



PLASTIC FREE

NORTH DEVON

SUSTAINABLE HOUSEKEEPING TOOLKIT

Developed by



Kindly funded by



In association with



INTRODUCTION

Since 2018 Plastic Free North Devon has been running a [Visitor Campaign](#) aimed at the 6 million visitors to North Devon each year. It encourages positive environmental behaviour in businesses and individuals with the belief that an **individual action multiplied by millions creates global change.**

The **Sustainable Housekeeping** element of the campaign furthers our aim through the knowledge and expertise of cleaners, housekeepers and property managers.

This toolkit has been developed to help reduce their environmental impact, to reach their customers with our messaging and to share and encourage other businesses to follow the same path.

There are increasing pressures on our environment from all sorts of factors but if we all work together and make small changes big things can happen.

BENEFITS OF THE TOOLKIT

By following this guide you will be able to reduce your impact on the environment by, save some money and gain kudos for being an environmentally sustainable business but ultimately all the measures that we have added to this toolkit will reduce unnecessary waste and chemicals that harm, and set your business in line with future goals for a healthy planet.





WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

CLIMATE CHANGE

With 4% of oil production used for plastic production it is no wonder plastics are a major contributor to climate change. Burning fossil fuels to create plastic increases the CO₂ in the atmosphere and leads to global temperature rise. [Find out more here.](#)

SINGLE USE PLASTICS

Single use plastics seem like the miracle material that can be used once and then thrown away. The use of fossil fuels to create, ship and dispose of a product that is used for a few minutes makes them a major contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions. These products are being washed up on our shorelines and in our waterways and pose a danger in the environment to all living things.

With plastic there is no away. Plastic gradually breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces (microplastics) which can then be ingested by wildlife and enter food chains.

With 12 million tonnes of plastic entering our oceans each year and single use plastics making up half of all plastic production, it's time to turn the tide.

PLASTICS AND HUMAN HEALTH

Plastic is toxic to humans but we inhale and ingest it every day which can have a negative impact on our health. This has been linked to cancer, hormone disruption, immune system impairment, foetus development, diabetes, skin irritation and heart and bowel conditions. Read more about this in the recently released paper from [Common Seas](#) to find out more and how we can demand for more funding to research this important topic.

CHEMICALS

Most cleaning products contain a wide variety of toxic chemicals which are bad news for the environment. Once these have been rinsed down the drain they enter our waterways and can harm wildlife and affect ecosystems.



Plastic is an amazing material but every stage of the plastic life cycle has an impact. Air, soil and water pollution is caused by the extraction, transport, manufacture, sale, use and disposal of this material.



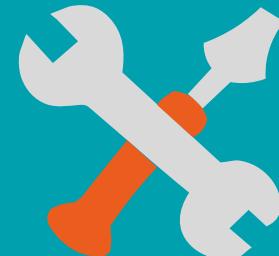
This toolkit will help you to review all aspects of your housekeeping to see where it is possible to reduce your impact.



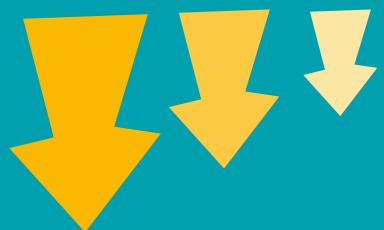
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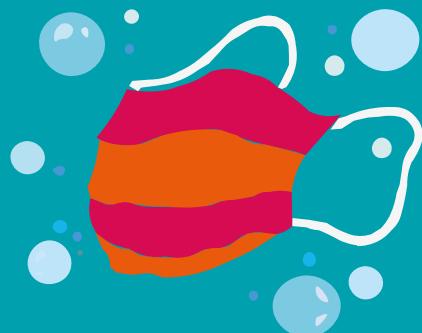
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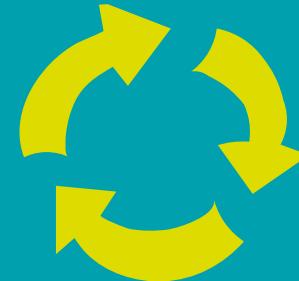
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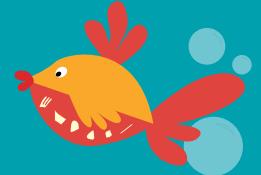
REDUCE



REUSE



RECYCLE



COVID 19

In the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic we are finding increasing amounts of single use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) items in our hedges, tidelines and on our streets. PPE is designed for a medical setting, for any other setting reusable items are safe and easy to use.

