



TRADESHOW AND CONFERENCE GUIDE



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1. INTRODUCTION



City to Sea is an environmental not-for-profit organisation, campaigning to stop plastic pollution at source.

Our award-winning campaigns are **tackling the single-use plastic items** found most commonly on our beaches and in our rivers and oceans by **providing practical solutions and collective action**.

By **working with communities, corporates and retailers** we're inspiring and empowering everyone to tackle plastic pollution.

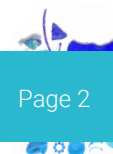
City to Sea is behind the award-winning Refill Campaign, which has saved 100 million plastic bottles from entering our waste stream **#SwitchTheStick** campaign has prevented **over 478 tonnes** of single-use, plastic-stemmed cotton buds being produced each year!

We've put this guide together for event organisers and exhibitors to feel inspired to take practical action to reduce plastics.

Despite their temporary nature and tendency towards disposables, indoor events are a unique opportunity to change behaviour and prevent plastic pollution. Whilst some event organisers and venues are starting to wake up to the environmental and financial cost of providing so many single-use plastic items to attendees, many feel lost and don't know where to start to make their events more sustainable. We've put together some advice as a starting point for organising your event but please contact us for more information.



NATALIE FEE, FOUNDER



2. PREVENT AND REUSE



PREVENT AND REUSE FIRST



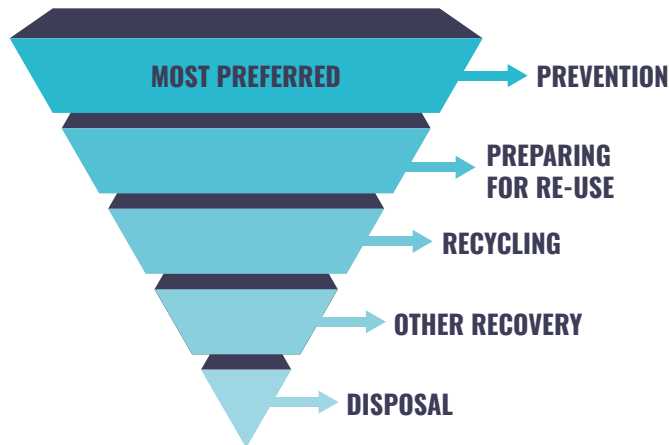
We advocate prevention and reuse wherever possible, in accordance with the waste hierarchy. For example:

- Replace bottled water with water fountains and water stations with jugs, so guests can refill their reusable water bottle or use a glass to avoid single use.
- Replace disposable with reusables where possible, e.g. cups and crockery.
- Rethink giveaways to make a positive environmental impact (for example, you could give away a **Refill x Chilly's** reusable water bottle or make a digital giveaway that enables you to capture people's contact details as a further bonus).

IF YOU CAN'T PREVENT AND REUSE...



If disposables are unavoidable look for ones that the venue has a recycling stream for, or look to organise one e.g. a coffee cup recycling scheme.



IS PLASTIC REALLY RECYCLED?



Some venues claim there is no issue with plastics in a closed environment, because materials can be captured and recycled. However, in reality plastic recycling is more complicated:

- Many plastics have been made hard to recycle.
- Even plastics that can be recycled can end up in the general waste.
- Many single-use plastics are still not made from recycled plastic.
- Plastic recyclers often export mixed low-quality plastics for recycling to countries with low environmental laws which can lead to hard-to-recycle plastics being dumped and burned and even ending up in waterways.
- If a venue has a one-bin waste system or poor recycling system, plastics can be contaminated with food, making it non-recyclable.

2. PREVENT AND REUSE

SWITCHING MATERIALS

Thinking of switching from bottled water to another material can seem like a great solution. However, there are other considerations; such as the environmental impacts of transporting water around the country and world as well as the material production impacts.

CANS

- ✓ Infinitely recyclable and easy to recycle
- ✗ Have a plastic lining
- ✗ 11 times higher lifecycle impact than a plastic PET bottle*
- ✗ 32% of the content is always virgin material sourced from destructive strip mining

TETRA PAK

- ✓ Lower carbon footprint than plastic
- ✗ Lined with plastic and aluminium
- ✗ Has a plastic lid
- ✗ Harder to recycle and not all contractors can recycle them

