

Aston University goes Plastic Free



Lead Organisation:

Aston University

Partners:

Aston University Departments: Sustainability Team, Catering Team, Conference Aston and the Students' Union.

The Project, Aims, and Challenges

Aston University is leading the way in plastic-reduction on campus with their ongoing project to reduce and replace single-use plastics that lead to so much harmful waste. This project has involved radical changes by different departments across campus to cut down on plastic consumption.

The University has obtained plastic-free status from [Surfers Against Sewage](#), only the second UK University to do so. This project involved the university taking action to identify the biggest mitigatable sources and then come up with effective and practicable solutions to these issues. The project also aimed to educate students and staff about the issues associated with single-use plastics and the benefits of the University implementing their waste-reduction scheme.

One of the biggest challenges for this project was implementing and embedding behaviour change across the campus, especially where convenience is often the defining factor for our behaviour as this can involve requiring extra encouragement to change. An example of this includes items such as sachets that are convenient and very transportable but produce a lot of packaging for a relatively small amount of product. This is as opposed to a much more efficient manner of having items in bulk packaging and then allowing the consumers to distribute their own product.



The Outcome

Aston University successfully identified and implemented a number of methods to reduce plastic consumption on campus and these have been highly successful in making it a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly campus.

This was achieved through a number of different methods including:

- The removal of plastic straws from all eateries
- Selling of reusable cups (to reduce need for disposable ones) and additionally moving to provision of compostable disposable cups
- Stopping the use of plastic bags in the Students' Union shop
- Not using balloons at main events such as graduations
- Moving to pencils given out at conferences and not pens
- Moving away from large water coolers to filtered/chilled tap water.

The work also includes supporting community projects such as looking to adopt a section of canal to help clean it up and regenerate it, and supporting a local plastic free grocery store. These all highlight the success of the University in its endeavour to move away from single-use plastics.

In the Future

The University intends to maintain its current successful programme as well as push on with further waste-reduction initiatives. It's recognised that it is very difficult to remove plastic altogether across all areas of the university's operations, so it intends to look at options of reusable plastics wherever practicable. This will also be accompanied by future plastic-free awareness campaigns and including plastic waste-reducing initiatives in the University's [Go Green Week](#).

The Extras

Awards and endorsements

Aston University has been awarded Plastic Free status by [Surfers Against Sewage](#), as part of their [Plastic Free Communities scheme](#). This scheme recognises work to drastically reduce single use plastics and ultimately stop plastic waste ending up in our oceans where it can be incredibly harmful.

Links and Downloads

[Aston University Plastic Free Campus Website](#)

[Aston University Sustainable Development Goal Commitments and Projects](#)

[Surfers Against Sewage](#)

Contact Details

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