

**PLASTIC FREE  
COMMUNITIES**  
SURFERS AGAINST SEWAGE  
*Freeing where we live from single-use*

# BUSINESS TOOLKIT



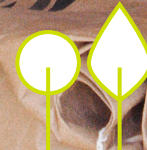
# WELCOME

## Welcome to your Plastic Free Communities Business Toolkit. First of all, thank you!

We're creating the Plastic Free Community network to free where we live from single-use. Together we're tackling avoidable single-use plastic, from beaches and green spaces all the way back to the brands and businesses who create it. Wherever you live, whether you're on shore or inland, urban or rural, high-tide or high-rise, we're uniting communities in the fight against single-use plastics. It's not about removing all plastic from our lives. It's about kicking our addiction to avoidable single-use plastic, and changing the system that produces it.

So, thank you for joining us and becoming a vital part of action to turn the tide on plastic pollution. As a business you have a valuable role in your community and this toolkit will give you tips and advice to make the most of it.

Let's free where we live from single-use, one plastic bottle at a time.





# THE STATS

Plastic pollution has sadly become synonymous with any outdoor activity, from surfing to swimming, walking to climbing or wildlife watching – it is simply an expected part of the experience. It is an issue that connects the environment with all parts of society. It is something that we can all take action on, at every level. In fact, it is only through concrete, collective, positive action that will we be able to stop the flood of plastic pollution from overwhelming our world.

Globally, we produce almost 400 million tonnes of plastic every year. Over half of that is discarded\*, having adverse implications for our oceans, green spaces, wildlife, economy and human health. 99% of plastic is fossil fuel derived and carbon emissions from plastic production are set to more than triple by 2050\*\*

The ocean sustains us, our wellbeing and our planet. We want to create thriving oceans and thriving people. This is why plastic pollution, and specifically tackling society's throwaway culture, is a top priority for Surfers Against Sewage. It isn't just about cleaning up our environment, it's about protecting it for future generations.

\*Geyer, R., Jambeck, J. R., & Law, K. L. (2017). Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made. Science Advances, 3(7), e1700782. [bit.ly/3uZWN6f](https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.1700782)

\*\*Stats: Centre of International Environmental Law, May 2019



1. 38.5 million plastic bottles are bought every day in the UK. Around half end up in landfill, being burnt or in the environment.
2. In the UK, we use 7 million disposable coffee cups every day.
3. Food and drink-related plastic items now make up one in every five pieces of litter.
4. 75% of Brits buy lunch on the go every day, creating 11 billion items of plastic waste a year.
5. UK Supermarkets distribute 112,000 pieces of plastic packaging per minute.
6. Plastic bags can kill marine wildlife by unintentional digestion or inhalation.
7. 28 wet wipes are found per mile of beach. 93% of sewer blockages are made up of wipes.
8. It's thought between five and 13 million tonnes of plastic end up in the ocean every year. Refuse single-use.
9. Sachets can take 300 years to break down.
10. 1 in three seabirds which die are found to have balloons in their stomachs.

# HOW TO USE YOUR BUSINESS TOOLKIT

This toolkit sets out how you can start to reduce your business's plastic impact and explains how to apply for the Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Champion award. It also contains useful information on solutions, so you can be sure the action you are taking is effective from the start.

The SAS Plastic Free Champion award is specifically for independent, locally owned, SME businesses. If you are part of a larger chain, company or organisation please contact the team at SAS for information on how you can take action and support Plastic Free Communities. We also look at the wider environmental impact of your business, again if you are unsure if you qualify, please check out the criteria on [plasticfree.org.uk](https://plasticfree.org.uk)

The best bit? You can retro-fit any action you have already taken!

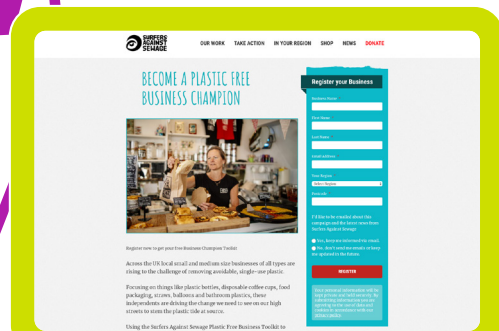
**LET'S GET STARTED**



# STEP ONE



# STEP TWO





## STEP THREE

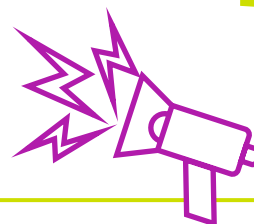
When you have eliminated three single-use plastic items from your business and have a plan in place to tackle the rest of your list, you are ready to apply for the SAS Plastic Free Champion award!