Using PPE for sanitising can give a false sense of reassurance in cleanliness. Regular hand washing is a far more effective way of protecting yourself, for example: single use plastic gloves stop you washing your hands as much as you would normally, to reduce infection transmission.

To read and learn more about this [here](#).



GREENWASHING

WHAT IS GREENWASHING?

Greenwashing is essentially a communications and PR tactic used to persuade the consumer that their product is more environmentally friendly without meaningfully reducing its impact. It is designed to persuade the user that by using their product you are doing your bit. Green claims can be misleading for consumers who are actually trying to do the right thing and they are often very vague. Many companies have pumped money into PR to make them look green rather than actually using that money to become more sustainable!!

Greenwashing is not always intentional and sustainability is a new journey for many businesses. In Nov 2021 a Green Claims Code was released by the UK government which provides guidance on green claims.

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT GREENWASHING?

When starting or continuing on your sustainability journey you may start to look at the products that you are using and do an audit on what they are and what the alternatives could be. The most important thing to remember when doing this is swapping one product for another that is deemed more sustainable, isn't always the solution. Looking for ways to reduce what you use should be the first step.



GREENWASHING

If you do look for new products then here are our top tips what to look out for:

LANGUAGE

Language that is vague and fluffy like 'natural' and 'eco'.

E.g. Arsenic and formaldehyde are natural but also toxic.

NO CERTIFICATION

Can these claims be backed up by evidence? Does it have a certification?

IRRELEVANCE

Stating things that aren't relevant to the product.

E.g. No CFC's – CFC's were banned in the 90's so this claim is being used to greenwash.

HIDDEN TRADE OFFS

For example: paper may be sustainably sourced but what are the other environmental implications – carbon emissions or bleaching etc.

Swapping one product for another because it's deemed to be greener isn't always the magic solution. Do your research, check for accreditation and try to reduce what you use.

Here are a few labels to look out for but it's worth doing investigation into what is your priority.



ETHICS

When making choices to do things differently there always seems to be so many decisions to make to protect the planet: *Where does it come from? Is it toxic? Is it cruelty free? Does it contain palm oil?*

Sustainability is a constantly changing landscape with evolving ideas, campaigns and products. Supermarkets will only sell a company's products when they are big enough to meet the demand of the whole country so you may need to think outside the box with your purchasing.

Take things slowly, do your research and change things step by step. Knowledge is key. Use up what you already have and then swap when it has run out.

Always remember – less is more for our planet.

For a practical guide on purchases check out the [ethical consumer](#).

NB: Ethical Consumer is an online and printed magazine whose aim is to inform readers on how to use spending power to help change the world for the better. You can access lots of information for free but some information requires an annual subscription.

We love the quote...

"EVERY TIME YOU SPEND YOUR MONEY, YOU'RE CASTING A VOTE FOR THE TYPE OF WORLD YOU WANT."

Anne Lappe



LET'S GET STARTED

AUDIT

Carry out a single use plastic audit on your products to look at what you could do to reduce your environmental impact.

From our research most cleaners have said that they now only use 1 or 2 products for everything which has reduced waste and also faff!

AUDIT QUESTIONS

1. Write a list of all single use plastics you use in your business
2. Write a list of all other products you use
- 3 Order your list in terms of what is the easiest to change to the more difficult

Once you have carried out your audit and worked out what you use and what waste it creates, carry on through this toolkit to make decisions on what you can do differently.



PRACTICAL TIPS

CLEANING MATERIALS

CLOTHS

Most cloths that are readily available are made out of plastic and are designed to only be used a few times and then thrown away (i.e. the jay cloth). However, these types of cloths release tiny plastic fibres whenever you rinse them under the tap which then enter our waterways.

- Choose natural materials for your cloths: organic cotton, bamboo etc. if you are buying new
- Use ripped up old towels for drying which can be used time and time again
- If you already have stacks of microfibre cloths or j cloths – don't throw them away, keep using them until the bitter end

SCOURERS

Switch to hard wearing scourers that will last longer. The classic metal/plastic scourers that are readily available are also designed to only be used a few times and are thrown away with each clean or at each change over.

- Switch to washable scrubbies and change to a clean one at each changeover.
- Switch to a natural alternative i.e. coconut scrubbies made out of coconut husk waste
- Use a eco cream cleaner or baking soda with the scourer



CLEANING PRODUCTS

From our research and discussion with environmental health colleagues there is no legislation that specifies certain chemicals are to be used for tourism accommodation. As a cleaner you are able to use whatever product/technique you like to ensure your accommodation is cleaned to your standards.



