



2024

Guide to **Plastic Free** Festivals & Events



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Project Partners:



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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Introduction

Who is the guide for?

Welcome to the Guide to Plastic Free Festivals and Events, a comprehensive resource tailored for event and festival organisers in Ireland.

Background of the Guide

This guide is the culmination of a year-long collaborative project between Native Events and the Regional Waste Management Planning Offices, thanks to funding from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC). The project looked at how to eliminate single use plastics at Irish festivals and events. It included four separate pilots introducing reusable cups, and two industry round tables with input from international sustainable event industry leaders, from Green Events Netherlands and Hope Solutions UK.

Why Plastic Free Festivals & Events?









In today's world, where environmental consciousness is at the forefront of public concern, it is imperative that the event and festival industry takes proactive steps to eliminate single-use plastics from their operations. This guide has been curated to address the challenges and opportunities faced by event organisers in their pursuit of a more responsible festival and event productions, specifically in the phasing out of single use plastic. It is our vision that by using this guide, you can not only reduce the environmental impact of your events but also activate behavioural change in your audience through memorable experiences that resonate with them.



About the Guide

The Guide to Plastic Free Festivals and Events aims to empower and equip event organisers in Ireland seeking actionable and practical ways to phase out single-use plastics.

Whether you're organising a small community gathering or a large-scale event, the guide will help you to:

-  Gain insights into the broader context of Ireland's efforts to reduce single-use plastics and how these efforts impact the event industry.
-  Understand different facets of your event where single-use plastics are prevalent, from serveware to attendee personal items.
-  Plan and implement reductions in single-use plastics throughout your event production cycle.
-  Understand reusable cold and hot drink cups and serveware alternatives.
-  Tailor your approach to introducing reusable drink cups in various event scenarios, whether it's a small festival, a multi-venue event, or a community gathering.
-  Address the financial aspects of transitioning to reusable cups, making sustainable choices economically viable for your event.
-  Calculate the Carbon Dioxide equivalent emissions associated with reusable cups at your event.
-  Familiarise yourself with key terminology related to plastic free events.

Events and festivals are microcosms of our society. If you were building a new town or city, what principles would you lay as the foundation for a better world?



Ireland's **Single Use** **Plastics** Phase-Out

Implications and Opportunities for the
Festival and Event Industry

What are Single-Use Plastics?

A Single-Use Plastic (SUP) product is one that is made wholly or partly from plastic and which is used only once before being disposed of.

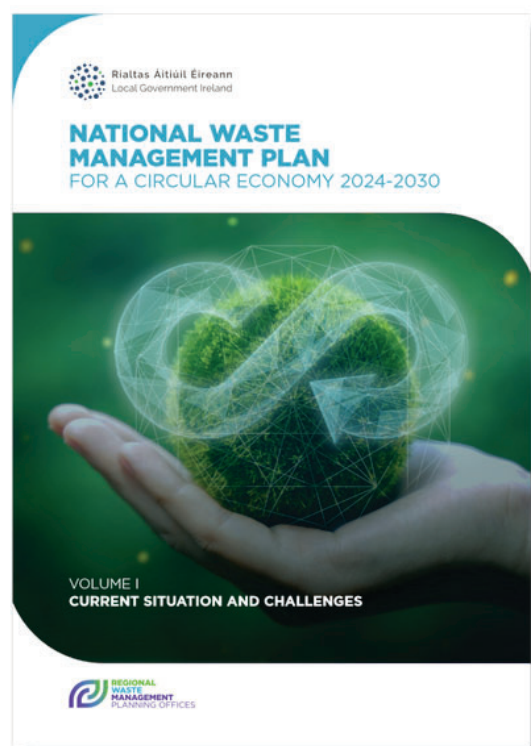


Plastic is an incredibly dangerous, and toxic material. Microplastics are produced from the breakdown of plastics and can enter our ecosystems, contaminate food chains, and may cause human reproductive disorders, cancers, diabetes, and liver disease.* It is crucial for the health of people and the environment to identify, reduce and eliminate them.

The Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (WAPCE) Ireland's National Waste Policy 2020-2025:

The WAPCE is Ireland's roadmap for waste planning and management, aiming to shift Ireland towards a more circular economy where resources are reused or recycled as much as possible and therefore waste generation is minimised. The plan includes a commitment to eliminate and reduce SUPs which is being delivered, to date, through frameworks, such as:

- SUP Directive & Regulations
- Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022
- Local Authorities National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy (NWMPCE) 2024 – 2030
- The Fáilte Ireland Sustainable Festivals Guidelines 2023
- LAPN (Local Authority Prevention Network) Green Events Guide



[The Single Use Plastics Directive & Regulations \(2019/904/EC\)](#)

- Commits EU Member States to introduce a range of measures to eliminate single-use plastic products and transition towards a circular economy.
- It targets the ten most commonly found single-use plastic items on European beaches which, along with fishing gear, represents 70% of all marine litter in the European Union (EU).
- The Directive was transposed into Irish law in July 2021 (European Union (Single Use Plastics) (No. 2) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 516 of 2021).

Refer to Appendix B for full details.

[Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022](#)

The Circular Economy Act 2022 lays down the foundations of a circular economy in Ireland and makes several provisions to facilitate the transition from a "take-make-waste" linear model to a circular model of production where products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, re-manufacture, recycling, and composting.

[Local Authorities National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy \(NWMPC\) 2024 – 2030](#)

The RWMPOs, on behalf of the local authorities, have prepared Ireland's NWMPC which sets out a framework for the prevention and management of waste in Ireland for a period of six years supporting and supplementing the wider policy base of the Circular Economy Act 2022. One of the focus areas of the NWMPC is in relation to SUP waste and includes measures to promote awareness and deliver best practice in the hospitality, sports and events sector. See Appendix C for full details

[LAPN \(Local Authority Prevention Network\) Green Events Guide](#)

The LAPN was set up to facilitate staff within different local authorities to share knowledge and collaborate on projects involving waste prevention and resource efficiency. In relation to greening festivals the LAPN have prepared a kit of materials that can be used by a festival to help make their event more sustainable including a short overall guide for greening a festival, a charter for the festival itself, a charter for local business and a charter for stallholders with steps they might take for greening their operations.

[The Fáilte Ireland Sustainable Festivals Guidelines 2023](#)

The Fáilte Ireland Guidelines outline all key impact areas involved with events and festivals and sustainable actions you can take, including the area of SUPs. For many actions, outcomes not only reduce negative impacts but also influence behaviour change. Staff and audiences inherently learn and behave in certain ways through participation at events. Initiatives such as a light switch-off policy for staff or a reusable cup system for audiences can have an impact.