1. If you haven't been updating your dashboard as you go along, it's time to upload your actions and submit in a few easy clicks.
2. We will check over your application and contact you, and your local lead if you have one, to award you Plastic Free Champion status.
3. Wait for your certificate and wooden award to arrive so you can display them with pride.
4. **Tell the world!** Share your actions to inspire others in your community and celebrate positive change.



**REMEMBER: YOU CAN RETROFIT ANY ACTION YOU HAVE ALREADY TAKEN TO REMOVE SINGLE-USE PLASTIC**

**USE**  
**#PLASTICFREECOMMUNITIES**  
**AND**  
**#PLASTICFREECHAMPION**



## STEP FOUR

### WHAT NOW?

THE JOURNEY HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN AND YOU CAN NOW BUILD ON YOUR FOUNDATIONS

1. **LOOK AT YOUR LIST AND GET TO WORK ON THE NEXT ITEMS YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED**
2. **PUT PRESSURE ON SUPPLIERS TO STOP SENDING PLASTIC PACKAGING**
3. **SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES TO HELP OTHER BUSINESSES IN YOUR COMMUNITY**
4. **LOOK INTO BUSINESS SCHEMES SUCH AS BULK BUYING, TO SUPPORT YOUR PLASTIC FREE COMMUNITY**

## TIPS & ADVICE

Here are some ideas to get you started on your journey. Some things can happen overnight, others may take a little longer. Stock ordering points are always a good time to rethink and find new, more sustainable ways of doing things.

### STIRRERS

Get rid of single-use stirrers and put out re-useable stainless-steel spoons.



### SACHETS

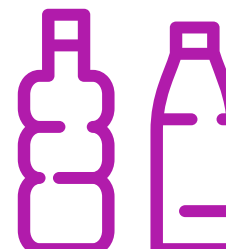
Replace with refill sauce bottles or dispensers, sugar cubes or a sugar shaker and refill pots of jams/butter. Put a refill jug of milk out.



## #REFUSE

### STRAWS

Ban all kinds of straws outright and keep a small stock of paper straws under the counter for those who need them.

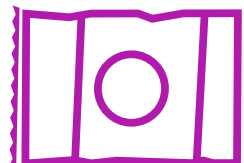


### BOTTLED WATER

Stop selling bottled water and offer a refill service instead. Is there a Refill scheme in your community you can support? [refill.org.uk](https://refill.org.uk)

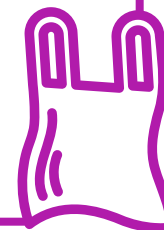
### INDIVIDUALLY WRAPPED BISCUITS/CAKES

Swap to 'nude' biscuits and cake domes.



### CARRIER BAGS

Ban plastic bags and encourage shoppers to bring their own bags, you could also offer a [boomerangbags.org](https://boomerangbags.org) scheme for people who forget.



### COFFEE CUPS

Be bold and only serve takeaway coffee in a refill cup. You can offer a mug exchange or rent-a-cup scheme until customers get used to the new habit.



### BALLOONS

Say no and opt for plastic-free bunting and decorations instead.



## TIPS & ADVICE

### #REDUCE

#### COFFEE CUPS

Promote refills by giving a discount to people who bring their own cup, actively reduce the amount of disposable cups you give out and saving money! Offer a mug exchange to regulars or set up a rent-a-cup scheme.

#### PLASTIC BOTTLED DRINKS

Opt for cans or glass bottles instead. Ditch bottled water for a refill scheme [refill.org.uk](https://www.refill.org.uk).

#### FOOD PACKAGING

Encourage refill options. Then look at your supply chain and stock products which aren't wrapped in plastic. Opt for things like paper bags or cardboard trays and boxes.

#### TAKEAWAY CUTLERY

Swap to wooden cutlery and encourage people to carry their own takeaway kit.

#### TAKEAWAY FOOD CONTAINERS

Encourage people to bring containers from home to refill and swap to paper, cardboard or foil.

#### PACKAGING

Reuse bubble-wrap, air pockets and other packaging which comes into your business. Check with suppliers what packaging they use and request an alternative.