Our tips should help you keep to the same high standard expected with every clean:

- Reduce the amount of products you use generally speaking a multi purpose cleaner is perfect for most jobs
- Use natural vinegar, baking soda and lemon mixes. Spray it on at the start of your clean and let it work its magic
- Vinegar is brilliant for glass
- Baking soda for scouring and grease
- Use a small amount of essential oils for a better fragrance
- Buy concentrated. Refilling with a concentrated solution that you dilute at home significantly reduces the amount of water being unnecessarily transported around and therefore cuts down on carbon emissions. Plus, they use less packaging!

Bulk Buy and Refill

- Have a few bottles already filled up to swap when needed
- If you don't have much storage then use refill shops every few weeks
- Ever considered a purchasing cooperative with other local cleaners in the area?
- Head to [Ethical Consumer](#) to research the ethics and impact of products

AS WITH ALL OF THESE THINGS IT IS TRIAL AND ERROR WITH WHAT WORKS FOR YOU. TAKE SMALL STEPS.



ROOM EXTRAS

TOILETRIES

There are so many ways you can reduce your impact with the types of toiletries that you supply. As with cleaning products you can ask yourself the following questions. The decision for these things is up to you.

*Is it ethical? Does it contain palm oil?
Does it have toxic ingredients?*

Here are our practical tips to reduce waste on providing toiletries:

- Cut up your soap into cubes for each guest to avoid waste and reduce cost!
- Place refillable dispensers on the wall
- Purchase pretty bottles to refill (bulk buy)
- Use an all in one product
- Make a decision not to provide toiletries and explain to your guests why – reduce environmental impact

TOILET ROLL

There is a huge variety of plastic free and more environmentally friendly toilet paper now.

- Check the labels
- Choose plastic free packaging
- Choose recycled paper over virgin wood pulp - no need to chop down forests to make toilet roll!
- Look for alternative sustainable fibres from non virgin forests
- Avoid bleached paper and chlorine processing

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Having a good clear system for waste management is a brilliant way of showing your guests that you are taking steps to protect the environment. Even if your guests don't take any notice of it, showing that you are serious and passionate will make a difference.

RECYCLING

Having clearly labelled recycling bins is essential in ensuring your guests have the ability to do it properly. Recycling is not the answer but it is an important part of the journey to becoming a more sustainable planet. It is also good for your wallet too with

Trade Waste (in North Devon) being more expensive than recycling!

- Always leave the 'What can be recycled' for your area in clear visibility for guests
- Create a [why](#) document to display for guests to understand the bigger picture
- Highlight that stretchy plastic and crisp packets can be recycled at most major [supermarkets](#)
- Inform guest where they can recycle their [tetra paks](#)
- Let the guests know about our [Toy Libraries](#) and places to hire rather than purchase cheap, polystyrene bodyboards in the welcome pack



If you have a problem with sorting your waste or working out what is right for your properties then get in touch with your local trade waste team whether you pay business rates or domestic household. It is also worth looking into business rates relief for smaller businesses.

North Devon – [Trade Waste team](#)

Torridge – [Waste and Recycling](#)

FOOD WASTE

Did you know that [1/3 of all food produced](#) for human consumption is wasted?? This causes unnecessary deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss.

- Encourage your guests to take leftover food home with them or encourage guests to leave edible food for cleaners to take and distribute
- Encourage your guests to use the compost caddy for any food waste or install a compost bin in the garden of the property for any non cooked food waste



ESSENTIALS:

Sachets and single use milk pots have made a very unwelcome comeback since the Covid pandemic. There are some very easy alternatives.



MILK

- Use small flasks in the room that keep it cool and can be refilled for each room
- Purchase a bottle of glass milk with a note telling them where they can refill it. Check out our [#look local](#) directory for refill stations in North Devon and Torridge

TEA AND COFFEE

- Place in small kilner jars that can be easily refilled
- Did you know tea bags can be sealed with plastic? Opt for [plastic free teabags](#) (clipper, PG Tips)
- Check out the [ethics](#) of the tea and coffee you supply – could you find an alternative or a local option ?



CONDIMENTS FOR BREAKFASTS

- Purchase large bottles of condiments to place on tables
- Place a slice of butter in a dish
- Supply large boxes of cereal rather than mini boxes
- Use a cafetiere instead of coffee machines to avoid the single use plastic pods

WATER

- Leave glasses out for tap water
- Encourage guests to take a refillable bottle when they are out and about



WELCOME GIFT

Plastic free, local welcome packs are always loved and demonstrates some thought behind what is given and the impact it has makes a very good impression.

