



## **EVERYTHING LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT COFFEE CUP RECYCLING**

On-the-go coffee consumption continues to boom, with an estimated three billion coffee cups being used annually, and only a fraction of these being recycled<sup>1</sup>. With applications for The Cup Fund, the UK's largest grant for projects that boost UK paper cup recycling, closing soon, Phil Wild, CEO for James Cropper, the innovators behind the world's first coffee cup recycling process, shares what he thinks everyone should know.

Wild says; "Britain's love of takeaway coffee shows no signs of diminishing, so it's vital that we use the wealth of opportunity at our finger tips to reduce the environmental impact of disposable cups. We must recognise that coffee cups are now absolutely recyclable if disposed of in the correct way. The problem is no longer rooted in technology, but one that comes down to infrastructure and consumer education.

There are some fundamentals everyone should know..."

### **We have the solution**

[The Environment Audit Committee](#) estimate that just one in 400 coffee cups are disposed of correctly, despite there being a clear and valuable solution.

Since the invention of [CupCycling](#) by James Cropper, a technology that extracts the polythene lining previously making it impossible for cups to be recycled, cups can now be transformed into luxurious papers. Therefore, the key to truly solving the coffee cup crisis is investing in getting these cups to the right place, and educating consumers and companies on the part they can play in a circular economy.

This is fundamental if we're to meet the EAC's 2023 ambition for all single-use coffee cups to be recycled.

### **Clear messaging**

It's not widely understood by consumers that coffee cups have to be recycled via a different waste stream. Consumers, quite fairly, assume that when they're made of paper,

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<sup>1</sup> [The Environment Audit Committee](#)



or carry a symbol saying that they are recyclable, cups can enter mainstream waste channels.

Without clear signposting or more education around the channels in place to recycle coffee cups, there can only be more confusion – and more coffee cups going to waste. This is where local council can help.

### **Infrastructure is key**

We've worked relentlessly since the creation of our CupCycling process in 2013 with retailers such as Selfridges, MacDonald's and Costa, and alongside waste management companies such as Veolia and Cumbria Waste, to implement the infrastructure needed to collect coffee cups and transform them into beautiful papers. This work is a functioning example of the circular economy in action and demonstrates how collaboration can lead to successful outcomes for both industry and the environment.

Additional recent trials have shown that with the right infrastructure, consumers will be guided on how to dispose of their coffee cups with ease and adhere to the process which drives circular thinking and places cups as a fantastic UK fibre source for papermaking.

A pioneering pilot scheme with environmental charity Hubbub and Leeds City Council worked to improve the 'on the go' recycling infrastructure for coffee cups in Leeds and wider Yorkshire area last year. By introducing collection points at heavy footfall areas with clear signposting for consumers to correctly dispose of their cups, nearly two hundred thousand coffee cups were collected by Forge Recycling in just three months and delivered to James Cropper's CupCycling facility to be transformed into beautiful packaging.

The pilot clearly demonstrates that the embedding the right infrastructure sits at the heart of the issue, and has the potential to be truly transformative.

### **New formats**

New coffee cup designs are emerging at pace, which in the future could be transformative again. However, there is no alternative solution out there just yet that works with the current recycling infrastructure in place. While redesigning the coffee cup should not be ignored, the entire supply chain needs to collaborate on design for



circularity.....and until we get there we should continue to develop the infrastructure already in place to deal with the current product design that can be easily recycled.

### **Collective pledge**

We've developed the technology to recycle disposable paper cups on a commercial scale, and played a role alongside waste management companies, coffee chains and restaurants to create a supply chain with proven ability to turn waste into beautiful papers.

We have the capacity to upcycle 500 million cups per year, and at the moment we're using just a fraction of this capacity. As a next step we need to build on the infrastructure that has already been created and use the technology we have. We can do this by collectively instilling a change in consumer habits through infrastructure and in turn tackle a longstanding environmental concern.

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### **About The Cup Fund**

Hubbub, with the support of Starbucks, is launching 'The Cup Fund', the UK's largest grant fund to support ambitious projects that boost paper cup recycling in the UK.

The aim of the fund is to kickstart cup recycling across the UK. It will be used to introduce new recycling facilities, create new partnerships and deliver high quality behaviour change communications in at least 10 cities.

Grant funding of between £50,000 to £100,000 is available to each successful project. As well as the funding, Hubbub will provide ongoing support to successful applicants based on our expertise and experience in delivering paper cup recycling campaigns.

The fund is wholly supported by Starbucks pioneering 5p cup charge which is applied when a customer chooses to use a single-use paper cup. Introduced voluntarily last year, Starbucks has donated all funds to Hubbub to support recycling and sustainability efforts.