

We're ditching disposables

Guidance Document

Zero Waste Scotland
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EUROPE & SCOTLAND
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1 What is a reusable, returnable cup scheme?

1.1 Takeaway drinks culture

“On-the-go” drinks are a huge part of our culture: who doesn’t love a latte on a cold frosty morning while waiting for the train or an ice-cold drink on a hot day?

And many of us in our efforts to be environmentally friendly, have become accustomed to remembering our reusable cups, along with our reusable shopping bags and water bottle.

With our busy lives, if we forget our reusable cup, we can always reach for a takeaway cup at the counter. One that often cannot or will not be recycled, even the ‘compostable’ ones.

An estimated 388.7 million single-use disposable beverage cups are used every year in Scotland, with this figure estimated could rise to 453 million by 2035. Zero Waste Scotland estimates that this amounts to 4,000 tonnes of waste each year. Across the UK, there are 2.5 billion single-use cups given out every year to consumers [1].

1.2 A cup to borrow, not to keep

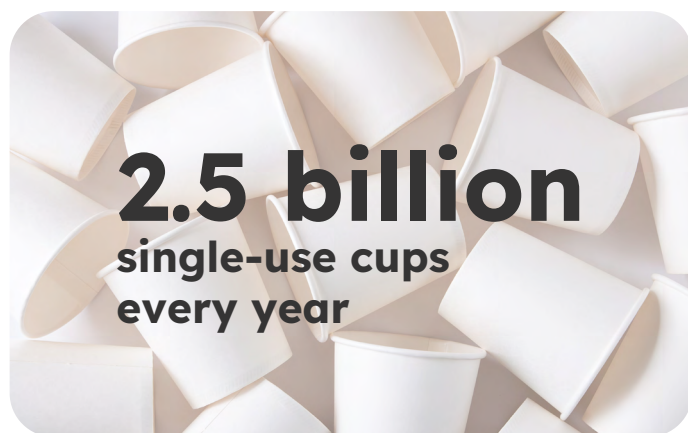
And so here enters a gap in the market. Many coffee shops sell reusable cups to keep, another one to stack up in the back of the cupboard.

1 Powell, K., Letsinger, S., Sweeney, O., Cooper, B., Worth, C., Cole, G., Zero Waste Scotland and Resource Futures (2022). Consumption of Single-use Disposable Beverage Cups in Scotland and Impact of Policy Options Consumption of Single-use Disposable Beverage Cups in Scotland. [online] Zero Waste Scotland. Available at: <https://cdn.zerowastescotland.org.uk/managed-downloads/mf-0qipu-bg-1686671922d> [Accessed 20 Feb. 2024].

2 Zero Waste Scotland (2021). Time to wake up from the packaging waste nightmare. [online] www.zerowastescotland.org.uk. Available at: <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/resources/time-wake-packaging-waste-nightmare> [Accessed 19 Apr. 2024].

3 The Scottish Government (2022). Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Scotland)

Customers don’t need another reusable cup to clutter up their lives. What if they could just borrow a cup instead? Pay a deposit to borrow the cup and then return it later and get your deposit back.



Zero Waste Scotland conducted research around the single-use plastics ban which came into force in June 2022. The findings showed that 77% of people in Scotland are concerned by the amount of single-use packaging and items we use [2]. This indicates that reusable packaging schemes could be an attractive alternative to many.

1.3 Policy landscape on disposable cups

As part of the ban on certain single-use plastics in Scotland which was introduced in June 2022 [3], the manufacture and supply of cups made from expanded polystyrene and

their lids, among other things, is now unlawful. Future policy measures proposed include charging for single-use disposable beverage cups, which evidence shows may help move more people towards reusable alternatives.

Offering a loan service for reusable cups is an action that has been highlighted as a key means to help tackle consumption of single use cups by the Scottish Government's Expert Panel on Environmental Charging and Other Measures (EPECOM) [4].

Some businesses are opting to get ahead of the curve and put into practice proactive measures to address consumption reduction of single-use cups, not only due to these potential future policy measures, but also because it's advantageous to do so.



