

Analysis of the approaches adopted by cork city in reducing the human impact on t...

[Environment](#), [Ecology](#)



Single use plastic is currently giving itself a bad name in headlines all over the globe. Although its hard to deny its convenience in the hectic modern world in which we live, it is also hard to look past the consequences of not desposing of it properly. Recently many pictures have emerged on platforms such as facebook which depict the negative effects that these products have on the Earth's marine life and the accumulation of this waste in areas making them uninhabitable. The Irish Population plays a big part in this as is said on Journal. i. e. " Ireland is of Europe's top five plastic waste offenders, as we produce 61kg per person, per year. " But what can be done to lessen the effects of these unnessecary items?

In Cork, disposable cups make up a substantial percentage of the cities litter. In fact, nationwide we use about 200 million disposable cups every year. To quote Mary Walsh, the Chief scientist in Cork City Council " litter surveys have shown that coffee cups are a major source of litter on the outskirts of the city. " However, there has been a surge of coffee shops recently which offer discounts ranging from 10 cent to 50 cent to those who bring their own reusable cup when they order a warm beverage. This incentive seems to be effective, particularly amongst students and the working population who tend to drink such products regularly whilst on the go. The introduction of campaigns to ban coffee cups from establishments such as Cork City Hall and Boole Library in UCC is also proving to be beneficial. There are also coffee cups which don't have a polyethylene coating making them biodegradable available in a selected few coffee establishments, however these still tend to less environmentally effective than a reusable cup.

Recently the harmful effects of plastic straws in the environment is also a cause for concern. It has been noted that “ A straw which is only used on average for 20 minutes can take more than 200 years to breakdown into smaller pieces and often does not fully disintegrate. ” This has led to the increasing popularity of paper straws across the city. One example of this would be the Linen Weaver, a branch of Wetherspoons located in the city centre. Fast food restaurants such as McDonalds have also vowed to swap their plastic straws for their paper counterparts. This has prompted Irish catering companies to sell decomposable straws and further afield in Sligo the trade of steel straws has proven to be extremely successful. Plastic bags are a major cause for concern worldwide which prompted the government of Ireland to introduce a levy on the use of plastic bags. This meant that if someone required a plastic carrier, they would have to pay 15 cent from March 2002 which later rose to 22 cent in July 2007 in order to to avail of one. “ It had an immediate effect on consumer behaviour with a decrease in plastic bag usage from an estimated 328 bags per capita to 21 bags per capita overnight. ”

The prevention of wasteful uses of these harmful products has had an amazing effect both visually and environmentally throughout Cork city. In fact, this scheme was so effective, many other countries across the world also adopted similar approaches to dealing with these bags. Furthermore, to further decrease our unnecessary reliance on plastic bags Boole library in UCC has introduced a waste segregation system which involves removing smaller bins from around the library and replacing them with two large

recycling centres, meaning less disposable bin bags are used every year. This promises a reduction of 10, 000 bin bags being disposed of annually.

Despite the incredible advances made during the last two decades throughout Cork city in terms of reducing disposable waste and adopting more eco-friendly approaches to how we protect the world we live in, it is clear to see that we need to do more in order to preserve our planet and all of its inhabitants for future generations. Every small difference adds up.