



Highland Council Internal Policy on Disposable Cups

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1. Introduction

The Highland Council Carbon Management Plan contains the commitment to:

"reduce the CO₂ emissions associated with waste generated by Highland Council by 20% by 2012, over a 2007/08 baseline. This equates to 20% less waste generated and land filled by 2012".

Disposable plastic cups, which are used at water fountains in Council premises throughout Highland, generate significant waste volume and cost for the Council. In December 2010 the Council approved the Climate Change Working Group's recommendation that the purchase of plastic cups be banned and removed from the purchase catalogues, with staff encouraged to use re-usable cups and mugs. This ban is to be phased in schools, following waste audits by eco-committees in 2011. It will not lead to the purchase of any new crockery by the Council.

The following document has been developed to provide guidance to facilities managers and staff on the alternatives to plastic cups.

2. Impacts of Plastic Cup Use

Plastic Cups cannot be recycled alongside Highland's other plastic's waste, as they are not made of the correct type of plastic, i.e. PET1 or PET 2. A case study carried out at Highland Council HQ revealed the use of plastic cups generates significant waste volume, cost and carbon emissions. For example,

- In 2009/10 Highland Council HQ used 52,000 plastic cups, filling 433 bin bags of waste.
- HQ spends in excess of £2000 per year to purchase and dispose of plastic cups.
- When waste is disposed of in a landfill site it produces methane gas as it decomposes. Methane (CH₄) is a greenhouse gas that is 20X more powerful than carbon dioxide (CO₂).

3. Ban on Plastic Cups

In order to minimise cost and meet the Council's commitments on waste and carbon reduction, Highland Council now prohibits the use of plastic cups at Council water fountains. Building managers are advised to use up any plastic cups which have already been purchased.

4. What can I use?

Staff are encouraged to use re-usable cups and water bottles when drinking from water fountains. If additional crockery is required, the expense must be met by staff. Line managers must ensure that Council budgets are not used for this purpose. Please see below for guidance on the safe use of water bottles.

5. What about Public Areas?

The Council accepts there is a need to provide disposable cups in public areas of Council buildings. It would be impractical to expect members of the public to use re-

usable cups and bottles. TEC Services are in the process of procuring recyclable paper cups and adapting cup dispensers. However, Building managers should continue to provide plastic cups until further notice.

6. What about Schools?

The removal of plastic cups in schools will be done in conjunction with the roll out of alternate weekly collections. Please see Appendix 1 for more details, including timetable information. This phased approach will ensure that all pupils have access to re-useable cups/bottles for drinking water. Prior to removing plastic cups, Eco-Committees should carry out a waste audit, to provide more information on current practice in schools. The removal of plastic cups and future waste practice in schools will also be informed by a Council pilot study, which will investigate waste generation and recycling at four Highland schools in 2011.

7. Exemptions

The Council accepts that in specific situations, Health and Safety requirements mean that disposable plastic cups cannot be removed. In light of this, the Council has agreed that disposable plastic cups should continue to be used for the dispensing of medication in Care Homes and for clients visiting Criminal Justice Units.

7. Awareness Raising

All facilities managers will be informed of the ban on plastic cups. Please see Appendix 1 for a poster, which can be placed above water fountains to inform staff of the ban on plastic cups and the reasons behind it.

8. Guidance on the Use of Water Bottles.

Recently, there has been some concern that reusable water bottles may pose a health risk. The biggest risk associated with re-using water bottles is that bacteria could develop in the bottle in between uses.



Recent research has shown that continued use of disposable water bottles may cause bacterial contamination. If such bottles are used it is safer to use them for a limited time only.