1.4 Advantages of reusable, returnable cup schemes.

- Reduces disposable cup and lid waste generation.

- Builds a relationship with customers, incentivising them to return with their cup on a future visit.
- Shows customers that a business is willing to try alternative operating models to help tackle the climate emergency.
- Reduces the cost of having to buy stocks of single use cups.
- The cost of the deposit should be designed to cover the cost of the cup, allowing for non-returned cups to be replaced.

1.5 Putting reusable, returnable cup schemes into motion

Zero Waste Scotland is supporting trials of reusable cup takeback schemes with businesses in Scotland as part of its wider Ditching Disposables project. A reusable, returnable scheme for cups allows customers to pay a small deposit when purchasing their drink that will be refunded to them when they return their reusable cup, so it can be washed and used again. There are a range of existing reusable cup schemes operating in Scotland. The schemes can be categorised as:

- a cup rental service operated by a third party
- an in-house scheme run independently by a hospitality business.

The common thread running through each is that they charge a deposit to the customer, which is reimbursed once the cup is returned for reuse. Examples of different types of reusable cup schemes operating in Scotland and other regions can be found in the Zero Waste Scotland article '[Switching to reusable cups - examples from Scotland and beyond](#)'.

Regulations 2021: Guidance. [online] [www.gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/environmental-protection-single-use-plastic-products-scotland-regulations-2021-guidance/). Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/environmental-protection-single-use-plastic-products-scotland-regulations-2021-guidance/> [Accessed 20 Feb. 2024].

4 Expert Panel on Environmental Charging and Other Measures (2019). Single-use disposable cups: EPECOM recommendations. [online] [www.gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/report-expert-panel-environmental-charging-measures-epecom-recommendations-single-use-disposable-beverage-cups-july-2019/). Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/report-expert-panel-environmental-charging-measures-epecom-recommendations-single-use-disposable-beverage-cups-july-2019/> [Accessed 19 Apr. 2024].



1.6 Charging for disposable cups separately

Selling disposable cups separately instead of offering discounts for reusables can significantly increase the number of people choosing the more sustainable drinks option. A study undertaken by Zero Waste Scotland [5] revealed that cafés which replaced discounts for customers who brought their own reusable cups with clear, equivalent charges for disposable cups significantly increased the proportion of customers switching to reusables for on-the-go coffee and tea.

Under the trials, four public sector cafés in Scotland stopped giving discounts for reusable cups and instead reduced the total price of a drink by the equivalent amount and charged customers that same amount for single use

5 Zero Waste Scotland (2023a). How Ditching Disposables can have a big impact on reducing single-use waste. [online] www.zerowastescotland.org.uk. Available at: <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/resources/how-ditching-disposables-can-have-big-impact-reducing-single-use-waste> [Accessed 19 Apr. 2024].

cups. For example, a 10p reusables discount was replaced with a 10p reduction in the total cost of the drink and a 10p disposables charge.

The proportion of consumers switching from disposable to reusable cups rose across all four cafés by 50% on average. The findings suggest that making the cost of disposable cups clear instead of hiding that cost within the total price of the drink will do more to kick Scotland's disposable coffee cup habit than offering discounts.

2 Environmental impacts

Zero Waste Scotland has undertaken an evidence review examining the environmental impacts of disposable versus reusable cups. There have been lots of studies undertaken in this area with the majority examining the most commonly used single-use plastic-coated paper cups.