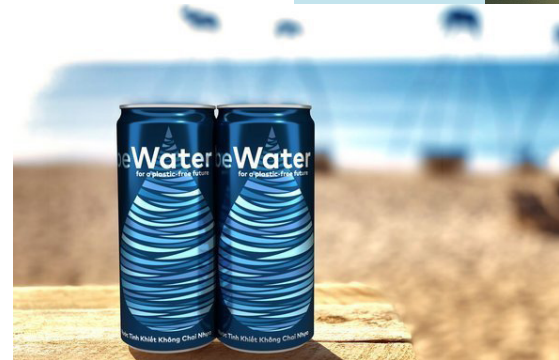
GLASS

- ✓ Infinitely recyclable
- ✗ 30 times higher lifecycle impact than plastic*
- ✗ Mixed glass recycling reduces the quality
- ✓ Can be used for building and road making materials

GLASS BOTTLES



CANS



Source: beWater

*Pret-A-Manger [research](#)



TETRA PAK



2. PREVENT AND REUSE



CAN YOU REALLY COMPOST COMPOSTABLE PLASTICS?



To recycle a compostable plastic item (bar cup, coffee cup, giveaways, packaging), the venue needs to have a food waste collection to a plant that can actually process them, which is usually an in-vessel composter.



There are currently around **27 facilities in the UK that accept compostable packaging** versus hundreds of anaerobic digesters that can't accept any kind of packaging.



For a composting facility to accept compostables they will need to know in advance **what brands you are sending and test them** if they haven't already approved them (**they break down over different periods** and the quality varies).



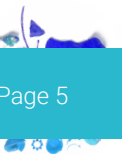
If compostables get into the food waste stream without prior arrangement **they will be pulled out and disposed of** at the depackaging stage with all the other plastics and packaging.



Home compostable plastics are only suitable for garden composting systems, so they will also be pulled out at the depackaging stage.



The reality is that without a genuine composting arrangement, the only suitable bin for compostable plastics is the general waste bin, which will usually go to be incinerated for 'waste-to-energy' or landfill, where nothing composts due to the conditions.



3. WAYS TO REDUCE PLASTICS



EVENT ORGANISERS

It's important to **liaise with your event venue and suppliers to tackle single-use items in the supply chain**. The more people that ask, the sooner they will adopt changes for all their customers, so your impact will continue after your event.

As an organiser **you have the power to change the culture of the event industry and promote reuse** and quality over the cheap throwaway culture that currently prevails.

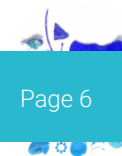


UNDERSTANDING YOUR PLASTIC FOOTPRINT

Do a plastics audit, looking in your bins and on your shelves to see where plastic waste is arising, from set-up through to clearing the venue.

This will help you identify where the biggest volumes of plastic are being generated – for example, you might find the event build and set-up creates the most waste due to polystyrene packaging and plastic wrap; or perhaps your event crew are disposing of thousands of coffee cups and plastic water bottles.

City to Sea can offer this service for a fee – please contact partnerships@citytosea.org.uk if you'd like to discuss this.



3. WAYS TO REDUCE PLASTICS



PLASTIC PACKAGING

As you're often working with the same suppliers, talk to them about alternative materials and systems for packaging and transportation. After all, you'll be paying to dispose of these single-use packaging materials.

- Request alternatives to polystyrene packaging such as cardboard or paper.
- Ask suppliers and logistics companies to use **reusable wraps** rather than plastic film.
- Arrange for plastic film to be collected separately and sent as a single recycling stream.

NAME BADGES

- Avoid plastic wallets. Instead print name badges on card with a hole that can be attached to the lanyard, or just have a clip rather than a lanyard.
- Have someone collect the lanyards at the end of the day or put bins at each exit/cloakroom to encourage attendees to hand them back.

WATER PROVISION

- Provide drinks fountains around the halls with reusable cups that can be washed (hire in glass or hard plastic).
- Advise exhibitors and attendees to bring reusable bottles, and reassure them that there will be water fountains on site. Include this in pre-event information, newsletters and social media.
- Provide a limited number of quality bottles that people can purchase if they don't have one, or give them away in a value exchange (people don't value freebies).
- Ask the trade show hall to switch to reusable glasses which they can send away for washing and cleaning – reusable plastic is not a problem and addresses the health and safety issues of glass.
- Have high level signage around the venue so people can find water points easily (like the toilets).
- Include water points on an venue maps.

WATER PROVISION



PLASTIC PACKAGING



NAME BADGES



3. WAYS TO REDUCE PLASTICS



FOOD



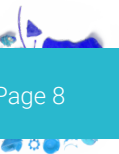
To inspire the caterers to reduce single-use packaging ask them not to **use cling film wrap**. Ask them to use reusable covers for platters instead.