#### PLASTIC STOCK

What are you selling that isn't in line with being a plastic-free business or part of a plastic free community? See what you can reduce or replace.

### #RETHINK

#### #REFUSE

Could you ban disposables outright and be a beacon for the rest of your community?

#### #REDUCE

What items in your business can you easily do without?

#### #REUSE

What can be re-used in your business and how can you encourage customers to reuse?

#### #REFILL

How can you promote refill schemes in your business?

#### #RECYCLE

It isn't a solution, but responsible waste management is important. How can you capture and recycle the waste you generate?



# SECTOR SPECIFICS

It may not be easy to see at first how your business can cut its plastic impact. Have a look through the tips above and adapt them to your business.



## HERE ARE SOME MORE IDEAS FOR SPECIFIC SECTORS:

No-one is expecting things to change overnight. Trial things out, do your research, ask other Plastic Free Champions for advice (your local Community Lead will be able to link you to them) and talk to your suppliers. Talk to your local Chamber of Commerce or Business Improvement District.

Don't worry if you can't tackle everything right now or can't find an immediate solution – the steps you CAN and DO take will still make a big difference.

**CAN YOU GET A BULK BUY SCHEME GOING INVOLVING OTHER PLASTIC-FREE BUSINESSES?**

### OFFICE BASED

1. Look at staff actions – ban plastic drinks bottles and disposable coffee cups from the office and promote refill. Replace single use tableware with re-useable items.
2. Encourage plastic free lunches – bring a lunch box from home and organise weekly team 'bring a plate' lunches.
3. Use plastic free caterers for events and look at marketing materials... ban balloons, plastic pens, gizmos and tat.

### HAIR & BEAUTY

1. Install a refill bar for shampoo, conditioner and other products.
2. Ban disposable towels and wipes and opt for washable and re-useable versions.
3. Give glasses of water and cups of coffee and ditch the plastic wrapped biscuit.

### HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

1. Ditch single-use mini toiletries and swap to refill products.
2. Invest in mini jars and bottles to refill jams, butter, yoghurt and milk.
3. Offer guests refill water bottles and coffee cups to use during their stay.

### LEISURE

1. Phase out single use plastic water bottles and become a water refill point.
2. Overhaul the vending machine to take out plastic bottles and plastic wrapped snacks.
3. Add a line on your booking forms reminding people not to bring single use plastic.

# PROMOTE STAFF ACTIONS

USE A  
REFILL  
WATER  
BOTTLE

REMEMBER  
YOUR REFILL  
COFFEE CUP

BRING A  
PLASTIC  
FREE LUNCH  
FROM HOME

REFUSE  
SINGLE-USE  
FOOD  
PACKAGING

CARRY YOUR  
OWN CUTLERY  
SET WITH YOU

REFUSE CARRIER  
BAGS AND BRING  
A SPARE BAG  
FROM HOME

SWAP TO  
REFILL  
CLEANING  
PRODUCTS

USE SOAP BARS  
OR REFILL  
BOTTLES IN  
THE BATHROOM

DO YOUR OWN  
#MINIBEACHCLEAN  
OR TAKE PART IN A  
COMMUNITY CLEAN

FUND THE MOVEMENT  
AND RAISE MONEY  
TO SUPPORT SAS  
PLASTIC FREE  
COMMUNITIES

# ALTERNATIVES AND GREENWASHING

Bio-plastic packaging made from sustainable plant-based materials like wood, sugarcane and corn starch are becoming increasingly popular as replacements for oil-based plastic products.

Beware of greenwash in bio-based food and drink packaging, especially any 'marine friendly' claims or statements that items made from PLA plant starch are easily compostable or friendly to the natural environment. Generally nothing is 'good for landfill' either!

BEWARE OF GREENWASH

NOTHING IS GOOD FOR LANDFILL

## KNOW THE SCORE

1

There is no mandatory legislation over using the terms 'biodegradable' or 'compostable' in food and drink packaging.



2

As a business you could be "sold" on the environmental benefits of a product without enough accurate information on product disposal to make an informed decision.

3

Businesses are led to believe that because a product is marketed as biodegradable or compostable it poses little negative effect on the environment. This is not true! Most biodegradable/compostable materials require specific processes and heat conditions to break-down. Put into normal household waste, landfill or littered they can be just as resilient as oil-based plastic and just as harmful to wildlife.



4

Many bio-plastic products are intended for the take away market and therefore won't be disposed of in a manner that allows them to be captured for treatment. Most will end up in general waste bins or contaminating traditional recycling streams.