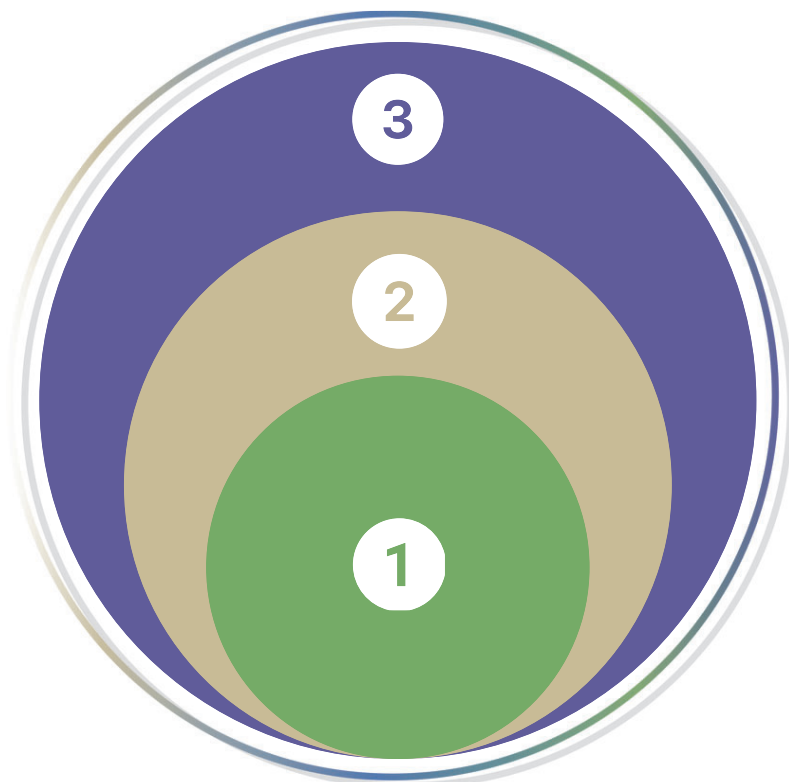
Current Irish outdoor event licensing requirements for waste management:

Current practice in Ireland requires the submission of an Event License Application accompanied by a draft Event Management Plan (EMP) to the planning department of the local authority, at least 13 weeks in advance of a large scale outdoor event (>5,000 attendees), for review by relevant departments.

The Environment Section of the EMP includes a Draft Environment Monitoring Programme which must be in place before, during and after the proposed event. Minimum requirements for the section are details on the litter picking provision, quantities and types of infrastructure, waste hauliers and waste processing plants and licences.

There is currently no requirement in event licensing applications for strategies towards waste prevention and/or waste reduction. It is important for event and festival organisers to remember that when referring to the waste hierarchy, elimination, reduction and reuse come first.

Know your sphere of influence:



- 3 Influence on behaviour: audiences
- 2 Lesser control, but influence: suppliers, artists, stakeholders
- 1 What you control: policy, plan, and core team

What does eliminating SUP mean for festivals, events, and their audiences?

Single use plastic phase out is happening across all industries, underpinned by legislation. Events and festivals are acknowledged as platforms to promote awareness and deliver best practice in reuse. Policy indicates that future event licensing will prohibit single use plastics. It is important to start phasing them out now.

Re-design the event/festival model

- Identify where single-use plastic currently exists within your event or festival (see p.10)
- Look for reductions, alternatives and innovations
- Know your influence with your audience
- Know your influence with stakeholders such as suppliers and sponsors
- Know your event/festival operating model
- Collaborate with stakeholders on SUP elimination

The following sections in this Guide aim to help you navigate SUP reduction and elimination at your festival or event.



Identifying Single-Use Plastics

Single-use plastics can be found in all aspects of events, from the cups and utensils used for food and beverages to the plastic packaging for merchandise and the disposable water bottles often brought by attendees. These plastics are also present in the production and build phase of events, including plastic sheeting, wraps, and cable ties used for setup and infrastructure.



Single Use Plastic

Reduce

Eliminate



Water and Drink Bottles and Cartons

Note: Many cartons contain plastic lining and are difficult to recycle.

Traders, vendors and caterers are only permitted to sell soft drinks and water in aluminium cans. Plastic water and drink bottles are banned.

Aluminium is infinitely recyclable.

Encourage reusable water bottles for all staff, attendees and artists.

Provide water stations front and back of house.

Mandate reusables for all event or festival participants including staff, volunteers, artists, performers and attendees.

Provide water stations front and back of house specified to your event capacity.

For artists areas, encourage reusable bottles and where necessary provide water coolers with reusable cups or bottles.

If a festival or event are selling drinks in plastic bottles, aluminium or steel cans, they will be required to register with Re-turn and operate a deposit return system.

Single Use Plastic

Reduce

Eliminate



Coffee Cups

Certified single use compostable cups collected in a single waste stream.

Compostable cups are lined with PLA (Polylactic acid plastic). Check with your waste contractor if they can process accordingly. If not, they are not a more sustainable single use choice.

Implement a reusable cup system for hot drinks.

See page 18 to plan for a reusable cup system at your event.



Cold Drink Cups
(including all cold drink cup types and sizes)

Use 100% recycled PET. Avoid branded cups or cups with the event name or date to ensure that any unused cups can be used at future events.

Establish a policy of only opening one box or crate at a time.

Ensure the cup is collected in a Mixed Dry Recycling bin and can be correctly processed by the waste contractor.

Create messaging for staff.

Prepare and plan to transition to reusable cups.

Implement a reusable cup system for cold drinks.

See page 18 to plan for a reusable cup system at your event.



Serveware
(Plates, Bowls)

Encourage Bring Your Own (BYO) where possible, in compliance with health and safety regulations.

If using compostable serveware, ensure they are collected in a single waste stream. Compostable serveware are often lined with PLA (Polylactic acid plastic). Check with your waste contractor if they can process the specific serveware in use accordingly. If not, they are not a more sustainable choice.

Reusable serveware is in the early stages of testing at events and festivals. In 2022, three festival pilots in the Netherlands (DGTL, Castlefest, and Into The Great Wide Open) implementing reusable plates, bowls and forks took place. Click [here](#) to read more.

Introduce reusable serveware at your event.

Single Use Plastic

Reduce

Eliminate



Cable Ties

Reduce need for cable ties through advance planning. For example, through the creation of detailed signage plans.

Biodegradable cable ties are available. Challenge: They do not biodegrade in the environment and need to be sent to a dedicated facility - involves extra separation, and assurance that the facility is available to process the cable ties.

Reusable Cable ties are available. This transition should be communicated to staff and volunteers with demonstration and additional time allocation for de-rig.



Straws, Cutlery, Stirrers and napkins

Banned under the SUP Directive 2021

Use wooden compostable utensils and provide dedicated compost bins.

Check with your waste contractor if they can process accordingly.

