PECT
CREATING SUSTAINABLE PLACES

BRING IT BACK

PROJECT TOOLKIT

www.bringitback.org.uk

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

RECOUP

WELCOME TO THE PECT BRING IT BACK TOOLKIT!

This toolkit has been created to help individuals and organisations create their own reusable packaging schemes, using lessons learnt from the PECT Bring it Back project.
We've tested different packaging, different messaging and how reusable packaging could work in different settings, so all you need to do is get started.
PECT Bring it Back tackles the barriers to reusable packaging schemes across different communities.

What is a reusable packaging scheme?

In a reusable packaging scheme, the same container is used multiple times for the same purpose. By opting for reusable takeaway packaging, we can reduce our reliance on wasteful, single-use packaging that is affecting our local nature, oceans and piling up in landfills across the world.

Why choose a reusable packaging scheme?

A reusable packaging scheme is a great choice for communities, businesses, and organisations to move towards a circular economy, by reducing waste. There is also the opportunity to save money at the same time as reducing your environmental footprint.

What did the Bring it Back project do?

PECT Bring it Back worked closely with local communities and businesses to set up reusable packaging trials that were tailored to the needs of each group. The co-creation of these trials aimed to meet the different needs of each partner, making reusable packaging schemes accessible for the customer and the provider.

Contents

How to Set Up a Reusable Packaging Scheme

STEP 1 GETTING STARTED

Before getting started, there are a few things to consider:

- Is there a particular audience or location that generates a significant amount of food and/or drink packaging waste?
- What existing connections/infrastructure can be used?
- Where will the packaging be washed? Is it easily accessible?
- What's the best way to make people aware of the scheme?*
- Set a realistic timeline for the scheme that can be shared with intended groups to manage expectations.

*Top Tip
During the trial, organising face-to-face meetings was a lot more efficient to reach the right people and to get answers.

STEP 2 WHO IS YOUR CUSTOMER?

There are two different types of reusable packaging audiences: **closed-loop** and **open-loop**.

Closed-loop audiences include offices, canteens, and schools, where the customer base is mostly those who come to the location frequently and will spend a large amount of time there.

Open-loop audiences will include spaces open to the public, where customers may be a mix of regulars and infrequent or one-off visitors.

Having this in mind at the planning stage, will help when making decisions later.

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STEP 3 IDENTIFYING BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Discover what type of different messaging and incentives work for different people. The following enablers and barriers can be applied across most schemes and are a good starting point when planning your campaigns.

Enablers for using a reusable packaging scheme could include:
- Discounts or rewards,
- Helping the environment or
- Supporting their local community/ economy.

However, there are also elements that could put people off, including:
- Packaging not being hygienic,
- Cost & convenience to return the packaging.

Gaining a valuable insight into what the barriers are to your prospective customers is the first step to understanding how a scheme could work for you.
What do you think the enablers or barriers are to your audience – what can you do support/ease them?

Surveying your audience before you launch is a great way to find out about typical behaviours, attitudes, and existing knowledge.

Questions could include:
- How often do you buy takeaway food and drink?
- Have you used a company owned reusable scheme before?

Discover what type of different messaging and incentives work for different people. The following enablers and barriers can be applied across most schemes and are a good starting point when planning your campaigns.
You can find more example questions in Appendix A (p.16).

Knowing what type of scheme your customers are looking for and their concerns can help decide on what package, incentive, and messaging to focus on for the largest impact.

Tackling some of the common barriers and using enablers

Convenience
- Ensure drop off points/locations are clearly visible, accessible and easy to use.
- Make sure there are multiple return points.*
- Ensure process to take part is as easy as possible. You could make it the default option, have no deposit or make the benefits very obvious.

Cost
- Some customers may be put off using reusable packaging if there are additional costs. This will depend on your audience and weighing up the value of your packaging (if there is no cost implication – people may decide to keep the packaging for personal use).
- You could offer rewards such as discounts or loyalty points. Many venues already offer a loyalty point system of some kind. For example, you could offer a loyalty stamp for either using or returning the packaging.

