SINGLE-USE PLASTIC PURCHASING POLICY – PUBLIC VERSION

Why plastic?

The impact of plastics, particularly on our oceans, is a fast-growing global issue. Nearly all plastics are made from fossil fuels. Their production contributes to climate change. Plastic never biodegrades in the natural environment, instead it breaks up into tiny 'microplastics', which end up in our oceans. These microplastics attract toxic chemicals, are ingested by wildlife and end up in our food chain. Larger pieces of plastic pose an ingestion hazard to wildlife.

Most plastics are not infinitely recyclable like some other materials, such as glass. They are 'down-cycled' rather than recycled; made into lower grade products which are eventually not recyclable. Globally, only 9% of plastic is recycled. We must seek alternative, natural materials to plastic wherever possible.

'Single-use' plastics are particularly wasteful and are not acceptable.

What is single-use plastic?

Single-use plastic is any disposable plastic item which is designed to be used only once, or for only one short term purpose, before it is thrown away or recycled. You can find it in packaging, containers, supporter products and materials used for marketing and events. We also regard bio-plastics that are designed to be used once only as single-use plastic.

This includes but is not limited to…

- **Plastic bags**
- **Plastic bottles**
- **Paper cups (lined in plastic)**
- **Disposable plates** and **cutlery**
- **Sugar packs**
- **Moulded plastic cases**
- **Drinks bottles**
- **Plastic film**
- **Bottle caps**
- **Drinking straws**
- **Foam peanuts and blocks**
- **Food containers**
- **Plastic tableware**
- **Food packaging, such as: Saran/Cling film**

Resin identification codes indicate the type of plastic that an item is made from:

Process Hierarchy

To ensure our commitment is met, the following steps should be taken when purchasing any item that contains single-use plastic (in order of preference):

1) **Completely avoid:** seek to avoid purchasing the item altogether, or in the case of packaging ensure it is not present. This may require product redesign or a change in behaviour
2) **Use a reusable alternative:** replace the item with a reusable alternative
3) **Use a sustainable alternative from renewable source:** replace the item with a sustainable, renewable alternative, e.g. paper products (N.B see the Paper, Timber and Print Procurement Policy)
4) **Use a sustainable alternative from abundant source:** replace the item with an abundant material e.g. glass or metal
5) **Use the best available plastic:** if you cannot avoid a single-use plastic item due to regulations (such as those relating to food packaging), you should choose (in order of preference):
    a) Plastic which is made from **recycled material**, and where possible, fully recyclable (ideally at the kerbside for supporter/consumer materials)
    b) If recycled plastic is not available, **fully recyclable plastic** is preferred (meaning it can be recycled easily at home by consumers)
    c) Bioplastics are a last resort and preferable to unrecyclable disposable plastics. '**Home compostable**' is the preference, but caution must be used:
        i) Ensure it is a truly biodegradable alternative made from natural material, not a synthetic plastic containing additives to make it 'degradable' (such as PLA or Oxo-degradable plastics). Even the term 'biodegradable' is sometimes used to describe traditional, petrochemical based plastic which contains additives to make them break down faster.
        ii) Avoid bioplastic which uses primary crops which could be better used for food or biofuel; look for bioplastic made from by-products rather than crops grown specifically for bioplastic production.
        iii) Consider how, and whether, the end user can dispose of it correctly (and any labelling that may need to be included on products to help achieve this). Bioplastics cannot be recycled, and not all facilities that process food waste take biodegradable plastics.

When applying the above hierarchy approach, in addition to the material used it is important to consider the whole life-cycle of the alternative you plan to source. Your alternative should represent a better overall environmental option than your original intended product. Consider:

- Is the product made from recycled content?
- Where is the product made?
- How it is produced (e.g. energy, water, chemicals used etc.)?
- How it is packaged and transported?
- The effect it has during its use?
- What happens to it at the end of its life (e.g. could it be recycled)?