SUP cutlery, straws, stirrers, and polystyrene cups and containers are banned since July 2021.

Reusable utensils for all back and front of house areas.

Note that hard plastic utensils branded as reusable but not supported by a return system are not SUP elimination.



Signage and Banners

Carefully advance your signage plan to create only what is needed. Reuse signs from previous event iterations.

Work with sponsors to ensure whatever they create can be used at other events or for years to come.

Circular signage sent back to the supplier for processing.

Reusable signage with no date for a minimum of three - five years.



Cigarette butts

Engage your event audience about cigarette filters, highlighting their plastic content. Provide ash trays front and back of house and communicate locations to the audience.

Provide ash trays next to all event or festival bins. Create signage about how to correctly dispose of cigarette butts.

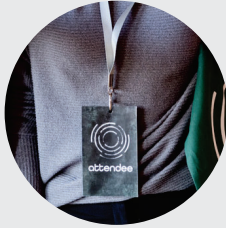
Only allow the sale of biodegradable cigarette filters at your festival. Engage with tobacco shop providers.

Provide ash trays site-wide at all bin stations. Create signage about how to correctly dispose of cigarette butts.

Single Use Plastic

Reduce

Eliminate



Lanyards and pockets

Consider whether or not you need lanyards. Avoid ordering excess amounts of lanyards through careful advance planning. If you can use card for the name tag, punch a hole and avoid using plastic pockets.

Use generic branding for your lanyards so that they can be reused at different events.

Mandate that all lanyards should be returned when attendees are leaving.



Wristbands

Consider whether or not you need wristbands. If your event does not permit re-entry, avoid using them. Avoid ordering excess amounts of wristbands through careful advancing. Wristbands are not reused as they differ from year to year for security reasons.

Assess the supply chain of the wristbands. Can you guarantee they are manufactured as locally as possible? Can you guarantee the working conditions of those who made them? Order what you need only through careful advancing.

The most sustainable wristband option ultimately depends on your event's unique circumstances.



Consider Banning:

Single-use plastic cups:

See section 4 for information on reusable cup implementation.

Glow sticks:

Ban the use and sale of glow sticks event wide. Emphasise the environmental impact of glow sticks and promote alternative lighting options, such as LED devices or reusable glow products.

Plastic Glitter:

Investigate certified biodegradable glitter for your event and communicate the dangers of microplastic glitter to your audience.

Plastic giveaways:

Discourage the distribution of plastic giveaways, such as low-quality plastic sunglasses, which often end up as litter. Encourage event sponsors and vendors to provide eco-friendly alternatives or promotional items with a longer lifespan.

Single-use rain ponchos:

Prohibit traders from selling single-use rain ponchos. Instead, offer reusable raincoats for purchase.

Fake plants:

Reduce plastic decoration and minimise the use of fake plants and plastic garlands.

Plastic carrier bags:

Encourage attendees and staff to bring their own reusable bags and provide reusable cloth bags only for purchases or giveaways.

Single use vapes:

Stay compliant with legislation and stay informed about the evolving regulations regarding vaping products. Communicate this information to attendees well in advance of the event.



How to ban Single-Use Items

Event or Festival Policy:

- **Identify Target Items:** Determine which single use items you want to ban, such as glitter, glow sticks, vapes, or any other items with environmental or safety concerns.
- **Establish Clear Policies:** Create event policies or guidelines explicitly stating the ban on these items. Ensure the policies are clear, concise, and easy to understand. Communicate the new policies to all stakeholders and include a line item about environmental matters in every staff and stakeholder meeting agenda.
- **Set Penalties:** Outline consequences for traders, staff or sponsors who violate the ban, such as confiscation of the prohibited items or fines.

Communication and Messaging:

- **Pre-Event Messaging:** Begin communicating the ban well in advance of the event through various channels, including event websites, social media, email newsletters, and ticketing platforms.
- **On-Site Signage:** Place signage at entrances and throughout the event venue to remind attendees of the ban.
- **Education on Alternatives:** Inform attendees about environmentally friendly or safer alternatives to the banned items for example certified biodegradable glitter. Provide information on where to obtain these alternatives at or before the event.

Security and Enforcement:

- **Security Personnel:** Train event security personnel to identify and address violations of the ban.
- **Bag Checks:** Conduct bag checks at entrances to enforce the policy and prevent prohibited items from entering the event.
- **Amnesty Bins:** Provide designated bins at entry points where attendees can voluntarily surrender prohibited items






Cups in Event Settings:

Cup types most commonly found in event settings in Ireland include single use paper (PAP lined with PE/PLA), single use plastic (PET/rPET), single use compostable (PLA) and reusable hard plastic (PP).

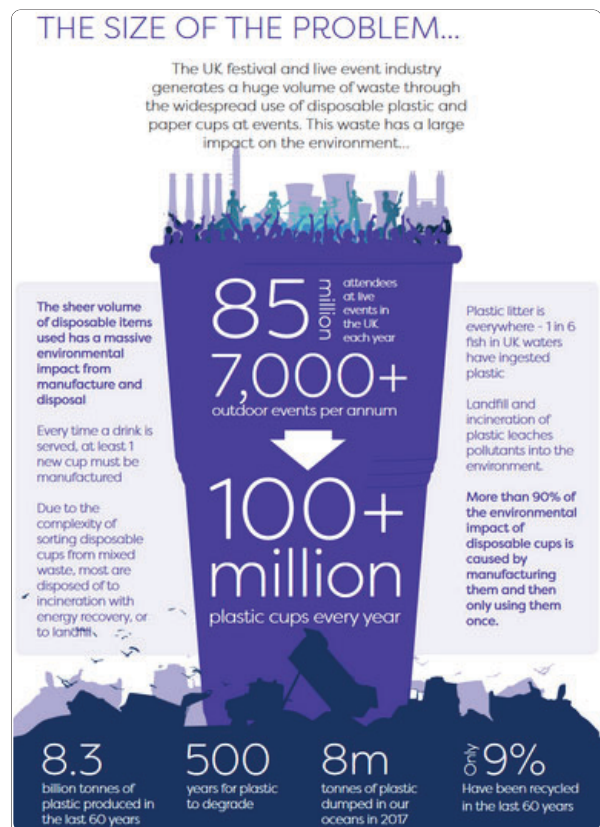
A study in Belgium* using a meta-analysis of 22 life cycle analyses (LCAs) of the impact of various cup types concluded that reusable cups are the most favourable solution for events while also noting that each event situation is different.

The most important factor influencing the environmental sustainability of a reusable cup is the number of uses it has.