- Keep it simple and stock up on non-perishable items so you are prepared when you run out. A local or fairtrade bottle of wine and some ethical chocolate would always go down a treat.
- Contact your local bakery for delivery or pick up fresh cakes and pastries that can be placed under a dome.
- Local shops supply fresh bottled milk and orange juice too. Buying locally takes a little more forward planning but is a great way to consume less plastic and feed the local economy at the same time.
- Share a print out of where your guests can find these welcome pack items if they chose to buy more on their visit. Guests wouldn't know about these places without us telling them. Heading to a fresh milk filling station can be doubled up as a fun educational day out for the kids!



COMMUNICATION

Communication is key if we want to encourage sustainable behaviour change.

Tell your guests what you are doing and why, this is the most important part of the journey. If you change something, put up a sign to say what you have changed and **WHY**.

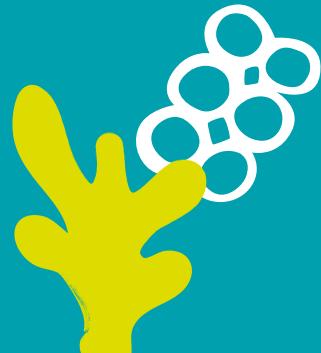


BE CONSISTENT

Write positive messaging about changes backed up by your processes.

BE POSITIVE

We are all in this together, we can do this, you can be part of the solution.



STAFF TRAINING

If you are a management company, think about holding staff training on potential changes and ask them to help inform new processes. Getting buy-in and ownership from staff will make it easier.

TALK TO OWNERS OF HOLIDAY HOUSES

If you are a cleaner or cleaning company encourage them to sign up to the [Visitor Campaign](#) to get buy-in with your changes.

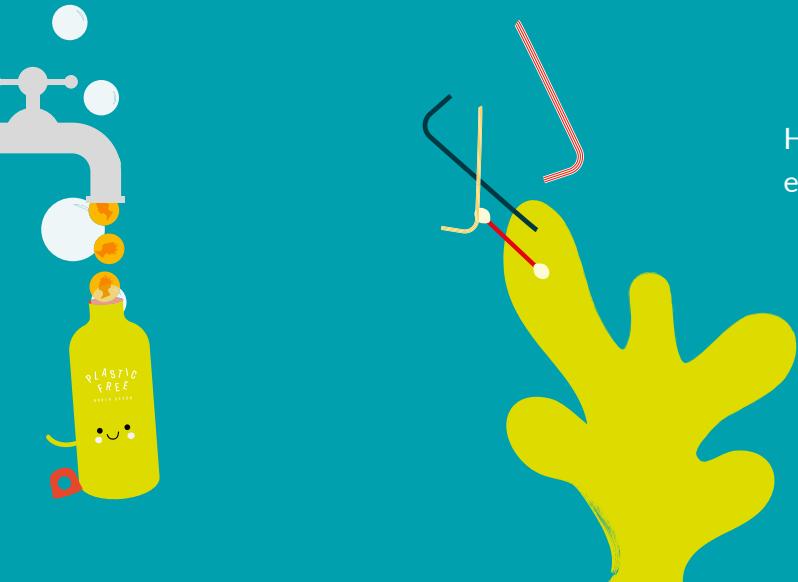
USE OUR VISITOR CAMPAIGN RESOURCE

Sign up to the [Visitor Campaign](#) to access resources aimed at helping visitors reduce their impact. Display our leaflet or poster, send out pre booking information with tips on what to bring (water bottle, coffee cup etc) and encourage your guests to borrow beach toys via our [Toy Libraries](#). There are so many ways you can communicate and educate your guests.



CREATE A WRITTEN WELCOME PACK DOCUMENT

Most guests look through the welcome pack – if each holiday home had environmental information intertwined within their standard info then we will be able to reach more people. Tell your guests what you have done, why and how they can help. We have our Visitor Campaign leaflet and poster but this would be specific to your accommodation.



Here is an example:

Dear Guests

As well as making your stay as comfortable as possible for you, we are also doing our best at making this lovely holiday home as kind to the environment as we can make it.

We use as little single-use plastic as possible, we avoid using harsh chemicals in our cleaning products and our welcome pack consists of locally sourced goods which help support our local area.

You can also help us on this journey.....

- Remember to take your refillable water bottle and coffee cups out and about with you to eliminate the need for single use items
- Did you know that you can recycle all your soft plastics and crisp packets at our supermarkets? Collect them all up and pop them in when you are passing
- Did you know that 30% of all food produced is wasted? If you have any perfectly edible, unopened food that you were going to throw in the bin whilst clearing the fridge or cupboards, leave it here for us to use or distribute

Thank you for visiting our lovely home





For further information on this toolkit, the Visitor Campaign or anything else we can help with then please get in touch:

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plasticfreenorthdevon.org

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