## PROPERTIES OF DIFFERENT BIOPLASTICS:

**PLA (POLYLACTIC ACID)** a bioplastic made from corn starch, commonly used for bags, cutlery, cold cups, hot cup/container lining and straws. PLA must be “hot” or industrially composted. It’s not going anywhere if you put it in your garden compost or food waste collection.

**CPLA** is a form of PLA that is heat resistant and must be “hot” or industrially composted.

**RCPLA** is ‘Recycled CPLA’. Again this can only be composted in “hot” or industrial processes.

**CELLOPHANE** is a wood pulp cellulose-based material. Like other bioplastics it must be “hot”/industrially composted. There are dissolving wood pulp cellulose based materials on the market that can be “cold”/home or “hot”/industrially composted. Check what you are buying.

**BAGASSE** is recycled sugarcane used for takeaway boxes. It’s not bioplastic, just pressed sugarcane. This can be “cold”/home or “hot”/industrially composted. However, some commercial bagasse is not accredited for home composting. Check what you are buying.


## SAS GUIDANCE

It is always worth checking with suppliers and manufacturers how sustainable alternatives are disposed of. Be aware that many biodegradable/compostable products are not home compostable and need to go to special composting facilities, of which there are very few in the UK. Also be aware that many of these products are takeaway so are hard to capture once they leave the premises.

The bottom-line is check what you are buying and its waste journey. SAS do not endorse or recommend specific products and we do not accept swapping to a compostable or bio-degradable product as an action to eliminate single use.

OUR MESSAGE IS TO  
AVOID SINGLE USE  
AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
- FULL STOP - BY  
ENCOURAGING REFUSAL,  
REFILL AND REUSE

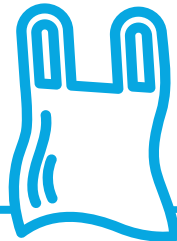
## FINAL THOUGHTS

 **38.5  
MILLION**

The UK uses a staggering 38.5 million single-use plastic bottles every day. Just over half are recycled, the rest end up in landfill, being burnt or in the environment.<sup>1</sup>

**2.5  
BILLION**

Less than 1% of the 2.5 billion paper coffee cups used in the UK each year are recycled.<sup>2</sup>



**YEARS+**

Plastic bags fragment in 100-300 years but will remain at large in the environment indefinitely.<sup>3</sup>

**264  
MILLION**

Up to 264 million toothbrushes are discarded every year. Sell a non-plastic toothbrush to ensure they don't pollute our environment post-use.<sup>4</sup>



**27K  
TONNES**

27 thousand tonnes of waste is created in the UK every year. Help stem the flow and start action to stop stocking unnecessary packaging.<sup>5</sup>

1. [bit.ly/3uUE6AB](https://bit.ly/3uUE6AB)
2. [bit.ly/2RvyD5H](https://bit.ly/2RvyD5H)
3. From SAS Marine Litter Guide
4. Based on population's three monthly replacement as per dentist advice
5. [bit.ly/2RthgCw](https://bit.ly/2RthgCw)

Surfers Against Sewage is one of the UK's leading marine conservation and campaigning charities.

Our mission is simple:

## TO CREATE OCEAN ACTIVISTS EVERYWHERE

Our projects and campaigns inspire, unite and empower individuals and communities to take action to protect oceans, beaches, waves and wildlife.

Plastic pollution in our oceans is the 'new sewage'. Blighting our beaches and strangling our seashores it reaches every part of our oceans. It is one of the biggest global environmental threats of our age and fighting it together is our priority issue. To combat plastic pollution we will:

1. **STOP THE PROBLEM AT SOURCE**
2. **CLEAN UP POLLUTION FROM OUR BEACHES**

Plastic Free Communities is a movement to engage and connect individuals, communities and businesses in the collective effort to reduce the flow of single-use plastics into the marine environment.

# THRIVING OCEAN, THRIVING PEOPLE

This is our vision of the future. This simple phrase captures everything that matters to us, not just in SAS, but humankind. It's a mantra, a motto, a rallying cry to drive us on, with a huge collective goal to help tilt our delicate planet back on its axis. This sounds huge, but when you love what you do, and work as one, that future draws ever nearer.

**TOGETHER, WE ARE THE  
VOICE OF THE OCEAN**



[www.sas.org.uk](http://www.sas.org.uk)