	 Disposable (Single Use) Paper Cups	 Disposable (Single Use) Plastic Cups	 Reusable plastic cups
Uses recyclable materials	Sometimes	Sometimes	Yes
Recycled	0-34%	0-34%	100%
To landfill or incineration	66%-100%	66%-100%	>0.1%
Reuseable	No	No	75+
1 pint carbon footprint (CO ₂ e)	17.2g	70.0g	168.0g
75 pint carbon footprint (CO ₂ e)	1,290.0g	5,250.0g	633.1g

The above table shows the carbon impact of single use paper, single use plastic and reusable plastic cups over 75 uses.

Hope Solutions UK Stack Up Report



A study conducted in the UK in 2017, in collaboration between Hope Solutions and ZAP Concepts (UK & Ireland), highlights a concerning statistic: Over 100 million plastic cups are annually consumed within the UK's festival and live events sector, with the majority ending up in incinerators or landfills.

Their research underscores that even when disposed of correctly, single-use cups have a higher environmental footprint than reusable cups.

3

**The number of
uses it takes for
a reusable cup
to become
the better
environmental
choice in
comparison to a
single-use cup**

**GOOD
ON
YOU**

Reusable Cup Roadmap

4

In this section, the reusable cup roadmaps outline 10 key steps of advancing and implementing a reusable cup system for your event or festival.

Key steps:

1. Cup requirements
2. Investigating reuse system options
3. Engaging your team
4. Placing your order
5. Key messaging
6. Operational Planning
7. Staff Briefing
8. On-site implementation
9. Cup counting
10. Impact measurement.

See Appendix D – F for practical checklists



Roadmap for Reusable Cups Implementation

For small, medium and large scale events or festivals, advancing should begin at the outset of the event planning cycle. If you are currently in contract with a sponsor, review this contract in advance of investigating reusable cups.

1. Cup Requirements

With your bar operator, ascertain the quantity of cups you require.

- If you have bought disposable cups previously, and your event numbers are the same, you can order the same amount of reusables as disposables. This is based on everyone having a fresh one each time.

2. Investigate Reuse Options

Investigate the availability and associated costs of reusable cups with a local supplier. Allocate enough time and resources to ensure that you understand this step, as there are various types of reusable cup systems that can be implemented. For example, rental versus purchasing and storing.

- For cup rental check the following:
 - Cost of rental
 - Cost of washing
 - Cost of delivery and collection
 - Is there a sale or return for clean unused cups
 - Cost of replacing lost or damaged cups
 - Does the service include on-site implementation or consultancy
- For cup purchase check the following:
 - Cost of blank cups
 - Cost of printed cups
 - Cost of storage (with supplier or elsewhere)
 - Costs of washing
 - Does the service include on-site implementation or consultancy
- Reusable Cup Quality and Life Cycle:
 - Request samples of the reusable cups. You will need these for your bar operator and sponsors.
 - Request sustainability credentials about the cups – point of origin, carbon footprint, expected life cycle, end of life processing.

3. Engage Core Team & Sponsors

Once you have investigated steps 1 and 2 thoroughly, engage the relevant stakeholders together or individually. Please note a collaboration of all three stakeholders below is necessary to finalise your reusable cup system plan. As with all sustainability initiatives, collaboration is key.

Bar operator

- Staffing requirements for movement of cups on-site
- On-site storage considerations for central distribution and within bars
- Impact on retailing operations i.e. till systems, cash floats, merchants services, EPOS systems, and bar staff operations.

Sponsors and drink suppliers

- Research your sponsor and check their domestic and global sustainability policy or strategy to see if they align with your ambitions to phase out single-use plastic.
- Review contractual obligations with sponsors in relation to branding and the current supply of single-use cups.
- Provide reusable cup samples and share sustainability credentials.

Event Financial Officer

- Explore all of the options for implementing a reusable cup system on-site. Some examples include:
 - Cash only, card only, or both – ensure testing has taken place with POS systems.
 - Deposit 'rent and return' system
 - Levy system
 - Ticket price increase

4. Place the Order

Once you have confirmed the reusable cup system, place your order with the supplier. Check the following:

- Understand how and when the cups will be delivered to the event – you will need to know when the storage facility will need to be made available to receive delivery
- Ensure cups are delivered in reusable hard crates, understand the quantity of cups per crate.
- Enquire about the availability of collection tubes for behind bars
- Enquire about the availability of additional empty crates for collecting dirty cups
- Confirm collection times post-event (If rented, you will need to leave enough time to gather as many cups for return as possible)



5. Operational Planning

Once you have confirmed the reusable cup system to implement, a wider stakeholder engagement should begin.

Bar operator and bar managers: Devise the bar operation for back of house. Ensure that Bar Managers are briefed on its implications for their staff ahead of the event as new systems can be challenging.

- Allocate a specific quantity of cups to each bar.
- Determine the corresponding number of crates required for each bar, ensuring that the back-of-house bar storage can accommodate the allocated amount.
- Collaborate with the Festival Financial Officer and the payment system provider to establish an operational plan for a potential deposit or levy system.

Site manager: Confirm any site changes to facilitate the implementation of cups i.e. position the central storage location, assess storage behind bars and make changes as required, assess the potential addition of cup return point in the main arenas or campsites.

Waste management and cleaning: Inform your contracted service provider that single-use cups will not be present at the event and will be replaced with reusables. Devise a plan for litter pickers and waste collectors to gather any discarded reusable cups on the ground or in bins and return to a central depot.

6. Messaging

With your marketing, communications and social media team, develop and design physical and digital messaging. Messaging should clearly explain the reusable cups system in place and what attendees should do with their cup once they're finished their drink.

Physical messaging: signage

- Deciding signage quantity and placement will depend on a number of factors, i.e. the number of bars, areas suitable for signage.
- Each bar should have a large sign (A2) per till
- Other key locations include toilets, seating areas, entry and exit points.
- Consider using stage screens for messaging about the reusable cups system

Digital messaging: social media

- Clear and consistent with physical signage design
- If relevant, share maps showing locations where cups can be returned

7. Briefing

Organise a meeting to discuss the operation of the reusable cup system with the Department Managers who will be directly impacted, such as:

- Production Coordinator
- Area Managers
- Security
- Volunteer Manager
- Artist Liaison
- Festival Crew Catering

8. Implementation

Consider the following:

- Appoint a reusable cup manager to liaise directly with the bar operator and managers.
- Appoint a reusable cup team (roughly one staff member per bar) separate to or within the bar staff.
- Count the number of crates (cups) upon delivery from the supplier.
- Account for cup distribution, noting quantities and locations.
- Where possible count cup returns into their crates throughout the event. Keep clean and dirty crates separate.
- Depending on the size of the site, a vehicle may be necessary for transport of cups.