Request that food is **only served on reusable plates and with reusable cutlery**.



Consider buffet formats that avoid portioning up salads and food in disposable packaging.



4. REFILL AT YOUR EVENT



These are the fountains we recommend for purchase or rental:



MIW Water Cooler Experts is a specialist water cooler company that supplies plumbed or electric water fountain solutions. Counters on the machine show how many single-use plastic bottles have been avoided.

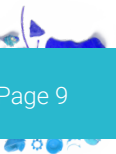


Ovopur countertop fountains filter tap water. They hold 12 litres of tap water and are a simple solution to tackling single-use plastics.

We can provide Refill logos and assets for your water stations to draw attention to them.



Sipple Hydration stations are a chilled water vending machines offering free tap water, or UV-filtered chilled water starting at 35p per refill. They are free to install, and any profit made from chargeable refills is split between Sipple and the venue. To find out more about these and to have the Refill brand at your event contact partnerships@citytosea.org.uk



4. REFILL AT YOUR EVENT

HOT AND COLD DRINKS / BARS

All event venues can provide reusable china and glasses.

Plastic reusable cups can be hired in from reusable cup companies such as **STACK-CUP™** or **Green Goblet** for coffee and bar drinks. Attendees can be charged a nominal fee such as £1 for their first cup and are encouraged to return to the bar or drop-off points to ensure they stay in the loop. Why not donate profits from your reusable cups to City to Sea? Contact partnerships@citytosea.org.uk for more information.

If disposables are the only option, ask to sign up for a coffee cup recycling scheme to ensure they get recycled. Most waste contractors can collect coffee cups now as this is a growing development in recycling.

PLASTIC HIRED REUSABLE CUPS



REUSABLE GLASS



HIRE A CUP SCHEME



DISPOSABLE OPTIONS



5. EXHIBITORS

For organisations looking to demonstrate a commitment to plastic pollution reduction in their stand design, Ecoboost creates bespoke stands from hard-to-recycle plastics, including ocean plastic and event waste. In 2019, Ecoboost prevented 50 tonnes of hard-to-recycle plastic becoming waste.

These stands are a great example of circular economy design because they are painted with non-toxic paints and are on a lease. This means they can be returned and made into other furniture and event stands, so there is no waste.

Another feature of Ecoboost's proposition is that they facilitate their clients to support plastic campaigning organisations. If you would like to support City to Sea with an Ecoboost stand build, contact partnerships@citytosea.org.uk.

STAND SET-UP

Choose reusable materials that can be used for multiple events.

- Choose pull-up banners made from a recyclable materials. E.g **cardboard** and **fabric banners**.
- **Avoid dating or putting the specific event** on a banner or sign as this will make it single-use.
- Hire a shell scheme, or if you go to multiple events, consider a fold-down cardboard stand as created by **Colour Studios**.
- **Use digital screens for event-specific information** to avoid waste.
- Ask your logistics company or team to use **reusable pallet wraps** for transportation.

COLOUR STUDIOS ECO BANNER



ECOBOOTH STAND



COLOUR STUDIOS ECO BANNER



5. EXHIBITORS



DRINKS ON STANDS



- Rather than offering bottled water **provide a water cooler and reusable glasses** ordered from the venue.
- For coffee cups, **look to hire in reusable china cups that can be washed** – people will have to stay longer on your stand!
- Unless there is a separate waste stream for coffee cups or compostable packaging, both will be going to be landfilled or most likely incinerated.
- Disposable coffee cups are made from virgin wood pulp and are lined with a plastic or bioplastic liner. This means **trees are being cut down for single-use cups**.
- **If reusable isn't an option** then there are some alternatives such as a **Butterfly cup** which doesn't have a lid so reduces the number of materials being produced (has a bioplastic liner).

GIVEAWAYS



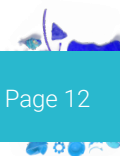
- Choose **reusable items** that have value to people or **edible items** with minimal packaging.
- If you choose sweets with home-compostable packaging, be aware this needs to go in a garden composting bin rather than a kerbside bin, otherwise it will be pulled out in the depackaging process.
- **Ask your suppliers to avoid single-sleeve packaging and polystyrene** for packaging items. Plastic is often required to protect materials being transported long distances from humidity, so one plastic bag around all materials may be necessary.
- **Don't give away bottled water.**
- Cheap clothing is often made from 100% polyester, which is a synthetic oil-based material. Cheap cotton has many negative environmental and social impacts, so use a quality supplier like **Rapanui**.

