








The University of Manchester and its Students Union is committed to the responsible use of plastics, minimising waste, and seeking opportunities to reuse and recycle plastic, allowing for circularity and efficiency in use.

The University of Manchester is leading on a range of plastics research exploring new and different ways of making, using, and recycling. Outputs of our research inform our ongoing approach to responsible plastic management and guide our actions set out below.

This Action Plan maps out our progress so far and our targets to achieve by 2025.

Focus	The challenge	Our work so far	Our actions to 2025
Plastic bottles	We recycle around 47 tonnes of plastic bottles each year. A better solution is bringing a reusable bottle to refill from our campus water dispensers.	<p>We have mapped our <a href="#">publicly accessible water dispensers</a> on our <a href="#">Sustainability Map</a> to encourage our staff and students to refill their reusable water bottles. Many of our Food on Campus outlets are also displayed on the <a href="#">Refill</a> app.</p> <p>We have improved water dispenser provision across campus and produced high quality signage for drinking water facilities. We will continue to roll out improvements.</p>	<p>We will continue to improve water dispenser provision across campus and produce high quality signage for drinking water facilities.</p> <p>We will explore opportunities via deposit return schemes &amp; reverse vending to increase the reuse and recycling of plastic bottles.</p> <p>We will explore opportunities to expand the items of plastics recycled through our plastic bottle recycling contractors.</p>
Hot drink cups	We sell over 732,000 hot drinks each year, which produces a large amount of waste.	<p>We have explored moving to compostable cups, however when tested by our Sustainable Materials specialists a small amount of polymeric material was found to be in them. We also explored if the cups could go into the paper waste or food waste bins. Our waste contractors confirmed that they would be removed from both waste streams. It was therefore decided to promote reusable mugs instead.</p> <p>We have introduced a 20p charge on all disposable cups in Food on Campus outlets. This avoided more than 35,000 cups from landfill in January and February 2020. These profits go towards local sustainability and community projects. The charge has contributed to an increase in reusable cup sales by 36%.</p>	We will increase the number of drinks sold in reusable cups in our outlets and will continue to research initiatives such as coffee cup recycling and the possibility of reuse schemes.
Single-use plastic cups in student bars	Large numbers of single-use plastic cups are used in our student bars, especially during peak times.	We have introduced reusable cups in our Fallowfield campus bar Squirrels, switching to a completely plastic-free drinks service.	We are working towards introducing reusable cups in more bars across campus. Where plastic cups are procured, we will seek to buy products made from recycled content.
Single-use plastics in labs 	Laboratories are heavily reliant on single-use plastics. Reducing these consumables is difficult due to issues of contamination, sterility and cost-effectiveness.	<p>The School of Biological Sciences launched a project to reduce the amount of plastic in their undergraduate teaching laboratory classes. The '<a href="#">Plastic 6R</a>' approach (refine, reduce, reuse, refill, replace, recycle(d)) has been applied to 12 practical classes and saved more than 37,000 pieces of plastic annually. This initiative was the <a href="#">2020 winner</a> in the Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Sustainability category of our Making a Difference Awards.</p> <p>This procedure has been expanded across additional teaching laboratories and adapted for use in research laboratories. The 6R approach has also been adapted to home, campus and workplace environments.</p>	<p>We will expand this procedure across all our teaching and research laboratories across all Schools, Departments, Faculties, alongside the University's commitment for all STEM laboratories to achieve LEAF Bronze level certification by 2025.</p> <p>We will work with Compliance &amp; Risk Teams to increase the range of recycling of laboratory plastics.</p>
Labs suppliers' initiatives	Laboratories rely on suppliers for much of their equipment, but are often left with large amounts of packaging to dispose of through University waste streams.	We are working with our labs suppliers to promote takeback schemes for excess packaging and recycle frequently used items such as pipette tips. <i>E.g. StarLab stackpack returns, Promega and NEB polystyrene box returns.</i>	<p>We will continue to promote sustainable initiatives across our laboratories and work with our suppliers to further reduce single-use plastic, encouraging recycling and takeback schemes.</p> <p>In the first instance, the Faculty of Biology, Medicine &amp; Health will develop a standard operating procedure for dealing with suppliers, to reduce packaging &amp; promote sustainable packaging, in line with circular economy principles.</p>
Stationery	Our departments order large amounts of stationery each year, which can sometimes become unused and expensive.	<p>We held stationery amnesties in 2019 &amp; 2020, to reduce the procurement of unnecessary materials including plastic, as well as avoiding their disposal and associated costs. Remaining stationery is donated to charity if it cannot be reused internally.</p> <p>The Want Not Waste Store in the Student's Union also offer a stationery recycling facility via Teracycle.</p>	We will run additional stationery amnesties and promote products with circular economy potential where possible. We aim to provide a facility for stationery reuse via the Furniture Reuse Store once relocated on campus.
Freebies at events	Single-use plastics are often used at events for convenience and cost-	<p>Our Careers Service has made great progress on reducing plastic at their events. In February 2020, their My Future Festival removed plastic bottles from exhibitors' lunches and used paper bunting instead of balloons.</p> <p>In person events have been largely limited since then but recent events have started to provide experiences rather than items as giveaways.</p>	We will promote plastic-free events across the University and encourage sustainable practices in event planning and waste management.