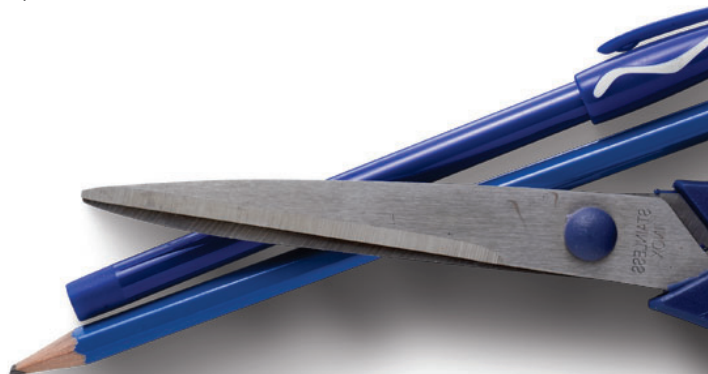
9. Counting

At the end of the event, gather all cups to a central location for counting, sorting and packing back into crates.

- Liaise with cleaners and waste collectors to ascertain if they have also gathered any cups throughout the course of the event.
- Sweep all areas, back of house and front of house to collect as many cups as possible.
- Brief security at festival exit points that reusable cups cannot be brought home
- Obtain an accurate count of cups to go for sanitisation. Please note that if you rely on the supplier to count the cups, you cannot ensure that their counting is correct.

10. Impact Measurement

Calculate the impact of your reusable cup initiative detailed in section 8 of this guide. As part of your sustainability communications campaign, publish your targets, progress and awards on your website and social media channels. Actively promote your audience's positive experiences of your reusable cup system - this helps to change the narrative and inspire positive behaviour change.



Considerations for different event types

Camping Events

- Consider additional signage for campsites encouraging attendees to return their cups (i.e. not keeping them in their tents or camper vans, and not placing them in bins).
- Consider a return point for cups in the campsite with clear signage denoting opening hours, and the system in place. For example, the return point could be combined with an info point.
- Consider prohibiting reusable cups from entering the campsites throughout or on the last night of the event or festival. Collect cups on entry to the campsites using security or volunteers.

Multi-venue Event

- Ensure coordination and communication among all participating venues. This includes aligning on cup distribution, collection, and return processes, as well as standardising cup design and type.
- Consider whether it's feasible to have a centralised cup management system that oversees the distribution and collection of cups at all venues. This can streamline operations and help maintain control over the inventory.
- Establish a uniform deposit and refund system for all venues to ensure consistency in pricing and encourage cup returns.
- Test the electronic deposit refund scheme in advance of the festival commencement and have an alternative cash access back-up plan.
- Ensure to brief all relevant venue staff such as cleaning, security, bar staff, box office.
- Ensure consistent messaging and communications across venues.
- Develop contingency plans for unexpected challenges, such as increased demand for cups at one venue, or transportation delays.
- If cup washing is taking place in venues, ensure compliance with local regulations and health standards for food and beverage service, as well as waste management and sanitation.



One-Day Concert or Venue

- Analyse the layout of the venue, including entrances, exits, bars, and food areas, to determine optimal cup distribution and collection points. Ensure clear signage and easy access to these areas.
- It is crucial that cups do not exit the event. Security and staff briefings must be held in advance of the event opening.
- If cup washing is taking place in venues, ensure compliance with local regulations and health standards for food and beverage service, as well as waste management and sanitation.

One-Day Concert or Venue

- If your event is small scale, you could consider a bring-your-own communications campaign. For this you would need to supply a washing station for attendees.
- For a reusable cup system, investigate potential collaborations with local businesses or sponsors to support your event. They may provide financial support or incentives for cup usage.
- Recruit volunteers to assist with cup distribution, collection, and general event support. Engaging the community in the process can enhance the event's sense of participation.



Participation Sports Events

- Ensure that hydration stations along the race route or throughout the stadium / sports grounds are equipped with clean, filled reusable cups.
- Provide a system for collecting used cups at hydration stations and throughout the stadium/sports ground.
- Recruit and train volunteers to assist with cup distribution, collection, and support at hydration stations.
- Communicate the benefits of the reusable cup system to participants and attendees, emphasising waste reduction and environmental impact.

In addition to the above, for participant race events:

- Place reusable cup return bins along the race route. Participants will run with their cups for different distances.
- Ensure that the use of reusable cups does not compromise safety during the race. Runners should be able to access hydration quickly and without hindrance.
- Provide water for attendees at the beginning of your participation sports event. Communicate this in advance to avoid attendees bringing single use plastic water bottles.
- For audience based sports events, such as match fixtures in stadiums, or horse-racing meets, please see one-day concert or venue section above.



Cost Considerations for Reusable Cups

5

The "polluter pays" principle is an environmental concept that assigns responsibility for pollution or environmental harm to those who produce it. In the context of single-use plastic cups at events and festivals, it means that the entities responsible for the production and distribution of these cups, often sponsors or beverage providers, should bear the costs associated with mitigating the environmental impact of their waste.

Sponsored events

Who should own the cups at a sponsored event?

- Polluter pays principle applies for sponsor branded cups: If the cups carry the logo or brand of a drinks sponsor, the cups should be owned by the drink sponsor so that they can be reused at multiple events.
- It is important that the cups do not have any other branding, such as festival artwork or a date, so that they can truly be reused by the brand.
- Generic reuse and return messaging should be included on the cup. For example, 'This cup is reusable, do not put in the bin', 'Reuse Me!', 'Do not take home'.



Non-Sponsored Events

Who should pay for the reusable cups at a non-sponsored event?

- For non-branded cups, the polluter pays principle still applies: the event organiser or bar operator is the decision maker on what type of cup will be used, as opposed to the drinks sponsor. Therefore they are responsible for potential plastic pollution. It is crucial to find a financial model that covers all of the associated costs.

If the cups are festival or event-owned:

- Avoid sponsor branding to ensure that if sponsorship changes, the cups can continue to be used for their full lifecycle.
- Avoid adding a date to your branding to ensure the cups can be used for their full life cycle regardless of the year.
- Consider generic branding so that the cups can be shared with other events or festivals.
- Consider no branding so that they can be shared with other events or festivals.
- Always include reuse and return messaging regardless of the main branding focus.
- In this instance, of the cups that are event-owned, it is up to the event organiser what branding, or cup type is used. A key consideration in this decision is how to ensure the financial model chosen for the cups will cover any associated costs.

When considering branding on reusable cups remember: The emphasis should not be on treating reusable cups as a novelty purchase for attendees; instead, the paramount focus should be on encouraging cup reuse as the most critical factor in reducing carbon emissions and waste.