Reusable cups are typically heavier than disposable cups, requiring more material and energy to produce. As a result, the production of a single reusable cup will generate more CO₂eq. emissions than a single disposable cup. However, the impact per use will decline the more times it is used, whilst the impact per use for a disposable is constant, being used only once. The studies, therefore, refer to a breakeven point, which is the number of

times a reusable item needs to be reused to be equal to the impact of a single-use item. Zero Waste Scotland has reviewed these studies and provided a summary of key findings. The studies identified that:

- A single-use plastic lined paper cup has an impact ranging from 10g CO₂eq to 30g CO₂eq [6][7]. This large range is due to differences in end-of-life treatment and material selection.
- Due to the variance in carbon impacts between different single-use plastic lined paper cups, there is a variation in the breakeven point: ranging from 10-41 uses for a reusable plastic cup [8][9][10].
- This means that after 10 to 41 uses, a reusable plastic coffee cup has a lower equivalent carbon impact than using the same number of single-use cups and disposing of them.
- Over the lifetime of a reusable cup, 10.3kg of CO₂eq could be saved compared to using single-use cups instead (assuming 500 uses / cups of coffee) [11].
- If reusable cups replaced single-use cups, carbon emissions could fall by 69%. In UK terms, a switch from disposable cups to reusable cups could save 52,000t of CO₂eq each year [12].

6 Foteinis, S. (2020). How small daily choices play a huge role in climate change: The disposable paper cup environmental bane. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 255(120294), p.120294. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.120294>.

7 Huhtamaki (2019). Life cycle analysis study: Taking a closer look at paper cups for coffee. [online] Huhtamaki. Available at: <https://www.huhtamaki.com/globalassets/global/highlights/responsibility/taking-a-closer-look-at-paper-cups-for-coffee.pdf> [Accessed 19 Apr. 2024].

8 (Foteinis, 2020)

9 VTT (2019)

10 Almeida, J., Pellec, M. and Bengtsson, J. (2018). Reusable coffee cups life cycle assessment and benchmark. doi:<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.35083.13607>.

11 Calculated from results in Foteinis (2020): Impact of reusable cup per use is 9.16g CO₂eq; single-use cup per use is 29.85g CO₂eq. 500 uses assumed by Foteinis (2020).

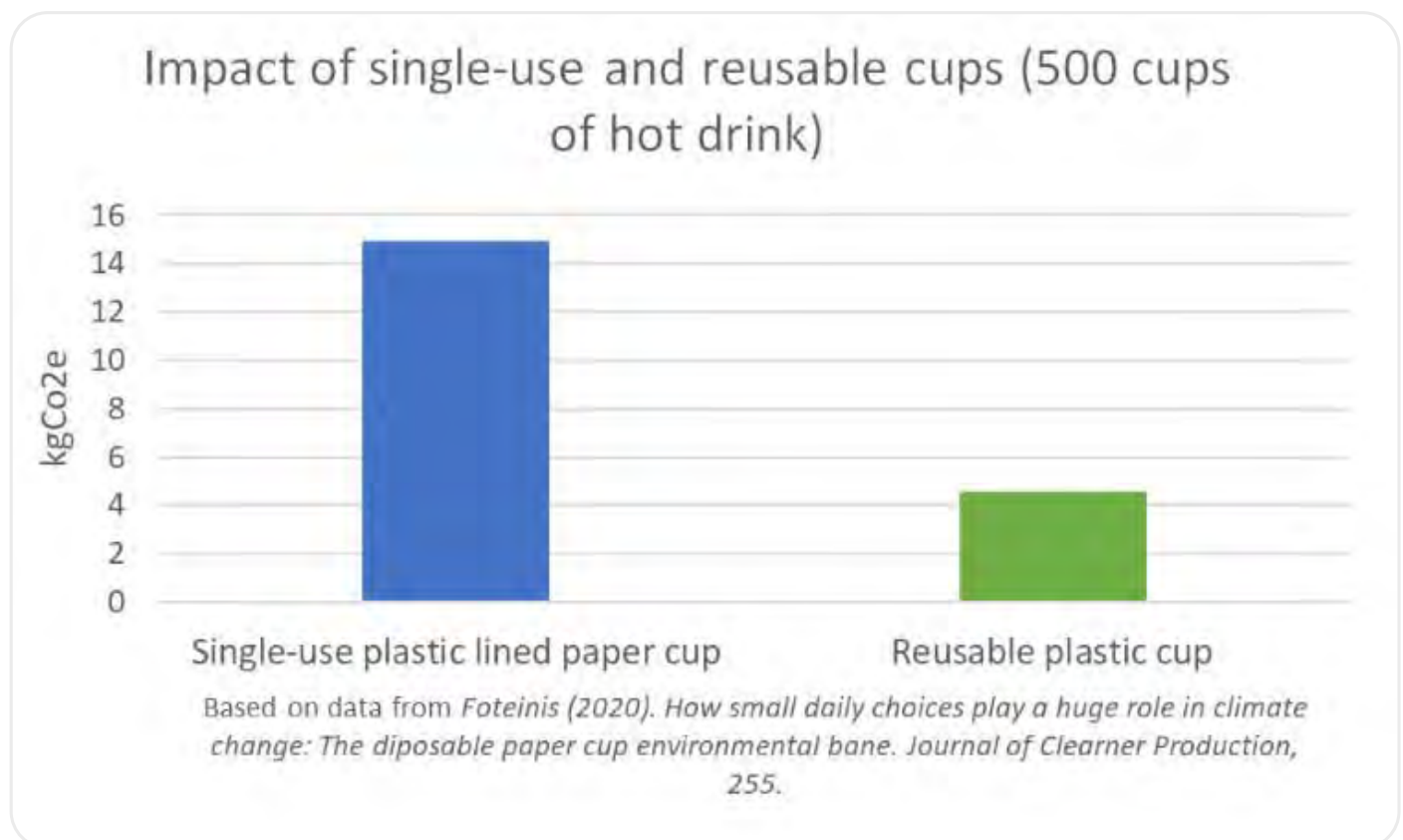
12 (Foteinis, 2020)

