

Case Study: Environmental Limits

Reducing the use of single use plastic and packaging



Where:
UK wide

When:
2018

Who:
Company wide

"It is vital that we do everything we can to turn off the tap on single use plastics. By working with our people, suppliers, designers and customers we will be able to significantly reduce our reliance on single use plastics."

**Poul Wend Hansen, Head of Environment,
Balfour Beatty**

The Challenge

Hundreds of millions of tonnes of plastic is produced every year and very little is recycled, leading to vast quantities going to landfill and into our oceans. It is vital that awareness is raised about the damaging impacts to the environment from single use plastics so we can reduce our usage and find alternative options.

The Measures

We have delivered some quick wins to avoid the amount of single use plastic that we use. We worked with our supplier, Lyreco, to reduce plastic and packaging including removing items such as plastic straws from the supply chain and replacing items such as plastic cutlery with more sustainable options,

We also worked with our caterers, Harrisons, to make sustainable changes such as the use of biodegradable cutlery and packaging, and banning plastic cups at water coolers. Staff are encouraged to use glasses or refillable water bottles, with some sites providing employees with reusable metal or plastic water bottles to discourage single use water bottles. Some offices, including Cheadle, have also switched to glass milk bottles instead of plastic bottles.

Where we are unable to reduce single use plastics we are looking at better segregation to allow for improved recycling. On our Scarborough Spa Cliff Stabilisation Scheme in Yorkshire we have installed an eight yard skip for plastic only, and have arranged for a separate mixed

plastic 1100 litre wheelie bin for the site compound to ensure that plastic is disposed of separately to allow for the correct recycling.

We are now looking at longer term actions. In order to do this we are gaining a better understanding of the plastic waste we produce. On our Vine Street project in London we are carrying out plastic audits to help us understand what we are procuring and look for opportunities to reduce the amount of single use plastics. Our University of Sussex East Slope Residences project will also be studied as a historic example, examining procurement to see where plastic could have been avoided and using this to inform better decisions on future projects

Through our actions to reduce single use plastic and packaging we want to raise awareness within project teams and offices about the amount of plastic used, and inspire people to change their attitude towards single use plastic both at work and in their day to day lives.

The Results

- Reduced use of single use plastic through limiting plastic options and sustainable replacements
- Improved waste management through segregated plastic bins and a more knowledgeable workforce
- Awareness raised about alternatives to single use plastic

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