Cost Sharing Models

- Organisations or a group of festivals may cost-share the purchase of generic branded cups to be used across multiple events
- For events with one or more sponsors:
 - If the only sponsor is insistent on branding, the cups should be purchased by the brand and reused at other events.
 - If one or more sponsors is insistent on branding, they must provide the branded cups for projected sales and take ownership of logistics such as washing and transport.
 - If all sponsors are insistent on branding, each sponsor should purchase their own reusable cups, the logistical management can still go through one reusable cup system, however there will need to be an agreement in place for deposit systems, staffing costs, transport and washing.
 - If no sponsors are insistent on branding, use blank cups or cups with generic reuse and return messaging such as 'This cup is reusable, do not take home'. This is the most environmentally friendly option.

Cup 'Rent & Return' Systems

In a reusable cup system, the cups are rented through either a deposit or levy system. A deposit is the upfront fee you pay to use a reusable cup, which is refundable when you return the cup. On the other hand, a levy is a one-time payment made to use a reusable cup, and additional levies may be required if you do not return or swap in your cup when making further drink purchases.

Single Deposit System:

Attendees pay a single deposit fee when they arrive at the festival or purchase their first drink in a reusable cup. They receive a token or voucher as proof of payment. Throughout the event, the attendee displays their token or proof of payment and does not pay another deposit. At the end of the event, they return the cup at a designated return station, and they receive their deposit back. This system may disincentivise attendees to return cups throughout the event or festival.

Continuous Deposit System:

Attendees pay a deposit on their first drink. When they return cups to the dedicated return station, they can retrieve a number of deposits. Upon further drink purchases, attendees can swap a cup for a fresh one with no charge or if they return without a cup to exchange, they pay a new deposit. This system can incentivise attendees to return more cups at a time. It is useful to limit the amount of cups that can be returned at once so as not to put unnecessary pressure on bar operations.

Levy inclusive ticket:

Attendees pay a one-time fee attached to their ticket, allowing them to use a reusable cup throughout the event. Ensure that this is communicated at the point of sale. The cost is included in their ticket, and attendees can exchange their cups for clean ones as needed. It is important to provide return bins or stations as there is less of an incentive to return the cups.

Levy at point of drink purchase:

Attendees pay a one-time fee for their first drink. Upon purchasing further drinks, all they need to do is return a cup and they will not be charged again. This will incentivise attendees to return their cups so that they don't have to pay extra each time.

Digital Wallet or RFID System:

Some events use digital wallets or RFID (Radio-Frequency Identification) technology. Attendees link their payment method to a digital account, and each time they obtain a reusable cup, the deposit is automatically deducted. They receive their deposit back when the cup is returned. For cashless systems, this is recommended.

Price-point for deposits and levies

The price point of a deposit or levy for reusable cups at festivals or events is critical, as it can influence attendee participation and the system's overall success. The deposit or levy amount should strike a balance between covering the cost of the cup system and encouraging cup return. Here are some factors to consider:

- **Cup Cost:** Calculate the cost of acquiring and maintaining the reusable cups, including cleaning and replacement. The deposit should at least cover these expenses.
- **Affordability:** The deposit should be affordable for the majority of attendees, ensuring that it doesn't create a financial barrier to participation. Consider the demographics of your audience when setting the price.
- **Incentive for Return:** The deposit should be enough to incentivise attendees to return their cups. A higher deposit can encourage responsible cup return, as attendees are more likely to seek a refund.
- **Market Research:** Conduct market research or surveys to gauge attendees' willingness to pay for a reusable cup deposit. This can help you determine a price that aligns with attendee expectations.
- **Environmental Impact:** Highlight the environmental impact of reusable cups in your messaging. Some attendees may be willing to pay a higher deposit if they understand the positive environmental outcomes.
- **Competition:** Consider what other events in the industry are doing with their deposit systems.




Measure your impact

Calculate CO₂e for once-off reusable cup use:

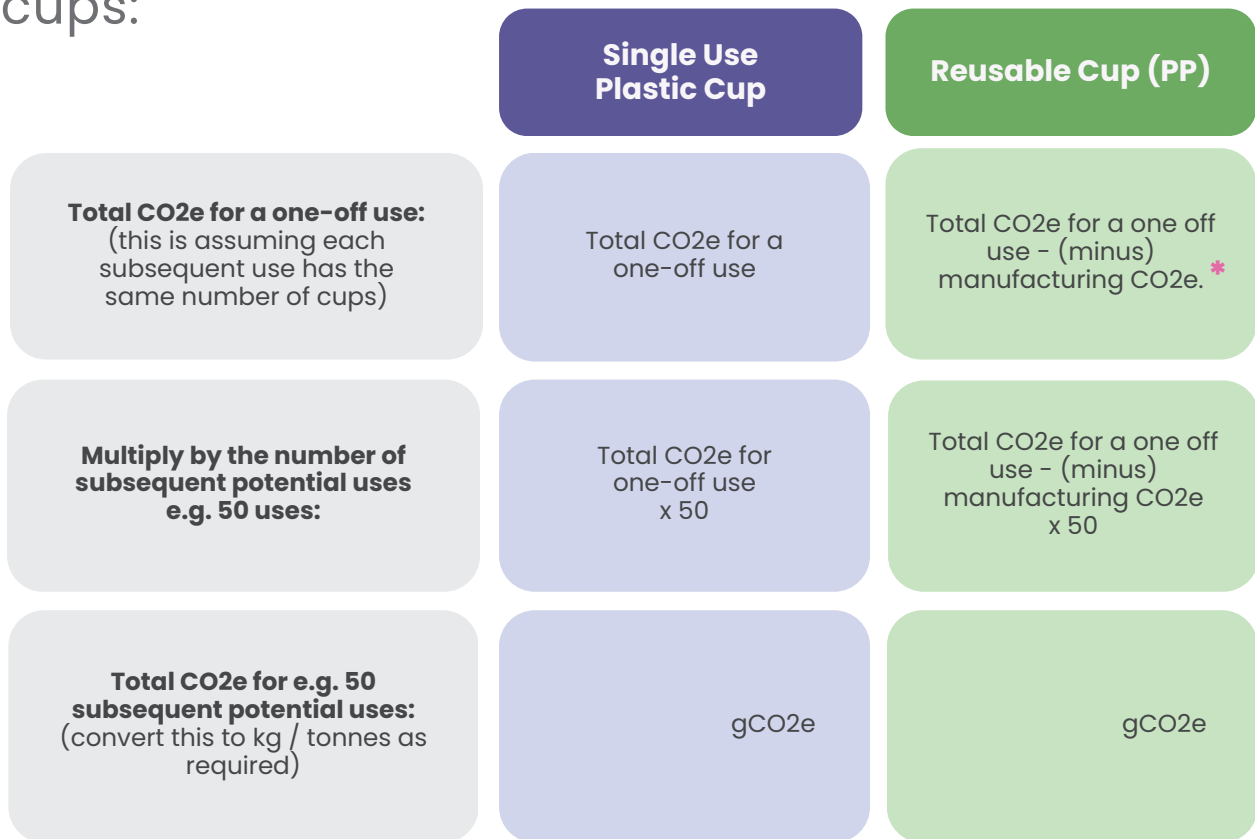
This calculation sheet is for Polypropylene (PP) Reusable Cups. The CO₂e factors used are taken from Hope Solutions (2017) Stack Up Report 2017.