With regard to re-useable water bottles, the risk of bacterial contamination can be reduced by adhering to the following guidelines:

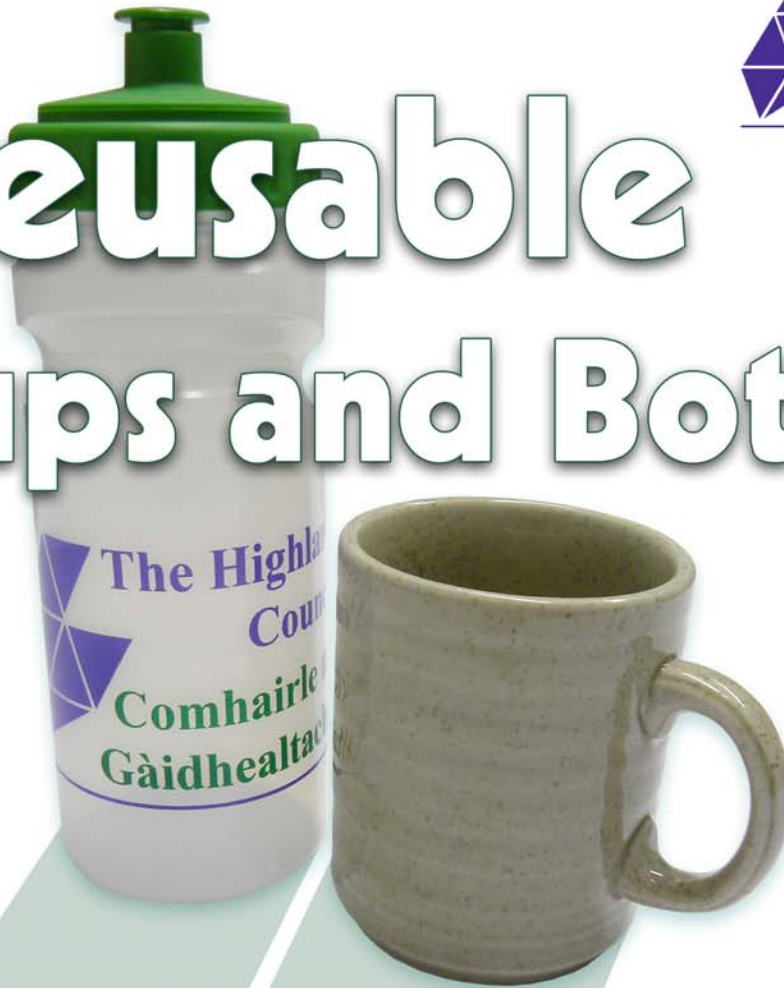


- Only use the bottles for water
- Rinse the bottle and the cap daily with clean water.
- Once a week the bottle and the cap should be soaked in a solution of Milton.
- Rinse both the bottle and the cap again and leave the bottle sealed.
- Rinse the bottle and the cap again before filling for use.
- To refill, stand the bottle on the water fountain and refill. The bottle should not be placed against the water tap.

9. Highland Council Water Bottles

Staff may purchase re-usable water bottles (500ML) in the Council Headquarters canteen, at a cost of £2.20. All profits will be donated to the Highland Hospice. The water bottles are 100% recyclable.

Reusable Cups and Bottles



- **Reduce Waste** - in 2009 Council Headquarters used 52,000 disposable plastic cups
- **Save Money** - in 2009 Council Headquarters spent over £2000 on plastic cups
- **Reduce** greenhouse gas emissions

Disposable plastic cups are now prohibited at all Council Water Fountains (excluding those located in public areas).

Visit: www.highland.gov.uk/internalpolicyondisposablecups

Refill Don't Landfill

Roll Out of Alternate Weekly Collections - Timetable

The Council is rolling out a new waste collection service to many sites across Highland. The new service will see a fortnightly collection of recycling bins alternating with a fortnightly collection of refuse bins. Both collections will take place on the same day of the week – blue recycling bins one week and green/grey refuse bins the next.

Area	Implementation Date
Lochaber and Caithness	April 2011
Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey	July 2011
Ross and Cromarty	October 2011
Inverness	January 2012
Wester Ross and North West Sutherland	April 2012
East and Central Sutherland	April 2012