

Highland Community Planning Partnership
Community Planning Board – 19 December 2018

Agenda Item	4.
Report No	CPB 14/18

Proposed Breakthrough Achievement – Single Use Plastics

Report by: George Hogg, Area Manager, South Highland, Scottish Natural Heritage

Recommendation:

The Board is asked to agree a breakthrough achievement to:

- Remove plastic straws from general use across all partners.
- Remove, or reduce as far as possible, single use plastics from catering operations.
- Work with contractors and suppliers to reduce/remove single use plastics where appropriate and explore how this might be incorporated formally into procurement processes.
- To collaborate across named contacts in each organisation to:
 - Share thinking, knowledge and experience across the Partnership.
 - Raise awareness externally within Highland to promote this issue and its solutions.

Background

1. According to recent estimates, 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic has been produced globally to date, with 6.3bn tonnes of this becoming plastic waste. 79% of the plastic waste ever produced now sits in landfills, dumps or in the environment, while about 12% has been incinerated and only 9% has been recycled. It is estimated that if current consumption patterns and waste management practices continue, then by 2050 there will be around 12 billion tonnes of plastic litter in landfills and the environment.
2. Much plastic may be single-use, but that does not mean it is easily disposable. For the purpose of this strategy, the term “single-use plastics” (SUP) includes all products that are made wholly or partly of plastic that are typically intended to be used just once and/or for a short period of time before being disposed of.
3. SUP has a global impact and recent media coverage has moved SUP into prominence. These include the BBC series Blue Planet II, which highlighted the scale of plastic pollution in our seas and oceans. Other images and articles such as giant SUP floating islands in our oceans, and wildlife deaths resulting from SUP, are increasingly being reported by the media. Awareness of the significant environmental damage being caused by SUP has risen in the public consciousness, and there is widespread momentum and support to reduce our dependency on these items. For example, Ullapool Primary School recently won a Great Scot award for its widely covered “nae straw at aw” campaign.
4. The issue of discarded plastics and marine pollution is high on the political agenda and there is increasing pressure for the voluntary sector, business and Government to work together to ‘solve’ the problem. Highland has the longest coastline in Scotland (at 4,905 kilometres), and the area has a key role to play in reducing plastic

waste. This is for both environmental and economic reasons – tourism is a key part of the Highland economy and to a large extent is based on the strong environmental image of the area.

5. The issue however is not a simple one and, however well intentioned, it is important that actions are considered in the context of their full environmental impact. Some of the available alternatives to SUP are more environmentally damaging and particularly in the context of tackling climate change. There is an important need to properly consider actions and share thinking and knowledge as it evolves ensuring actions reflect best practice.
6. There is strong existing and developing policy support at the Scottish and European level for action to address this issue applying the waste hierarchy principles in descending priority of reduce, reuse, or recycle.

Consideration of Breakthrough Achievement

7. The Chief Officers' Group at its meetings on 26th April and 9th November considered whether concerted action to reduce the use of SUP would be an appropriate breakthrough achievement for the Community Planning Partnership. It is noted that the partners to some extent have taken or are considering action to reduce their use of SUP. For example, The Highland Council through its Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 8th November adopted a Single Use Plastic Strategy and Action Plan which is compatible with the recommendations of this paper. In addition we are aware that further policy and or legislation is being considered at the European and Scottish level to govern the use of SUP which may require some of the actions which are being contemplated here to be implemented.
8. Given the profile and importance of this issue it is considered that there is an opportunity for us to show some collective leadership on this issue within Highland. Adoption of these recommendations will deliver a significant environmental benefit, will help raise the profile of the issue further within Highland and will encourage the sharing of thinking, knowledge and experience across the partners.

Recommendation

9. The Board is asked to agree a breakthrough achievement to:
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