

Report on	Plastic Promise
Date of Meeting	8 th February 2022
Reporting Officer	Mark McAdoo, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Contact Officers	Karen Brown, Recycling Education & Awareness Officer

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek approval from members to sign the Live Here Love Here Plastic Promise in order to make a commitment to reducing the consumption and usage of single use plastic items.
2.0	Background
2.1	Plastic pollution poses a significant threat to our environment, in particular single use plastics which are used only once before being thrown away. Despite the fact that many items of single use plastic can be recycled in household blue bins, much of the litter found around the Mid Ulster towns/villages and countryside areas exists in the form of plastics such as drinks bottles, plastic bags and coffee cups. Statistics released by DAERA show that every week over 1.3 million single-use plastic (SUP) cups and 3 million SUP food containers are thrown away in Northern Ireland, the majority of which end up in landfill or our seas.
2.2	Funded by DAERA, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) and Tackling Plastics NI (TPNI) are delivering the Plastic Promise campaign that aims to tackle consumer single-use plastics, by encouraging government departments, councils, schools, businesses and individuals to make simple changes to reduce their direct consumption of single use plastic. The project is managed by Live Here Love Here and to date has over 500 pledges made from a range of councils, schools, businesses and other individuals.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	One of the first measures introduced to tackling the problem of plastic pollution was the carrier bag levy introduced in 2013 forcing retailers to charge at least 5p for new carrier bags (unless exempt). In the 2020/21 year, the eighth year of the scheme, it saw an 81.3% reduction in bag numbers dispensed annually compared to the baseline. Since the introduction of the carrier bag levy, there have been several calls for action on plastics and many other initiatives and legislation aiming to reduce plastic usage have been developed and introduced.
3.2	The EU's Single Use Plastic Directive came into force in July 2019. The EU aims to become a forerunner in the global fight against marine litter and plastic pollution. Through this EU Directive, different measures are being applied to different products. These measures are proportionate and tailored to get the most effective results, and also take

into account if more sustainable alternatives are available. The 10 items addressed by the Directive are

- Cotton bud sticks
- Cutlery, plates, straws and stirrers
- Balloons and sticks for balloons
- Food containers
- Cups for beverages
- Beverage containers
- Cigarette butts
- Plastic bags
- Packets and wrappers
- Wet wipes and sanitary items

EU rules on single-use plastic products aim to prevent and reduce the impact of certain plastic products on the environment, in particular the marine environment, and on human health. They also aim to promote the transition to a circular economy with innovative and sustainable business models, products and materials, therefore also contributing to the efficient functioning of the internal market. Following this directive, single use plastic straws, stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds have been banned in England since October 2020 with similar legislation planned for Northern Ireland in 2022.

3.3 The UK Plastics Pact was introduced in 2018 and brings together businesses from across the entire plastics value chain with UK governments and NGOs to tackle the blight of plastic waste. It aims to create a circular economy for plastics, capturing their value by keeping them in the economy and out of the natural environment.

The Pact is united behind four targets to 2025;

1. Eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use packaging through redesign, innovation or alternative (reuse) delivery model.
2. 100% of plastics packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable.
3. 70% of plastics packaging effectively recycled or composted.
4. 30% average recycled content across all plastic packaging.

3.4 The New Decade New Approach Deal outlines a “Programme of Government” with various items including Climate Change and the need for a plan to eliminate plastic pollution. In November 2020 the Environment Minister announced that the Northern Ireland Executive had approved a plan to reduce unnecessary plastic within the NICS government estate. The plan has been underway throughout 2021 focusing mainly on the categories of cleaning, catering and tableware and takeaway. The actions in the plan are grouped around raising awareness and changing behaviours across the NICS and working with suppliers and contractors. Covid restrictions with building closures/staffing issues etc. has caused some delays with full implementation by the original timeframe of October 2021 but good progress has been made to date.

3.5 DAERA have also released a number of consultations in the last 12 months to gauge attitudes and views on plans to introduce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations for packaging in the UK alongside England, Scotland and Wales and also on proposals to introduce a Deposit Return System (DPR) for drinks containers in England,

Wales and Northern Ireland. The most recent consultation was launched in November 2021 on proposals for the reduction of the usage of Single Use Plastic (SUP) beverage cups and food containers in Northern Ireland to which Mid Ulster Council responded.

3.6	<p>The UK Plastic Packaging Tax comes into force in April 2022. This is a new tax that will apply to plastic packaging manufactured in, or imported into the UK, that does not contain at least 30% recycled plastic. The recent COP26 summit also reinforced the global issues faced as a result of single use plastics with the impacts they are having on our environment and in particular the need to take urgent action now.</p>
3.7	<p>These actions support the concept of the Live Here Love Here Plastic Promise. KNIB and TPNI are seeking to further engage all local authorities in Northern Ireland to reduce single-use plastics usage and to ultimately eliminate single-use plastics from their estates, properties and services. Councils should lead by example and therefore Mid Ulster District Council should make a pledge to reduce plastic consumption across the organisation. Most Council's in Northern Ireland have already made a plastic promise and a commitment by all local authorities to reduce and remove single-use plastic would be consistent with public policy in the UK and Northern Ireland.</p>
3.8	<p>KNIB/TPNI has been asking local authorities to commit to a Plastic Promise to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce and eventually remove consumer single-use plastics from its offices within a timeframe to be agreed; and • Address single-use plastics in operations and services working to reduce and remove avoidable consumer single-use plastics wherever viable and practical.
3.9	<p>Below is an outline of what is proposed for Mid Ulster District Council.</p> <p>Plastic Promise Mid Ulster District Council is committed to reducing and removing single-use plastics across its estate where possible.</p> <p>Policy Mid Ulster District Council will seek to reduce and remove single-use plastics from its estate by 2025 and in all operations by 2030.</p> <p>To demonstrate our commitment MUDC will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address single-use plastics in our operations and services to reduce and remove consumer single-use plastics where viable and practical • Work within our supply chains to reduce and remove single-use plastics • Work with elected members, staff and our communities to change behaviours towards using single-use plastics <p>Support Available KNIB/TPNI has a range of guidance and support services to help the Council achieve the commitments including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Knowledge Hub, the UK's largest public service collaboration platform, has a dedicated TPNI Working Group featuring resources to reduce plastic pollution in the natural environment • Tackling plastic case studies are featured on the TPNI website to inspire action and local authorities are encouraged to share their plastic projects regularly • TPNI host quarterly Working Group Meetings attended by representatives from all 11 Local Authorities, DEARA advisors and guest speakers on single-use plastics.

4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: There is no financial investment required to sign up to the Plastic Promise however, depending on what actions are agreed there may be significant financial investment required in terms of removing/reducing plastics usage within Council and the procurement/purchasing of plastic alternative items.
	Human: The Environmental Services Team will take the lead on introducing and implementing commitments and actions associated with the Plastic Promise.
	Risk Management: There may be reputational damage should the Council be seen not be progressing with environmental initiatives such as reducing its use of single use plastics.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None
	Rural Needs Implications: None
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that Mid Ulster District Council makes a Plastic Promise as outlined.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	None