CUPS AND REUSABLE BOTTLE GIVEAWAYS



- **Cheap plastic or aluminium bottles** are likely to become single-use whilst the embodied energy in making them is much higher than in a single-use plastic bottle.
- **Stainless steel** is more expensive than aluminium but can be reused infinitely and doesn't contain a plastic lining like aluminium.
- **Coffee cups made from rice husks** (such as **Huskup**) are a by-product material and don't contain any plastics. Bamboo coffee cups are also made from a by-product material but with a plastic polymer, melamine, binding them together.

Please see [Refill's guide to Disposables and Reusables](#) for more detail.



6. RECOMMENDED WATER BOTTLE SUPPLIERS



CHILLY'S BOTTLES

Chilly's and Refill are both on a fearless mission to accelerate the daily use of reusable products. The Chilly's x Refill bottle combines both style and performance whilst being eco-friendly and durable - it's the only bottle you need for hot or cold drinks on the go. Named 'Best Buy' by the Independent. Co-branding options – have your organisation's logo laser etched on your bottles.

Costs: Starting at £13 for co-branded, wholesale or bulk orders. RRP £20.

All orders include a minimum of £2 donation from Chilly's towards growing the Refill campaign.

RAW BOTTLES

RAW foundation helps to educate and empower young people to tackle plastic pollution, so all RAW bottles support their cause. 500ml bottles Single wall 100% stainless steel Laser-etched logos Refill and/or City to Sea logo options as well as your own.

Costs Starting at £7.10 per bottle. RRP £10.

Minimum order 30+ bottles.

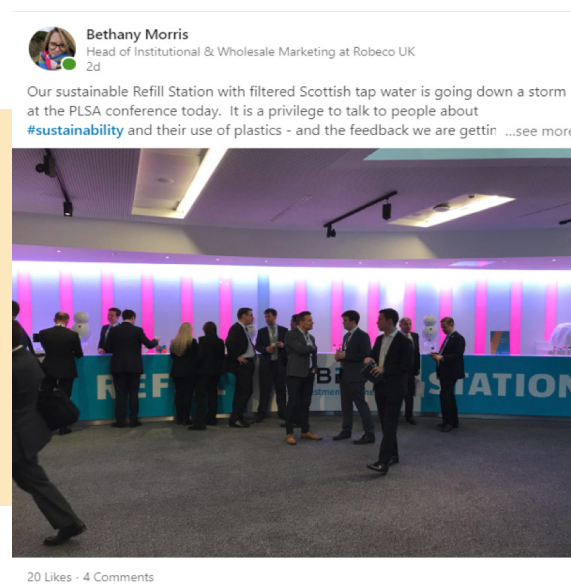
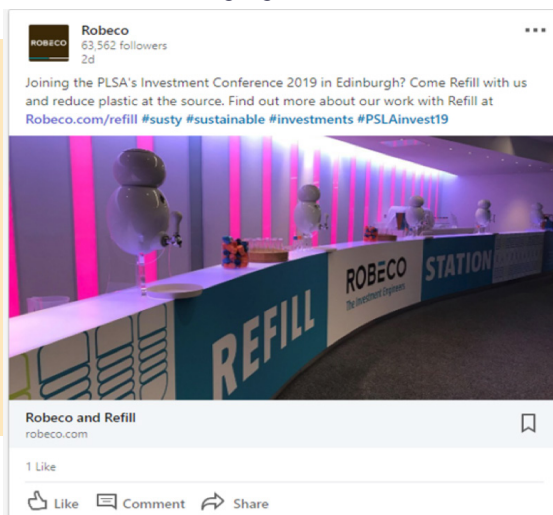


7. COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

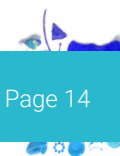


By choosing to avoid single-use and champion reusables you have an additional story for your event communications and a new way to differentiate your organisation from your competitors.

Below are examples of how **Robeco**, a sustainable global investment management company, is using its partnership with City to Sea and Refill to highlight its activities at an event.