- In Scotland, we could save 4,100t of CO₂eq per year (based on consumption of 200 million single use cups).

The below figure shows the carbon impact of 500 single-use cups compared to one reusable plastic cup. The study suggests that by choosing to reuse we can significantly lessen our carbon footprint and reduce waste.

Established cup reuse scheme, Shrewsbury Cup, uses reusable polypropylene cups manufactured in the UK. These are reported to have a lower environmental impact than single-use paper cups after just 3 uses. After 7 uses the environmental impact is 41% less, and after 182 uses (6 months) the impact is 95% less [13].

For more information on the figures quoted in this document and for further information about the impacts of reusable cups as well as food packaging and carrier bags, please read the Zero Waste Scotland article '[The environmental benefits of reusable plastic over single-use products](#)'.



13 SHREWSBURY CUP (n.d.). Home. [online] Shrewsbury Cup. Available at: <https://www.shrewsburycup.co.uk/> [Accessed 19 Apr. 2024].

3 Reusable cup models to consider

Reusable, returnable cup schemes are still in their infancy in the UK. Several projects have been trialled to test different methods for engaging customers in utilising reusable cups to reduce the use of single-use cups. Two primary approaches tend to have been employed and these are summarised below.

3.1 ‘Borrow for a deposit’ schemes

The ‘Borrow for a deposit’ schemes typically require customers to pay an upfront deposit (usually £1 or £2) to receive their beverage in a reusable cup. Customers can get their deposit back by returning the cup to one of the participating scheme cafés/outlets or drop-off points. Alternatively, customers can get a fresh beverage in the same cup or can swap this for a clean cup and lid. Cups are then typically washed by the participating cafés ready for reuse again. In some schemes, a third-party organisation, often a community-based organisation, manages the redistribution of cups on the ground across the participating cafés. Their time is usually subsidised by an annual membership fee for participating cafés.

3.2 ‘App-based’ schemes

‘App-based’ schemes typically require customers to scan their reusable cup and to register personal details, including payment details. Schemes adopt different approaches with some charging a membership fee, with others offering no charge. Reusable cups can then be used for free. The cups can then be returned at a participating café or drop off point within a specified time limit free of charge. If customers do not return their cup within a specific period (e.g., 2 weeks) then a fee is charged to their card for the cost of the cup. Cups are typically consolidated and washed centrally before being redistributed to the participating cafés. Again, participating cafés are charged a membership fee.

