

Single Use Plastic (SUP) Policy

What is this policy for?

The Single Use Plastic (SUP) Policy commits Digital Islands to act to remove and reduce the use of Single Use Plastic from Digital Islands's operations and services as well as working towards finding positive solutions for reducing unnecessary waste across The geographical areas where we operate.

Who does this policy affect?

The Single Use Plastic Policy will affect:
Digital Islands employees, sub-contractors, freelancers and suppliers

Keywords

SUP, Single Use Plastic, Plastic, Climate Emergency, Environmental Advice

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Context

Digital Islands is a Green Growth business, committed to reducing the potential negative impacts that economic activity might have on the planet. Digital Islands is an accredited Green Growth Advisor, working with Brighton University and the Clean Growth UK team to provide advice, support and practical assistance to clean / low carbon businesses. Digital Islands has designated the subject of eliminating the use of Single Use Plastics as a key area of focus.

The Issue

Single-use plastics can be described as any disposable plastic item that is designed to be used only once, for a relatively short period of time. Single-use plastics are often used in packaging, consumer products, cosmetics and healthcare. Examples include: plastic bags, disposable utensils, beverage containers, balloons and wet wipes. It is estimated that around 50% of plastic waste we produce globally is packaging that is used just once.

There are two key issues linked to this policy:

1. Plastic pollution is litter - Plastic pollution is both a global and local issue that affects the natural and urban environment, the oceans, beaches and links to people's health and wellbeing. Southern England has some of the most beautiful countryside in Britain, numerous designations including the Jurassic coast world heritage site, the South Down National Park, and dozens of magnificent Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as well as our coast and marine environments. All of which contribute greatly to the regional economy and support a diverse range of habitats and species which are at risk due to plastic pollution. Plastic pollution from SUP found in our towns and villages impacts aesthetically but is also costly to clear up.
2. Plastic is a major contributor to climate change - Chemicals derived from fossil fuel production are used to make almost all plastics. The more plastic made, the more petrochemicals are required, and the more petrochemicals required, the higher the demand for gas, oil and even coal. By reducing or removing SUP this will mean Digital Islands is helping to reduce the demand for fossil fuels, thereby reducing the CO2 in the atmosphere.

National Policy

The UK Government published its 25-Year Environment Plan in January 2018, which includes a target of “achieving zero avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042”.

DEFRA's new waste and resources strategy 2018/19 also sets out several plastic waste reduction reforms to help the Government achieve its ambitious plans for a greener future.

Reducing SUP has become a priority for many local authorities across the UK and elsewhere. The target of “removing SUP from government estate by 2020” highlighted in DEFRA's new Waste and Resources Strategy requires all local authorities to take action immediately in order to meet the given 2020 target.

Challenges

Plastic is one of the most useful inventions in recent history. However, the current volume of plastic waste means it has also now become a pressing environmental challenge. Its low cost has encouraged the development of many SUP items:

- SUP is found in many products: medical supplies that cannot be reused for safety and hygiene reasons, cigarette filters containing plastic among other materials, chewing gums, disposable nappies, food packaging, balloons, cups, straws and many more.
- The types of polymers used to produce some items are currently hard to recycle so they often end up in residual waste. The numbers of SUP items are high; the UK Government estimates that every year 4.7 billion plastic straws, 316 million plastic stirrers and 1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds end up in landfill.

- Items used 'on-the-go' are the most often littered, creating an environmental pollutant and removing the possibility of managing their end of life effectively.
- When SUP items are not adequately captured and managed at their end of life, they represent a real threat to our ecosystems by degrading into tiny particles. Known as micro-plastics, they can contaminate the food web including being ingested by plankton.

Single Use Policy (SUP)

Digital Islands will act to remove and reduce the use of Single Use Plastic from its operations and services as well as working towards finding positive solutions for reducing unnecessary waste in all activity.

Digital Islands will lead by example:

- All employees and sub-contractors will be required to make a commitment to not using SUP during any period of time working with Digital Islands or when working on Digital Islands business.
- Where the use of plastics is unavoidable, Digital Islands will encourage the use of recycled plastics, supporting manufacturers that make products from locally sourced waste plastics
- Work with our suppliers and contractors to expand the adoption and implementation of a SUP policy

Objective

To be able to demonstrate that both Digital Islands and those we work with are reducing the use of single-use plastics, and are finding sustainable alternatives (where ever possible)