*Top Tip
Find a collection point that works for you, there are various types including A-frames, wall-mounted and cardboard

Environment
- Lots of people want to see a reduction of waste in their local community or area. By using messaging around the environment, you can enable people to feel good about taking part in the scheme.

Hygiene
- Hygiene can be both as an enabler and a barrier. Most cafes will have onsite washing facilities, and already use reusable cutlery and crockery.
- It's sometimes not the best option to use hygiene in messaging as it could have the opposite desired affect, by highlighting biased concerns over cleanliness.

See how these enablers and barriers were also used in the messaging to further encourage uptake (more on p.10). The more specific you can make your scheme to your audience, the more likely it is to succeed. Therefore, you may wish to run your own survey on your specific customer base to get more unique data.

STEP 4 CHOOSE YOUR PACKAGING & MATERIALS

As part of Step 3 you have now hopefully found out people's thoughts on reusable packaging schemes and what type of reusable's your customers will be willing to use. Depending on your audience you might want to look at reusable container, plates, cups (hot and cold) and even cutlery.

Things to consider when choosing your items:
- How long does it need to last?
- How easy is it to clean?
- Material (i.e., recycled content)
- Can it easily be recycled?
- How much will it cost?
- How many will you need?
- Quality
- Usability – leak proof/retains temperature.
- Branding/printing
- Collection points – single or multiple parts (e.g. a coffee cup)

Top Tip

Some reusable packaging options are more expensive than others; they may be more durable and aesthetically pleasing, however this can impact the return rate. Think about how to ensure your customers return the packaging. If the packaging looks too nice - customers might want to keep them!

STEP 5 BUSINESS CASE FOR SETTING UP A SCHEME

Cost and benefits

Using cups as an example, the potential cost savings from setting up a reusable packaging scheme is another reason to make the switch. To calculate the cost of setting up your scheme you will need to calculate the cost of your existing cups, the cost of your new cups (see appendix B for a list of potential suppliers), the percentage loss of cups over time, and the costs to clean and replace cups.

	Cost of Cup	Time Used	Number of Cups	Cleaning	Cost
Non Reusable	£0.20	1	50	0	£10
Reusable	£2.30	50	1	£0.10	£7.30

It is important to think about percentage loss of cups and the replenishment of stock. On average, trials conducted as part of the Bring it Back scheme had return rate of between 70-80%.

Other cost savings
- Reduction in waste collections frequency and therefore cost
- Closed vs Open Loop - these are likely to differ as you communicate with your audience. Closed loops tend to be easier to speak with and so percentage loss should decrease over time. Open loops are likely to have smaller losses but more consistent over time (with new people regularly encountering the scheme)

Additional costs to consider
- Staff time to wash the reusable packaging
- Ongoing promotion of the scheme once it's been set up

STEP 6 MARKETING YOUR SCHEME/CAPTURING YOUR AUDIENCE

Tone and messaging for different audiences

What successful adverts or campaigns have you seen? They tend to be eye-catching, include a clear call-to-action and usually will contain very simple language. A good rule to follow is to keep it simple, avoiding jargon.

Social proofing

Have you ever done something just because everyone else around you is already doing it? You can use this in your communications. Seeing other people using the scheme, enjoying drinks in reusable cups or food in reusable packaging, make it seem that it's the norm. This could be in the form of posters, social media posts or advertising or a video.

Common themes

Local – most people care about where they live, they want to see a reduction in litter, they would also prefer to spend money locally. You can use these themes within your communication and incentives.*

Cost – cost can be a huge factor for people when it comes to eating or drinking out. Encouraging cafes or takeaways to offer incentives (like stamps) or discounts are

popular. On the otherhand, if you are worried about or struggling with packaging 'going missing' then placing a deposit can help place value on the packaging.

Convenience – If it's hard to find your drop off points, it's not easy to return them. Consider signposting or providing maps for your return points. Make them easy to spot and recognisable (see Building a brand).

Environmental – this was by far the most receptive messaging in our trial schemes. More people are wanting to make small changes to their lifestyles to help our planet. By placing a heavy emphasis on how your scheme helps the local environment and conserves natural resources, you can appeal to those already trying to go green.

