment first and make the waste reduction measures you're taking highly visible on the day.
- **After the event**, let people know how it went, set a new target for the following year and remember to say thank you.



LOOK FOR WAYS  
TO IMPROVE  
NEXT TIME

After your event, think about what has gone well and how things could be improved for next time. Set targets for the following year and work them into your plan. You might also want to look at how you can reduce environmental impacts by improving energy and transport efficiency.

WE ARE  
HERE TO HELP!



Please contact Plastic-Free Fife if you would like more information:  
[plasticfreefife@gmail.com](mailto:plasticfreefife@gmail.com).

We would also love to hear about your experiences and share your ideas.

# EVENT STALLHOLDER GUIDELINES

EVENT NAME .....

EVENT DATE .....

The organisers of this event are aiming to minimise waste by reducing single-use plastics and other disposable items and increasing recycling rates. Please help us create a more sustainable event by following these guidelines.

1. Use reusable cups, containers, cutlery and plates where possible, and accept them if event goers bring their own. Consider offering a discount for people who do this. For more information, see <https://www.refill.org.uk/refill-guide-for-events/individuals/>
2. Where reusables are not feasible, try to use paper-based food containers and packaging without plastic coatings, and avoid packaging where possible. Single-use compostables like Vegware should be avoided in Fife at present, as they will be sent to landfill where they will not compost. Expanded polystyrene cups and food containers, and single-use plastic cutlery, stirrers, plates and straws have been **banned in Scotland** (<https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/single-use-plastics/regulations> ) since 1 June 2022.
3. No giving out or displaying balloons or any single-use plastic toys and paraphernalia – opt for paper or card decorations. Avoid glitter, including for face painting.
4. All stallholders should minimise waste brought on site by removing bulk packaging before arriving.
5. No styrofoam/polystyrene (cups, pots, flakes, chips or other styrofoam bulk packaging) to be brought on site.
6. No plastic bags.
7. No sale of single-use plastic drinks bottles – cans for soft drinks, reusable water bottles to be refilled at an agreed location.
8. No single-use condiment sachets – use bulk dispensers.
9. Put unavoidable waste in the correct bins on site, or take it back with you after the event and recycle it yourself.
10. Keep your stall area tidy and leave it free from litter at the end of the event.
11. Share best practices - post any ideas/pictures of alternatives to plastic you have used on social media, tagging ‘plasticfreefife’, or send them to Plastic-Free Fife beforehand, so we can share them.

We are encouraging businesses across Fife to become Plastic-Free Champions (<https://plasticfree.org.uk/get-involved/business/>) and sign up for the City to Sea Refill App (<https://www.citytosea.org.uk/campaign/refill/>). So if you aren't already involved, please get in touch: [plasticfreefife@gmail.com](mailto:plasticfreefife@gmail.com).

# BACKGROUND AND CASE STUDY

## THE BAN ON SINGLE USE PLASTIC ITEMS

Expanded polystyrene cups and food containers, and single-use plastic cutlery, stirrers, plates and straws have been banned in Scotland since 1 June 2022. Vendors are no longer allowed to sell food using these items.

## UNDERSTANDING COMPOSTABLES IN FIFE

New, plant-based 'compostables' have emerged on the market in response to the environmental crisis caused by 'traditional' fossil fuel-based plastics and the ban on single-use plastic items. Disposable products like Vegware cups, food containers and cutlery are now well-known and widely used by food vendors.

Despite their eco-friendly sounding names and clever marketing, these products will not break down in the environment or home composters. They will only compost in very specific industrial facilities. Fife Council does have a plant for composting organic waste, but it can't compost products like Vegware. The council therefore advises that all such compostables should go to landfill, where they will remain for many years without breaking down. If these products enter the wider environment, they will cause the same problems as conventional plastic.

And don't forget that these are still disposable items. Their manufacture consumes lots of energy and resources, only for them to be thrown away after one use.

**Compostable food packaging, containers and utensils are single-use items and should be avoided if possible. If used at events in Fife, they should be disposed of in landfill bins.**

## BALLOONS AND GLITTER

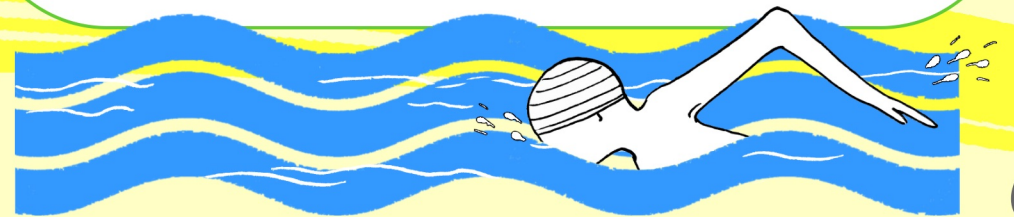
**Balloons** can be a fun and easy way to create a festive atmosphere. However they are single-use (and so wasteful), harmful to the environment, non-recyclable, and non-biodegradable.

Some balloon manufacturers claim their products are plastic-free and/or biodegradable. Although they are made using natural latex they contain other synthetic ingredients like colouring and plasticisers that will not biodegrade. The latex in the balloons will take many months to biodegrade, and in that time it may harm wildlife and pollute the countryside. These 'eco' balloons cannot be recycled either, and should be avoided.

Consider reusable alternatives. Banners and bunting are a great option and can last for years if looked after. Why not try fabric versions that can be mended and cleaned after each use? Or consider making your own bunting from scrap fabric.

Face painting is a popular activity at many events. The **glitter** used in face paints is made from small pieces of plastic which disappear down the drain when they are washed off, going on to pollute the environment and harm wildlife like any other microplastics.

Some suppliers now sell 'biodegradable', plant-based plastic glitters. However, these will still only break down in industrial composters. If they enter the environment, they will cause pollution and harm nature just like 'traditional' plastics.





## CASE STUDY DUNFERMLINE CHILDREN'S GALA

To reduce the amount of single-use plastic at their event, in 2018 the Dunfermline Children's Gala trialled hiring an inflatable bouncy castle for the children to enjoy instead of giving them all a helium balloon. They felt that providing an entertaining experience for the children would be more enjoyable than giving them a balloon each, and this turned out to be true.

In addition, the children were asked to bring along their own refillable water bottles rather than being given a bottle of water during the event. Refillable water urns were provided to top them up. The children were also provided with a packed lunch without any single-use plastic food packaging, including fresh fruit instead of packets of raisins, and small cardboard boxes of sweets instead of plastic-wrapped chocolate. These steps eliminated over 6,000 single-use plastic items from a single event.