	Single Use Plastic Cup	Reusable Cup (PP)
Recyclable?	Sometimes	Yes
Reusable?	No	Yes
To calculate the CO₂e from the manufacturing of cups:	Number of single use plastic cups used x 70g of CO ₂ e	* (Number of reusable cups used / 3) x 168g of CO ₂ e
To calculate the CO₂e from cups lost/unreturned:	Number of single use plastic cups used (all are lost) x 20g of CO ₂ e	Number of reusable cups lost/unreturned x 48g of CO ₂ e
To calculate the CO₂e from washing cups: (Note: The washing machine used as part of the 4 reusable cups pilots in 2022/2023 had a 0.05g CO ₂ e)	N/A	Number of reusable cups returned for washing x 0.05g CO ₂ e
To calculate the CO₂e from transport:	Kilometres travelled (delivery) x vehicle specific CO ₂ e (g) per km	Kilometres travelled (delivery & collection) x vehicle specific CO ₂ e (g) per km
Total CO₂e for a one-off use: (convert this to kg / tonnes as required)	gCO ₂ e	gCO ₂ e

 Reusable cups need to be reused to achieve CO₂e savings. Go to page 31.

* For a rental system, you can assume that the cups have had three previous uses. If you have newly purchased cups, do not divide by 3. Instead, multiply the number of cups purchased by 168g.

Calculate CO2e for multiple uses of reusable cups:



* The reusable cups CO2e from manufacturing has already occurred and for this reason should not be included for the calculation of multiple uses.

For this calculation you take the total CO2e for a one-off use and subtract the manufacturing CO2e (this leaves you with the washing, transport and losses CO2e). Multiply this figure by the number of uses you wish to calculate e.g. 50.



Glossary



01. PET



PET (Polyethylene Terephthalate): Beverage bottles (water, juice, carbonated drinks), food containers, polyester fabric, and some household items.



02. HDPE



HDPE (High-Density Polyethylene): Milk bottles, detergent bottles, shampoo bottles, bin bags, and plastic lumber.



03. PVC



PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride): Pipes, electrical insulation, vinyl flooring, window frames, and some automotive parts. PVC is not commonly used for single-use packaging due to environmental concerns.



04. LDPE



LDPE (Low-Density Polyethylene): Plastic bags (shopping bags), shrink wrap, squeeze bottles (e.g., ketchup), and various flexible packaging.



05. PP

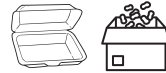


PP (Polypropylene): Yoghurt containers, bottle caps, food storage containers, disposable cutlery, and automotive parts.

Glossary



06. PS



PS (Polystyrene):

Foam cups and takeaway containers (expanded polystyrene or EPS), plastic utensils, and packaging materials.



07. OTHER

Other (Miscellaneous):

This category includes various plastics that do not fall into the first six categories. It can encompass less common plastics like PLA (Polylactic Acid, a biodegradable plastic) and PC (Polycarbonate) a transparent thermoplastic polymer which can be used for clear reusable hard cups.



COMPOSTABLE



Certified compostable:

Products are designed to break down into environmentally safe materials when subjected to composting conditions. They are often made from biodegradable materials, typically plant-based, that can decompose naturally into organic matter.



20. PAP



PAP (Corrugated fiberboard (cardboard)):

Cardboard boxes, shipping containers, packaging materials made from corrugated cardboard.

Glossary



21. PAP

21 PAP (Non-corrugated fiberboard (paperboard): Cereal boxes, snack boxes, food packaging made from non-corrugated paperboard. These are typically stiffer and less rigid than corrugated cardboard.



22. PAP

22 PAP (Paper): This category encompasses a wide range of paper products, including newspapers, books, magazines, wrapping paper, wallpaper, paper bags, and paper straws. It represents various types of paper materials.



Further Resources

- 🔗 [Hope Solutions \(UK\) Stack Up Report 2017](#)
- 🔗 [National Geographic Article - how much do microplastics in our bodies harm us](#)
- 🔗 [Fáilte Ireland Sustainable Festival Guidelines](#)
- 🔗 [Mission Reuse - Reusable Tableware at festivals in the Netherlands 2022](#)
- 🔗 [EPA LAPN - Greening Events](#)
- 🔗 [The Ellen MacArthur Foundation - Charity committed to the Circular Economy](#)
- 🔗 [Green Deal Circular Festivals - a collaboration between European festival organisations and the Dutch government. All parties are working together to create fully circular festivals by 2025.](#)
- 🔗 [Circularity_Gap Report 2023](#)



Appendix A

Project Partners



Native Events, leading project partner on the 'Guide to Plastic Free Festivals and Events,' collaborates and engages with events, festivals, cultural organisations and industry suppliers, facilitating a holistic transition toward sustainable and regenerative practices within the sector.



For the purposes of local authority waste management planning, Ireland is divided into three regions, namely Connacht-Ulster, Eastern-Midlands & Southern regions. The RWMPOs are managed by a designated lead local authority for each of the three waste regions and are responsible for leading the coordination and delivery of the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy activities on behalf of the local authorities.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) is responsible for the delivery of policies and programmes in a number of areas including the waste and circular economy sectors. The department must ensure that all of its policies are in line with EU and global obligations.



Appendix B

The Single Use Plastic (SUP) Directive

The Single Use Plastics Directive (2019/904/EC) commits EU Member States to introduce a range of measures to eliminate single-use plastic products and transition towards a circular economy. It targets the ten most commonly found single-use plastic items on European beaches which, along with fishing gear, represents 70% of all marine litter in the European Union (EU). The Directive was transposed into Irish law in July 2021 (European Union (Single Use Plastics) (No. 2) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 516 of 2021)).

Since July 2021, the following SUP items are banned from being placed on the Irish market:

- Cotton bud sticks
- Cutlery
- Plates
- Stirrers
- Chopsticks
- Straws
- Expanded polystyrene single-use food and beverage containers
- All oxo-degradable plastic products

Since January 2023, producers of packaging are required to cover the costs of litter clean up, in addition to their existing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) obligations associated with the following SUP items:

- Food containers
- Beverage containers and cups
- Packets and wrappers
- Lightweight carrier bags.
- Tobacco products with filters and filters marketed for use in combination with tobacco products.

The same requirement will apply, from 31st December 2024, to producers of balloons and wet wipes.

