



Case Study – Eco boxes and cups 2017

Overview

University of Birmingham’s (UoB) Hospitality and Residential services team were challenged with issues relating to food and drink takeout packaging waste. This project focuses on the inventive ways in which the university tackles food and drink to go packaging and the issues surrounding them.

UoB’s aim was to reduce the amount of single use food takeout boxes and disposable hot drink cups, with a view to becoming waste free in these areas.

Eco to go reusable boxes and cups were chosen by the University for their sustainability credentials which are consistent with UoB’s commitment to reduce their environmental impact whilst maintaining economic viability.

Our Goals

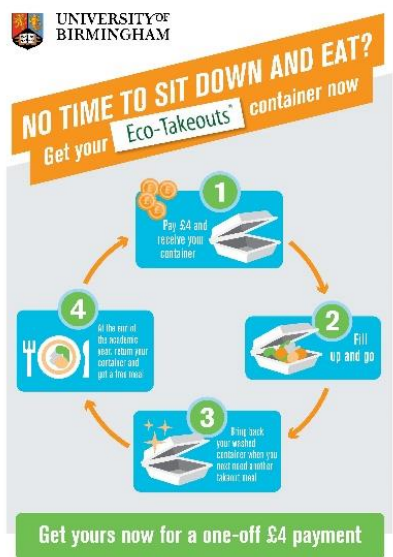
Our goals are to enthuse staff, students and visitors to take control of their environmental impact; to obliterate the use of single-use disposable food and drink containers and the throwaway culture that accompanies them.

Eco to go Box

Eco to go box was trialled at the UoB Hub Café Vale Student Village in September 2016. The boxes are made from sturdy, recyclable polypropylene and can be reused extensively. Students and staff purchase Eco box for £4 and are responsible for cleaning and returning the box to the food outlets. A free meal is offered if the student chooses to hand the box back to the university at the end of the year.

A decision was made to withdraw all single use hot food takeout boxes from The Vale Village.

UoB staff marketed the boxes around campus with posters, table tents and visuals on tv screens.



Performance and Results

In year 1 (2016/2017) – 135,625 disposable containers were replaced with reusables with a total saving of £17,404.

Eco-box is a self-supporting initiative. £21k a year was being spent on single-use food containers, which was an unnecessary expenditure resulting in thousands of containers going to non-recyclable waste. The initial outlay for 1008 boxes was just over £4,000 and a saving of over £17k.

UoB now plan to roll out the Eco box across the whole of campus – and with over 30,000 students the potential environmental impact and cost savings are huge.

Eco to go Cups

With the success of the Eco box, UoB wanted to expand their environmental efforts by extending their reuse policy to coffee cups. Eco to go cups were selected because they are the most environmentally friendly reusable cup available in the market, made from agricultural waste the cups are 100% natural, non toxic and biodegrade in compost turning into fertiliser.

UoB's incentive to encourage uptake of the reusable coffee cup was to sell the cups at cost price and offer a free drink with the initial purchase of the cup. Menu boards advertise hot drinks without the price of a disposable and charge 10 pence for every hot drink taken in a disposable cup.

Floor standing and counter top point of sale are used in cafes and retail outlets plus a poster campaign detailing clear environmental message.

UoB held Eco festival days highlighting the benefits of reusable VS disposables.



Performance and Results

UoB completely sold out of the 5000 cups within 3 ½ months. The figures, from the launch at Freshers week in September - December 2017 are as follows.

Number of disposable cups used: 69,993, Number of times a reusable cup was used: 35,083. That's a whopping 33% of hot drink takeouts in reusable to go cups.

