

Belfast City Council Plastic Promise
June 2022

Belfast City Council is committed to reducing Single Use Plastic items across its facilities and operations. We have already successfully reduced the number of single use plastic cups in use in our canteen and at office water dispensers, whilst also encouraging the use of re-useable cups and glasses and refillable bottles. In addition, we have improved our internal recycling facilities for staff to deposit single use plastic items, such as plastic water bottles, pots and trays. This improvement has led to an increase in recycling and a reduction in the amount of materials being sent to landfill. It also supports the Circular Economy as the new bins are made from recycled materials and are made locally in Northern Ireland. Mains water fountains have been installed across council buildings for staff and also in five parks across Belfast for the public to refill water bottles.

(Quote from P&C Chair) “In response to the damage caused by plastics to oceans, wildlife and human health, Belfast City Council is delighted to take positive action by signing up to the KNIB “Plastic Promise” which forms part of “Live Here Love Here” programme. KNIB have launched the “Plastic Promise” initiative aimed at individuals, community groups and organisations to reduce the consumption of plastics and in particular to put an end to “throwaway” plastics. By signing up to the Promise, Belfast City Council recognises our important work already carried out on managing single use plastic and also commits to furthering our application of the Waste Hierarchy in dealing with the problems associated with single use plastics. Belfast City Council has declared a Climate Emergency and made a commitment to reducing our carbon emissions as soon as possible. The Plastic Promise helps us to take immediate action towards achieving this commitment.”

The Recycling Outreach Team has plans to further promote the reduction of single use plastics and other disposables to staff once more people return to the offices and the team continues to work with the public, schools, businesses and other partners to encourage the reduction of single use items as part of their ongoing education campaign. The team recently ran a “keep cup” give away for staff to reduce the number of single use cups used and promoted the improved recycling scheme with posters across community centres.

Many of our communications to the public, for example via City Matters and to the staff using interlink and intercom promote waste reduction and avoidance of single use items (waste free lunch, waste free bbq). This is a core message that we are very consistent with.

Both our reusable nappy scheme and reusable period product pilot have generated public interest and support. There were 76 applications to the cloth nappy scheme in 21-22 and in the 24 hours the reusable period products pilot was open we had over 2750 applications. Both programmes actively reduce the amount of single use items people actually use. Disposable nappies and period products contain significant amounts of plastic, with some pads being up to 90% plastic.

The Council also continues to work on an education and community litter programme to tackle single use plastic litter in our environment – for example we have facilitated over 180 clean-up events in the past year alone.

We will also work with our supply chains to reduce single-use plastic where possible.