Appendix C

Ireland's National Waste Management Plan (NWMPCE) for a Circular Economy 2024 – 2030

The RWMPOs, on behalf of the local authorities, have prepared Ireland's National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy, to replace the previous three Regional Waste Management Plans. The national Plan sets out a framework for the prevention and management of waste in Ireland for a period of six years supporting and supplementing the wider policy base of the Circular Economy Act 2022. Under the plan, there are 13 overarching core policies and 16 focus areas for which targeted policies and priority actions have been identified.

Spotlight: Core Policy 5 –
Changing Behaviours

“Influence and encourage behavioural improvements in business and households through Local Authority and external networks and coordinated multi-agency awareness campaigns.”

[Find out more about the National Waste Management Plan here.](#)

Single Use Plastic Waste – Targeted Policy within the NWMPCE 2024–2030, relevant to Events

There are six material stream focus areas within the NWMPCE 2024–2030 plan:

1. Food Waste
2. Packaging Waste
3. Single Use Plastic (SUP) Waste
4. Construction and Demolition
5. Textiles
6. Hazardous Waste



Two of five SUP policies mention events specifically:

- Coordinate the response of the local authority sector to the sectoral obligations contained in the Single Use Plastic Directive and national policy, including regulatory and awareness activities.
- Promote awareness and deliver best practice in the hospitality, sports and events sector including the mandatory requirement for reusable containers / plates / cutlery and provision of accessible drinking water fountains.
- Promote and facilitate the introduction of deposit return systems or schemes for single use plastics.
- Support the application of the prohibitions and levies on single use plastics.
- Prohibit the use of single use plastics by local authorities in offices and public areas as well as at outdoor public events through licensing.

Appendix D

Reusable Cup Checklist for Event Organisers

When Planning the Event: If you are currently in contract with a sponsor have you reviewed this contract in advance of investigating reusable cups? If it is possible to implement a reusable cup system, have you:

- Ascertained the quantity of cups you require, with your bar operator?
- Investigated the availability and associated costs of reusable cups with a local supplier?
- Explored all of the options for implementing a reusable cup system on-site?
- Identified a suitable reusable cup system for the event?
- Engaged all relevant stakeholders i.e. site manager, sponsors and drink suppliers, festival financial officer and bar operator(s).
- Analysed the layout of the venue, including entrances, exits, bars, and food areas, to determine optimal cup distribution and collection return points?
- Designed and developed the physical and digital messaging with your marketing, communications and social media team?
- Identified adequate storage area(s) for clean and used reusable cups?
- Confirmed the number of reusable cups required for the event?
- Placed your order with the supplier and confirmed how and when the cups will be delivered and collected?
- Appointed a reusable cup manager to liaise directly with the bar operator and managers?
- Organised a meeting to discuss the operation of the reusable cup system with the department managers?
- Appointed a reusable cup team (roughly one staff member per bar) separate to or within the bar staff?
- Arranged for the transport of the reusable cups to/from the storage area (for some events a vehicle may be necessary for transport of cups)
- Developed contingency plans for unexpected challenges, such as increased demand for cups at one venue, or transportation delays.

Prior to the Event Commencing, have you:

- Tested the electronic deposit refund scheme (if using) and have an alternative cash access back-up plan?
- Checked that the physical signage has been erected?
- Checked the ordered reusable cups have arrived?
- Ensured adequate storage space?
- Counted the number of crates (cups) delivered from the supplier?
- Accounted for cup distribution within the site?
- Ensured there is adequate available cash if using a cash refund system?

Prior to the Event Commencing, have you:

- Briefed bar staff on the procedure in place?
- Liaised with security staff to ensure cups do not exit the event?
- Briefed cleaning staff to ensure cups are not sent for recycling/disposal?
- Emailed all event staff with information on how the reusable cup system operates for attendees?

During the Event, have you:

- Kept clean and dirty crates separate within the collection point or storage area?
- Counted and noted cup returns into their crates throughout the event?
- Liaised with all relevant stakeholders to identify any issues arising?
- Addressed any issues arising?

Post event, have you:

- Gathered all cups to a central location for counting, sorting and packing back into crates?
- Liaised with cleaners and waste collectors to ascertain if they have also gathered any cups throughout the course of the event?
- Checked all areas, back of house and front of house to collect as many cups as possible?
- Obtained an accurate count of cups to go for sanitisation?
- Calculated the impact of your reusable cup initiative?

Appendix E

Reusable Cup Checklist for Bar Operators

When Planning the Event, have you:

- Confirmed the quantity of cups you require?
- Identified suitable on-site storage area(s) for clean and used reusable cups, and ensured you have adequate space behind bars?
- Identified additional staffing requirements?
- Confirmed the operational plan for a deposit or levy system, if being implemented and any backup plan(s)?

Prior to the Event Commencing, have you:

- Briefed bar managers and staff on implementation of the reusable cup system?
- Appointed a reusable cup team (roughly one staff member per bar) separate to or within the bar staff?
- Allocated a consignment of cups per bar?
- Ensured the deposit or levy system is operational?
- Tested the electronic deposit refund scheme (if using) and have an alternative cash access backup plan?
- Ensured there is adequate cash available if using a cash refund system?

During the Event, have you:

- Ensured an adequate number of clean reusable cups are available?
- Ensured the used reusable cups are kept separate from the clean cups?
- Liaised with event organiser to address any issues arising?

Post event, have you:

- Ensured all unused clean reusable cups are clearly identified and returned to the central collection point?
- Ensured all used reusable cups are returned to the central collection point?

Appendix F

Reusable Cup Checklist for Site Managers

When Planning the Event, have you:

- Identified any site changes to facilitate the implementation of cups?
- Confirmed site changes with organiser and bar operator(s)?
- Devised a plan for litter pickers and waste collectors to gather any discarded reusable cups on the ground or in bins and return to a central collection point?
- Added required signage to the signage plan?

Prior to the Event Commencing, have you:

- Ensured required signage is in place?
- Briefed security staff to ensure cups do not exit the event?
- Briefed cleaning staff to ensure cups are not sent for recycling/disposal?
- Ensured all structures and marquees needed for the reusable cup operation such as central storage and return facilities are completed?

During the Event, have you:

- Ensured any central reusable collection point is operating efficiently?
- Liaised with security staff and cleaning staff to identify any issues arising?
- Liaised with event organiser to address any issues arising?

Post event, have you:

- Ensured all reusable cups collected by security staff and cleaning staff are returned to the central collection point?
- Informed event organiser of any issues that arose?

A photograph of a festival scene. In the foreground, a person's arm with tattoos and wearing a blue glove holds a green plastic trash bag. Another person is holding a brown bowl of food. In the background, there are people, flags, and a tall wooden structure. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**Events and
festivals are
microcosms of
our society. If
you were
building a new
town or city,
what principles
would you lay as
the foundation
for a better
world?**