Building a brand

You might want to do a mix of digital and offline marketing to engage with all the different people within your target audience. Getting your target audience familiar with your brand, showing participating cafes or restaurants, and showing existing users, can encourage people to want to take part. Ultimately, you should do what is best for your organisation or community, with the budget you have. Although remember, the more places you advertise the scheme, the more likely people will give it a go.

*Top Tip
You could market your scheme as 'community owned cups' to place ownership and responsibility on the user.

STEP 7 SETTING UP YOUR SCHEME

Here are some key tips on setting up your scheme:

1: Testing it out
Before fully implementing the scheme, try using reusable packaging on a smaller scale. Start with a particular packaging type or test in a specific location i.e., just one cafe. This will help you identify any challenges or problems that may arise and allow you to make any changes before the programme launch.

2: Ask the experts
Work with your chosen packaging suppliers to help integrate your scheme into your business model. Suppliers can give the best insights into how their packaging could work and share good case studies.

3: Train your employees on how to handle and manage the new packaging
Keep your staff up to date by setting up group chats and regular check-ins. This is a very important step

– staff engagement can be a major limitation in setting up a successful scheme – front-facing staff are the first point of contact your customers will have with your project, they are your sales people!

4: Thinking ahead
Think about how you will phase out single-use cups, could you serve other products in them until you run out? Determine whether you will need to have back-up disposable options?

*Top Tip
Make sure to clearly communicate the responsibilities of staff including promoting, collecting and washing the packaging.

STEP 8 MONITORING AND DATA COLLECTION

Capturing data from your reusable packaging scheme will allow you to measure the take up of the scheme and return rate. You can then evaluate how popular the scheme has been, and measure at what rate you are losing packaging, if at all, and put in measures to reduce this. This data will also be used to calculate cost and investment needed. Monitoring questions might include number of cups or packaging items given out (this could be tracked through a button on the till), or the amount returned in the return stations. Any type of monitoring needs to be simple and quick.

It's also good to get your customers thoughts. Have your team ask a few questions as to why people are getting or not getting involved.

Over time, you might decide to reduce or even stop collecting data if your scheme is going well.

What did we learn from our pilots?

Open-loop

Team engagement: making sure that all the team are included and made aware of the scheme before setting up is crucial. Hold a team training session for the scheme operations before setting up to ensure all staff are trained and ready for customer questions.

Local groups/councils: a good way to increase awareness of schemes amongst local communities is to ask the local groups and councils to advertise the schemes in newsletters/bulletins/websites etc. But be sure to ask ahead of when you need advertising as some groups need several approvals before it gets advertised.

General

Knowing the trends: Time of year could affect your scheme, e.g. in summer months you might see more people asking for 16oz cups for milkshakes or iced coffees. Knowing these trends can help you decide on sizes and quantities.

Don't make the packaging too attractive: You don't want people to take it home!

Adding a logo: a good way to associate the packaging with your organisations/venue and can also explain what to do with the item.

Increasing return rate: consider using a deposit system for your packaging, initially you might have lower uptake, however it can incentives customers to return. Alternatively, no deposits might increase uptake, but offers no incentive for the packaging to be returned.

Marketing: showing customers how to use the return points is essential for the scheme's potential to be maximised. This can be done via clear signage and instructions as well as through social media campaign's such as 'Show us your cup'.

Next steps

Once a scheme is launched, think about how it can be improved:

- Stay updated on new packaging innovations and technologies that can enhance the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of your reusable packaging scheme.
- Seek feedback from stakeholders and adjust to address any challenges or emerging trends.
- Look at other packaging within your supply chain, can you design out other single use packaging and expand your returnable range?
- Review the costs and investments as well as the social impact your scheme has, ensuring you promote the successes and milestones.

Project Information

STARBUCKS®

HUBBUB
Registered Charity No. 1158700

This initiative is one of six projects around the UK funded by Hubbub and Starbucks' Bring It Back Fund, which was set up to fund innovative solutions and systems for sustainable packaging in the food and drink industry.

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An environmental charity that aims to make places better for people and the planet. We promote sustainable practices to help protect our environment now and to leave a legacy for future generations. We deliver innovative projects of local, regional, and national significance, enabling change for a smarter future.

