

Somerset Waste Board meeting  
23 Feb 2018  
Report for decision



Plastic Update

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<p><b>Forward Plan Reference:</b></p>	<p>It has not been possible to provide 28 days advance notification within the Forward Plan and therefore the General Exception procedure is being used to enable this matter to be considered (see Appendix A).</p>
<p><b>Summary:</b></p>	<p>The issue of plastic waste reaching the natural environment is of significant public concern, stimulated by recent coverage of ocean pollution on BBCs Blue Planet Series.</p> <p>The following report provides an update on steps being taken by Somerset Waste Partnership to inform, participate in and respond to the public debate, and to support joined-up leadership across the public sector in Somerset.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p>	<p><b>That the Somerset Waste Board considers, comment on and notes the update, and that the Strategic Management Group continues to work together closely to ensure a joined-up approach across the public sector in Somerset.</b></p>
<p><b>Reasons for recommendations:</b></p>	<p>To recognise the important role Somerset Waste Partnership is playing in tackling the problem of waste plastic.</p>
<p><b>Links to Priorities and Impact on Annual Business Plan:</b></p>	<p>Action 5.2: Action on waste prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery.</p>
<p><b>Financial, Legal and HR Implications:</b></p>	<p>N/A – Information update only</p>
<p><b>Equalities Implications:</b></p>	<p>N/A – Information update only</p>
<p><b>Risk Assessment:</b></p>	<p>Opportunity 5 in the SWP Strategic Risk Register (opportunity to capitalise on the 'blue planet' effect and increased awareness of the impact of plastic consumption).</p>

## 1. Background

- 1.1. SWP is well placed to inform and steer the public conversation around plastic waste. We are already engaging through social media, local media, and through the ‘Schools against Waste’ programme. The recently circulated briefing on the impact of plastic, particularly in light of recent regulatory changes in China, has been circulated to all town and parish councils and received well.

Going forward our approach is proposed to be:

<b>Leadership:</b>	SWP going single use plastic free (like some other partner authorities)
	SMG to seek to ensure consistency in how partner authorities bear down on single use plastics (and share learning)
<b>Influencing:</b>	Social media campaign
	Seeking opportunities through local press, local radio and TV
	Schools against Waste programme
<b>Supporting:</b>	Acting as the Somerset coordinator for the national <b>Refill</b> campaign
	Working with Viridor to trial collection of plastic tubs, pots and trays at more HWRCs
<b>Motivating:</b>	Launch a pledge against preventable plastic (and encourage take-up through partners as major employers in Somerset)
	Providing support on a dedicated page on SWP website for communities who want to go further (e.g. sharing guidance on plastic free towns)
<b>Reminding:</b>	All aspects of campaign emphasise that kerbside sort means nearly all our materials are recycled properly in the UK
	What can and can't be recycled in Somerset (and why)
	What Recycle More and moving away from landfill will achieve

The key messages are:

- Because of the effort that Somerset residents put into sorting their waste at the kerbside, we produce high quality materials that are still in demand
- SWP's approach means we use waste effectively as a resource, nearly all of which stays in the UK
- Until we implement Recycle More the only plastic we can accept at the kerbside is plastic bottles – the challenges that other authorities are currently facing in dealing with their mixed plastics shows the challenges we need to work through to maintain Somerset's focus on resource efficiency
- Whilst recycling is a key part of the solution, it cannot address the problems of plastic waste on its own. Everyone must play a daily part in reducing waste, and further action from producers, the waste industry and national government is needed

- 1.2. The Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership, under his delegated authority, has taken a non-key decision that SWP as an office will go avoidable plastic free. This will include avoidance of items like plastic cutlery, single use cups, disposable stationery and plastic packaging. This is similar to decisions taken by a number of partner authorities, and SWP's Strategic management Group recognised that they are in a unique position to support all partner

authorities in addressing this consistently, sharing best practice and learning, in particular as we work together to eliminate other forms of avoidable single use plastic.

- 1.3. Recognising that the choices we make as individual consumers is likely to have the greatest impact on plastic waste, SWP (and SMG) staff will be the first to be offered the opportunity to sign up to our pledge against preventable plastic. Through SMG and the Somerset Waste Board we would welcome partner authorities sharing this with their staff and encouraging them to sign the pledge (and register this on SWP's website). With the public sector as a whole being the largest employer in Somerset we hope that this will provide a kick-start to a campaign to encourage all people in Somerset to sign up to this pledge:

## My Pledge Against Preventable Plastic

- Remember your *Things to Bring*:** Bag for life; reusable water bottle; coffee cup
- Ignore the Straw:** Sip from the glass
- Choose to Re-use:** No plastic cutlery; take condiments from a bottle or pot—never a sachet!
- Be a Local Litter Hero:** Organise a beach, street or park litter pick in your community; if you see litter on the road proudly pick it up and bin it.
- Say Yes to Less:** Only pick the packaging you really need; buy loose fruit/veg; never buy black plastic\*
- Lobby Locally:** Let local shops and businesses know what's important to you, ask them what they can do to help.

\* avoid hard to recycle black plastic

Somerset Waste Board and SMG will be updated once the marketing materials and webpage to support this campaign are up and running. It is proposed to produce this pledge as a postcard with a number of simple actions people can follow as they go about on their daily routine. The flip side will carry information about what can be recycled. This will be handed out at events, be available for local groups to distribute, and be given to school children during the Schools Against Waste visit. It will also be shared with our contractors (Viridor and Kier) as major employers in Somerset.

- 1.4. SWP are exploring the possibility of introducing a trial of dedicated mixed plastic deposit facilities at a wider range of Recycling Centres. These will be in addition to the facilities for single use cups rolled out to several sites in January. This trial is necessary because we need to understand the most effective way of managing these materials, not least because China's import restrictions are having a significant effect across the whole recycling market, and we therefore need to fully understand the financial and environmental implications before rolling this out more widely. It is proposed that this trial will:

- Run until the end of March, to enable us to factor the outcome into our contractual discussions with Viridor
- Continue with dedicated collection of PTT at the Taunton (Priorswood) and Wellington (Poole) Household Waste Recycling Centres
- Trial co-mingled plastic bottle/PTT collection at 3 other sites
- Promote this offer, but in a way that reflects our uncertainty about whether it will be feasible to continue after the trial.

**1.5.** The Refill campaign, which encourages retail outlets to refill visitors' water bottles at no cost, thus reducing the risk of single use plastic litter, has recognised Somerset Waste Partnership as its hub for the county. With the support the SWB and its partner councils, SWP will encourage a wide range of businesses and local organisations – chambers of trade, parishes, environmental charities etc – to come together to support this campaign, which has also won the backing of the water industry. Refill will be ready to launch in April in Somerset, and the board and partners will be provided with a further update ahead of launch. Ahead of this the Strategic Management Group are identifying key contacts within each partner authority who might be able to support with the promotion of this initiative (e.g. environmental health, trading standards, economic development). Wide member engagement will also be a crucial route to raising the profile and take-up of Refill.