

Report on	Consultation on the Reduction of Single Use Plastic Beverage Cups and Food Containers
Date of Meeting	6 th December 2021
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Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek approval to submit a response to a Consultation on the Reduction of Single-Use Plastic Beverage Cups and Food Containers.
2.0	Background
2.1	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has published a consultation on proposals for the Reduction of Single-Use Plastic (SUP) Beverage Cups and Food Containers in Northern Ireland. The response deadline is 17 th December 2021.
2.2	The consultation has been designed collaboratively with WRAP (the Waste and Resources Action Programme) to consider a number of policy options on the most effective way to ensure a substantial reduction in the use of SUP beverage cups and food containers. The Department aims to encourage a more sustainable environment and circular economy for everyone across NI and the reduction in usage of all SUP beverage cups and food containers will help to contribute to these targets.
2.3	The Department is seeking views on the suggested policy options to ensure the most effective method of reducing the consumption of SUP beverage cups and food containers is identified. The responses to the consultation will be used to determine the best policy options to help to promote the reduction in SUP items. The goal of the policy is to reduce the use of the targeted types of SUP packaging and to encourage the wider take up of multi-use (MU) and/or single-use non-plastic (SUNP) alternatives.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The high functionality and relatively low cost of plastic means that this material is increasingly used in everyday life. While plastic plays a useful role and provides essential applications in many sectors, it is increasingly used in short-lived

	<p>applications, which are not designed for re-use or cost-effective recycling. The steady increase in plastic waste generation and the leakage of plastic waste into the environment, in particular into the marine environment, must be tackled in order to achieve a circular life cycle for plastics. The significant negative environmental, health and economic impact of certain plastic products calls for the setting up of a specific framework to effectively reduce those negative effects.</p>
3.2	<p>Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) carried out Northern Ireland's first Litter Composition Survey in 2019. This DAERA-funded analysis identified that, at any one time, there are an estimated 600,000 items of packaging litter on the streets of Northern Ireland. Of this, 31,841 items, or 5.2%, were calculated to be single-use cups containing plastic, and 19,982 items, or 3.3%, were calculated to be plastic food packaging. These findings are supported by the results of KNIB's annual litter and marine litter surveys. The 2020 Marine Litter Report notes that 67% of all observed litter was plastic, and KNIB's litter survey (June to August 2020) found an increase in the littering of SUP packaging and cutlery.</p>
3.3	<p>The consultation considers the range of SUP beverage cups and food containers which are available. The definition of beverage cups for purposes of the consultation is cups for beverages, including their covers and lids. These might include take-away coffee cups and lids, or milkshake cups and covers, for example. The definition of food containers for purposes of the consultation is food containers, i.e. receptacles such as boxes, with or without a cover, used to contain food which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) is intended for immediate consumption, either on-the-spot or take-away, (b) is typically consumed from the receptacle, and (c) is ready to be consumed without any further preparation, such as cooking, boiling or heating, including food containers used for fast food or other meal ready for immediate consumption, except beverage containers, plates and packets and wrappers containing food.
3.4	<p>The food containers have then been divided into two scopes as detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope 1 includes food containers that are filled at point of sale (e.g. plastic trays for chips, plastic boxes used at salad bars). Consumers would have a choice here to use a SUP food container or use an alternative. • Scope 2 includes pre-filled SUP food containers, used for pre-packaged, prepared foods in shops (e.g. a pre-packaged sandwich, salad bowl or prepared fruit box). Consumers would therefore not have an alternative option when purchasing their food.
3.5	<p>The primary objective of the proposals is to influence customer behaviour to promote a significant reduction in usage of SUP beverage cups and food containers. The Department worked with WRAP to consider a range of proposals in identifying the most effective options for a sustained and substantial reduction in the use of SUP beverage cups and food containers.</p>
3.6	<p>Three policies were modelled for both SUP beverage cups and food containers:</p>

3.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A ban on their use, • A levy of 25p on each cup and 50p on each food container, and • A voluntary scheme or schemes implemented by businesses that make use of SUP cups or food containers, which may comprise a range of charges for cups/food containers, discounts for re-usable cups/food containers and communication efforts. This is modelled as having the same effect as a 10p levy for a beverage cup and 25p for a food container. <p>The proceeds of any levy will be collected and processed by DAERA and used to both promote and sustain the wider NI environmental sector. The levy will be reinvested to support a broad range of local and country wide environmental projects, supporting small, medium, and large projects funded through the NI Environment Fund, which enables not for profit organisations and councils to deliver key environmental interventions.</p>
3.8	<p>The consultation document can be found using the following link:</p> <p>https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-reduction-single-use-plastic-beverage-cups-and-food-containers</p>
3.9	<p>A proposed consultation response by the Council is included as an appendix, with a general overview of the Councils suggested position provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed policy should apply to both Scope 1 and Scope 2 items. • In addition to plastics, paper and card packaging (e.g. pizza boxes) could be included in the proposed policy to ensure they are compostable as they may not be suitable for recycling once contaminated with food residues. • SUP beverage cups and food containers to be banned in a phased approach over time to encourage the use of currently available compostable / reusable alternatives. • If a ban is not feasible then a sufficiently high levy should be considered to act as an effective incentive for producers / consumers to encourage behavioural change. • Voluntary schemes were not recommended as they typically have low participation rates but could form part of a phased in approach with a ban / levy after a period of time.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: None
	Human: None
	Risk Management: None

4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None
	Rural Needs Implications: None
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members are requested to approve the submission of a response to the DAERA Consultation on the Reduction of Single Use Plastic Beverage Cups and Food Containers as outlined.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Proposed response to the Consultation for the Reduction of Single-Use Plastic Beverage Cups and Food Containers