RECOUP

RECOUP is a leading independent authority on plastics resource efficiency and recycling, with commitments towards the more sustainable use of plastics, increased plastics recycling, and improved environmental performance by meeting legislative requirements. Achieved by leading, advising, challenging, educating and connecting the whole value chain, underpinned by expert evidence and knowledge.

Appendix

Example survey questions

1) When making a purchase, what kind of rewards do you most prefer to receive?
Options – earning loyalty points, receiving something free with purchase, receiving a discount on my purchase, receiving coupons or vouchers.

2) Do you belong to any of the following groups?
Select the group that you usually spend the most time. (Offer options on your target audiences including business hubs, local parks, etc.)

3) How many times did you get a takeaway or 'on the go' in the past month?

4) Have you ever used a company-owned reusable packaging scheme for food and drink?

5) Barriers
What might put you off using a reusable packaging scheme for food and drink?

6) Enablers
What might encourage you to use a reusable packaging scheme for food and drink?

7) Motivations
What would motivate you the most to return the reusable packaging to the place where you got it from or to a collection point?

Full list of suppliers

Supplier name	Description	What we ordered	Website
Johnsons Catering Equipment	Specialist catering equipment supplier	Reusable Take Out Containers, Zero Waste Cup	johnsonsce.co.uk
Green Warehouse	Commercial recycling bins	Ubin	greenwarehouse.co.uk
Cater Box	Storage suppliers	Stackable Storage Containers	caterbox.co.uk
Co-Cr8	Waste and recycling; circular produces; and design services	Tube coffee cup collection points	co-cre8.earth
Pixart Printing	Printing and design services	Cardboard collection points	pixartprinting.co.uk
PPS Print	Printing service	Printing of messaging	pixartprinting.co.uk
Discount Displays	Exhibition stands and display systems	Wooden menu blocks	discountdisplays.co.uk
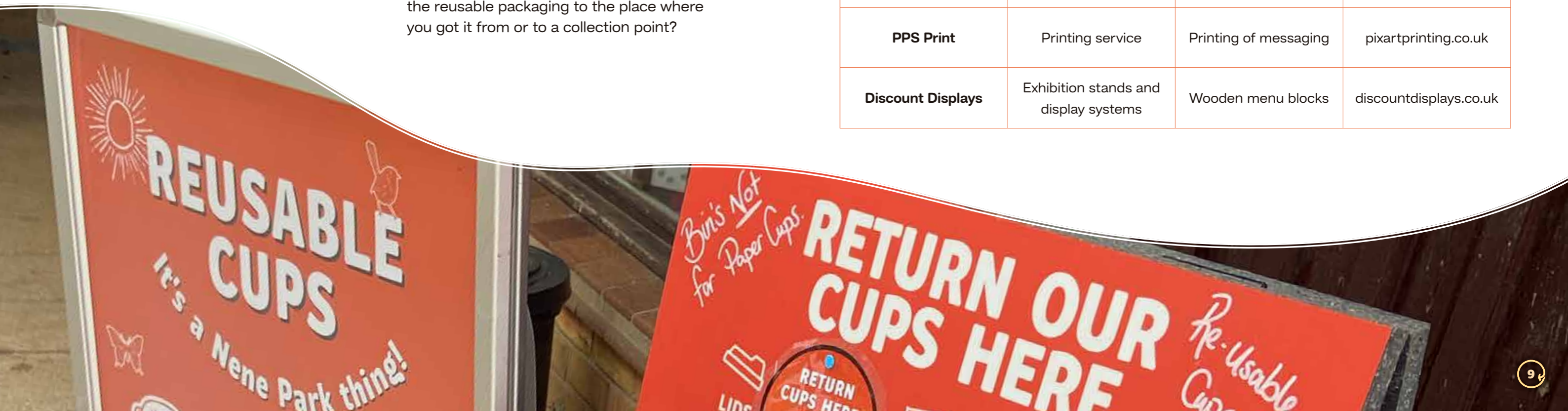
Closed-Loop Case Study
STUART HOUSE

An office building that hosts a mix of businesses as their office location. The building has its own café that sells hot and cold food and drinks.