1. Make sure your exhibitors and attendees **know what you're doing** to reduce plastics and environmental impacts.
2. **Before the event**, use your sign-up process and email communications to ask your stakeholders to bring a reusable bottle, tell them that you have water fountains and let them know about the efforts you're making.
3. **Add information** to your website or blog.
4. **Create a press release** and tell the local or relevant trade media about the steps you're taking.
5. **Use social media to engage** with your audience and set an example, making sure everyone knows you're championing reusables and reducing plastic pollution.
6. **Set up an event hashtag** and encourage exhibitors to Tweet about the event.
7. **Consider having a team of ambassadors** promoting and highlighting your water fountains and guiding people on how to recycle properly on site.
8. If appropriate, **book a motivational eco speaker** such as City to Sea's Natalie Fee to inspire your audience.
9. **Take photos** and use them when promoting the event next year.



7. COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

ROBECO CASE STUDY

Robeco, a sustainable investment management company, have partnered with City to Sea and are working towards delivering plastic-free conferences and events. Their greatest achievement at one single event is preventing the use of nearly 10,000 waste bottles at the PLSA event, a large industry conference.

Robeco engage with conference organisers to fully explain their plan and ensure that all stakeholders have bought into it. Together everyone can buy into the concept and make it work.

They have done this by creating their own freestanding water fountains for larger scale events. For a more mobile option, use the Ovopur water fountains. They also give away stylish glass bottles that appeal to their audience and encourage them to start refilling.

They have distributed over 3,000 bottles at events and conferences, enabling thousands of delegates to enjoy refilling (and these figures keep on growing!).

Communicating with their audience and internal teams on the topic has been incredibly valuable and a positive experience. They have also reached over 50,000 people through B2B integrated communications including social media, podcasts and advertising.

Authenticity is key to the Robeco and City to Sea partnership. With over 90 years' experience of asset management and over 25 years' experience of incorporating sustainability, they know the most powerful impact can be seen where big business implements real change – that's one reason why Robeco's team of engagement experts work with the companies in which they invest.

ROBECO EVENT WATER BAR



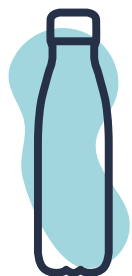
ROBECO EVENT WATER BAR



8. HOW TO TAKE ACTION



TOP TIPS FOR TACKLING PLASTICS ON YOUR STAND OR AT YOUR TRADESHOW OR CONFERENCE:



Promote refilling instead of plastic water bottles.



Choose reusable instead of disposable coffee cups, cutlery and crockery.



Design your stand/s to be reusable by avoiding dates or events on your marketing materials.



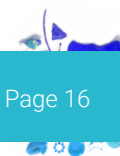
Collect all lanyards at the end of the event.



Design card instead of plastic name badges.



Tell your audience and guests about your plastics ambitions in all your pre-event comms.



8. HOW TO TAKE ACTION

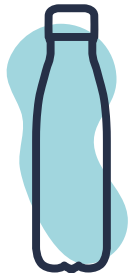
If you want to go a step further, we would advise:



An audit to assess your plastic footprint.



Discuss reducing plastics packaging with your suppliers and logistics team.



Giveaways that reinforce a positive message, e.g Chilly's bottles or coffee cups.



Supply reusable cups/bottles to the crew.

OUR REFILL BOTTLES



9. OTHER SUSTAINABLE EVENT TIPS



1. **Travel is the biggest carbon impact** for most events so work to promote public transport and carbon accounting for guests.



2. Energy is another big impact, so **choose venues that have a 100% renewable energy tariff.**



3. To get a better picture of the carbon impacts of your event use an online tool, or work with an organisation like [Clean Co₂](#) who can **footprint your event in detail.**



4. For food and beverages request:
 - All **Fairtrade** tea, coffee, bananas and wine.
 - More **plant-based** options.
 - Caterers to remove beef from menus , due to the impacts on rainforest from **soya production.**
 - **Remove fish** unless it is line caught. Industrial fishing contributes heavily to plastic pollution in the oceans from ghost nets.

10. ABOUT CITY TO SEA

City to Sea is award-winning not-for-profit organisation, campaigning to stop plastic pollution at source – from city to sea.

We're tackling the top 10 single-use plastic items found most commonly on our beaches and in our oceans, by providing practical, solutions-focused initiatives and advocating reduce and reuse over single-use.

We're working with communities, corporates and retailers to inspire and empower everyone to tackle plastic pollution – by connecting our actions to our oceans.

Through our digital content and campaigns, we're raising awareness of the issue and making sure people know that wherever you live, your actions affect our oceans.

Find out more about our work or contact the team to find out how we can help your business reduce single-use plastic and move towards a more sustainable event.

Contact partnerships@citytosea.org.uk

www.citytosea.org

WHAT WE ARE TACKLING



OUR REFILL CAMPAIGN