<p>Single-use plastic cups in staff areas</p>	<p>Frequent events such as meetings, interviews and conferences mean that many single-use plastic cups are provided for visitors to use with our water dispensers. This produces large amounts of waste and financial costs for departments.</p>	<p>We encourage our departments to replace their single-use plastic cups with reusable alternatives, for events, meetings and for visitors to use. This reduces costs and associated waste.</p> <p>Several departments have already stopped ordering plastic cups and now use reusable glasses.</p> <p>We are working to stop the purchase of plastic cups, and to promote or provide the use of alternatives, particularly for staff.</p>	<p>We will reduce the number of plastic cups purchased for use with water dispensers, especially in staff areas.</p> <p>Where plastic cups are procured, we will seek to buy products made from recycled content.</p> <p>We will develop a position statement or procedure to allow the above to happen consistently across campus.</p>
<p>Staff and student engagement</p> 	<p>The University of Manchester has more than 12,000 staff members as has one of the largest student communities in the UK.</p>	<p>Our <a href="#">award-winning 10,000 Actions</a> and <a href="#">Team Actions</a> platform encourages staff and students to make small commitments in their daily lives, including reducing their plastic consumption through individual and team-based actions.</p> <p><a href="#">50,000 Actions</a> launched in 2021 and is the biggest environmental sustainability initiative in the higher education sector, challenging all our 50,000 university students and staff to take practical action in everyday life to help build towards a more sustainable way of living.</p> <p>Step Up &amp; Lead Sustainability Champions was launched in 2022. Sustainability Champions are students who take on an additional role promoting awareness of sustainability issues amongst their peers to encourage environmental action.</p>	<p>We will expand the engagement of staff and students in 50,000 Actions.</p> <p>We will develop the Step Up &amp; Lead Sustainability Champions roles and attract more student volunteers.</p> <p>We will develop a position statement or standard operating procedure to allow consistent messaging around responsible plastics in line with the University's best practice research.</p>
<p>Manchester Museum</p> 	<p>Many gift shop items arrive in plastic packaging or are designed to be single-use products.</p>	<p>Our <a href="#">Manchester Museum</a> is taking actions to reduce its plastic, including selling soft toys made from recycled plastic bottles and encouraging suppliers to eliminate plastic packaging.</p> <p>The gift shop has continued to research sustainable alternatives to plastic across products and actively encourages suppliers to use less packaging and alternatives to cellophane wrapping. The gift shop closed in December 2021 due to renovation works and will reopen when the museum reopens in February 2023.</p>	<p>The goal to become one of the industry leaders in sustainable retail continues. The Museum Team will develop a new retail strategy and mission statement for the new museum shop due to reopen in February 2023.</p> <p>We will utilise opportunities provided by this public facing institution to influence plastics behaviour beyond staff and students into the wider community.</p>
<p>Want not Waste Shop</p> 	<p>Zero waste living can be expensive and inaccessible to many people.</p>	<p>Our <a href="#">Want not Waste shop</a> sells a selection of zero waste products, including spices, pulses, grains and sugar, helping you to avoid excess plastic packaging. Customers can bring their own containers or bags to fill up products and pay by weight or item. This can help reduce both cost and food waste.</p> <p>The Want not Waste team received four awards at the 2020 Making A Difference Awards, including the student winners of the <a href="#">Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Sustainability</a>.</p> <p>We will continue to promote the Want not Waste shop to all staff, student, and members of the public. Their team of volunteers increased to 30 volunteers in the 2019/20 academic year; and over 1,250 volunteering hours (in shop shifts, events, and other work on the project) was recorded between October 2021 – April 2022.</p> <p>The shop's volunteers continue with their aim to make zero waste living affordable and accessible to all. They also educate and share skills via free workshops and sharing meaningful content on their social media.</p> <p>+ <a href="#">Recycle4GM guest blog on Want not Waste</a></p>	<p>We will continue to promote the Want not Waste shop to all staff, student and members of the public.</p>
<p>Jodrell Bank Bluedot Festival</p> 	<p>Many events, including festivals, can have large environmental impacts.</p>	<p>Since its inception, the annual Bluedot Festival has considered sustainability within its operations and waste management. As well as other sustainability initiatives, the festival has a zero waste-to-landfill policy and uses no single-use plastics.</p> <p>The Bluedot Festival Sustainability Programme was celebrated for their <a href="#">Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Sustainability</a> in our 2020 Making a Difference Awards.</p>	<p>We will continue to reduce unnecessary plastic and promote recycled content at Jodrell Bank.</p>
<p>Data collection</p>	<p>Data to demonstrate impact of single-use plastic reductions and inform future interventions.</p>	<p>We eliminated 250,000 pieces of avoidable single-use plastic between 2018 – 2022.</p>	<p>We will consider quantifying progress via carbon saved through the above actions, rather than numbers of plastic items avoided. Methodologies to quantify carbon savings to be explored.</p>