What went well?
✓ The cup trial went well. Regulars used the same cup all day and then returned to U-bin at the end of the day.

✓ The reusable food containers were popular amongst customers.

Limitations
✗ The return rate for the containers was lower than for the cups, partly because of the aesthetic appeal of them and therefore customers taking them home.

✗ The collection points were used as bins. More signage on the bins helped reduce this slightly, however due to their convenience on the floors and no general waste bins near them this was the outcome.

What packaging?
12oz reusable cups were chosen for the Stuart House pilot (see p.17 for a full list of suppliers). Sandwich containers and tubs were also chosen to cater for the cafes catering needs.

Collection points
U-bins on each floor.

Closed-Loop Case Study
ST. JOHN FISHER

A secondary school providing a range of meals and snacks to its students during breaks and lunchtimes. All food purchased is eaten on the premises and during set times.

What went well?
✓ Drew attention to the issues of single-use packaging in the school.

✓ Most pupils used the scheme correctly and were interested in the messaging.

Limitations
✗ Pupils need guidance with putting the packaging in the correct place.

✗ The collection point was not placed next to the bins. This is strongly recommended for better return rate. Some children would throw the reusable packaging in the bin instead of in the collection point.

✗ Difficulties with school premises and extra costs for washing up.

✗ More engagement in wider environmental issues needed in the school.

What packaging?
Tubs were used for serving chips in the cafeteria and plates for hot food. The cafeteria originally served food in single-use packaging, so this reusable alternative helped the transition to waste reduction and a wider engagement in reuse within the school.

Collection points
Black containers were used for returning packaging, and they were placed underneath A2 signage in 4x different languages (English, Polish, Urdu and Spanish).

Open-Loop Case Study
OUNDLE TOWN

A small town with a large private school. Bring it Back worked with five independent coffee shops in Oundle on a scheme.

What went well?
✓ The A-frame collection point was frequently used by students in the cloisters common space.

✓ Due to cafes being in close proximity, customers were able to return cups at any of the cafes.

Limitations
✗ 16oz cups would have been worthwhile in this community due to the popularity of large drinks and cold drinks such as milkshakes.

✗ Staff engagement was challenging, so if this project were to be done again training sessions to staff would be made available with weekly entire team check-ins, i.e., making a group chat with the community created.

What packaging?
White 12oz cups were given to the wider Oundle community, and oatmeal 12oz cups were given to Oundle students. This was chosen because we aimed to monitor uptake and return rate for the general Oundle population compared to student population.

Collection points
Cardboard collection points were used in all the cafes, and the A-frame was used at Cloisters in the student's communal area

Open-Loop Case Study
NENE PARK

A large country park with two cafés onsite. Takeaway drinks are popular for customers to enjoy whilst walking around the park.

What went well?
✓ Behaviour started to change after a push on social media and marketing to inform customers how to use it correctly. The collection points have also been more successful over time.

✓ The collection points inside the cafes were used more than the bin versions in the park.

Limitations
✗ Staff engagement was challenging in this pilot. Due to summer months being very busy, cafes would only push the scheme in quieter periods.

✗ Monitoring was also challenging due to the busy cafes; an action plan was put in place including a button on the till for uptake, a champion was appointed, and pot wash counted returned cups.

What packaging?
White 12oz cups were given to each café.

Collection points
Tube collection points were used on the side of park bins, as well as A-frames in the cafes.

Open-Loop Case Study

WEST RAVEN COMMUNITY CAFÉ

A community initiative with a café and gardens. The café is open to the public five days a week, whereas the garden is used mostly by regular volunteers who help in the garden.

What packaging?

12oz cups, and 2x sizes of sandwich containers were given to West Raven community café to cater for all their takeaway requirements.

What went well?

✓ Customers and staff engaged well with the scheme from the start, and collection points were used correctly after the first week due to good staff and customer engagement.

Limitations

✗ The A-frame collection point is too big for use in the café, so keep this in mind when selecting a collection point for your scheme. The cardboard collection points are more convenient for smaller sized cafes.

Collection points

A cardboard collection point was used in the café and an A-frame was given for use in the garden for any events where the cups are used.

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bringitback@pect.org.uk

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