3.3 Relative benefits of each model

Borrow deposit

- It does not rely on technology and is therefore more accessible to more customers.
- It is quick and easy to engage in the scheme.
- There is no need for customers to register personal details to use the scheme.
- Lower cost to set up such a scheme with no investment in App/QR systems required.

App-based

- Once signed up to the scheme it is quick and easy for customers to use.
- Cups can be tracked easily, and customers prompted to return them.
- Easy to analyse data using these systems.
- No customer deposit reduces initial financial barriers to engagement.
- Easy to build in rewards and incentives.

3.4 Examples of reusable, returnable cup schemes in the UK and Ireland

Shrewsbury Cup

Website: www.shrewsburycup.co.uk

Shrewsbury Cup operates in Shrewsbury across 35 outlets. Customers pay a £1 deposit for a reusable polypropylene cup. They return the cup to any participating café to get their £1 back. The cups are washed by the cafés ready to be used again. The scheme

is cost neutral for cafés based on the money saved from not purchasing single use cups. Membership for businesses is £20 a month covering promotional material, training, advertising, troubleshooting, and web page updates.

The fee also covers the administration of cup supply, delivery and collection through the Shrewsbury Cup team. If cafés end up with too many cups, the team swap the cup for £1 coins and vice versa. Customers can get their £1 back when they return the cup to any participating café. The scheme website features a map showing all participating cafés. If a cup is damaged beyond reuse, then the deposit is not returned. Deposits are always returned in cash. No surcharge is currently applied to disposable cups by any of the participating cafés. Once returned, the participating cafés then wash the cups in-house ready for reuse.

CanCan

Website: www.wearecancan.com

CanCan is a reusable cup scheme operating in Bristol. It is an 'App based' scheme enabling customers to identify participating cafés. Cup stocks are ordered and managed through the app by cafés. Customers scan the QR code via the App and register their details, including payment details. From then on, they can then quickly grab a takeaway drink and pay for their takeaway beverage via the App. The barista will scan their CanCan code and give them a returnable cup linked to their code.

Once they have finished their drink, they can use the CanCan app to locate the nearest return point. Customers return their cup and lid to one of the participating cafés in the drop off boxes. There are 5 cafés in Bristol participating. The cups are collected and washed at a central facility by CanCan. If cups are not returned by midnight on the 7th day of borrowing, customers are charged a late return penalty. The penalty is £2.00 for cups and £1.00 for lids if not returned. They only get charged if they don't return the cup and CanCan must replace it. The App technology allows CanCan to follow the life of every cup, which means that they can accurately track the impact of the scheme. The App also shows customers their nearest venue.

2GoCup

Website: www.2gocup.ie

Based in Dublin, 2GoCup is an environmental initiative designed to prevent the production, consumption, and disposal of single-use cups, while offering the same convenience and affordability to independent businesses. Customers purchase a beverage as normal and then pay €2 extra for a 2GoCup. Once finished, they return the cup back to any participating outlet in return for their deposit.

The cafés are charged a subscription fee by 2GoCup covering the management and promotion of the scheme. Membership costs the cafés €2 per day. The project began as a pilot project and is now operating as



01 DEPOSIT

€2 for a 2GoCup or €3 for a 2GoBowl.



02 ENJOY

Your guilt-free takeaway!



03 RETURN

The product any of our participating locations for your **full** deposit back, OR swap your empty for a fresh one!

LEARN MORE

a permanent scheme having been market-tested across 100 sites in Ireland and the UK. 2GoCup built on the original deposit model by developing an App that customers can download and use to locate cafés and further engage in the scheme.

3.5 Serviced reusable schemes

A 'serviced reusable, returnable' cup scheme can be operated either using a combination of a deposit or an App based system. Deposit schemes are more likely to be used in a festival or arena events where there is the scale to support drop off or collection services. Cup App schemes work best in urban environments where outlets are broadly distributed and drop off points do not need to be resourced. In the serviced reusable model, where cups can be deposited and collected remotely from the retail outlet, the focus is on speedy collection, wash and return to use to avoid excessive inventory in the system and hygiene issues. Cups are typically washed by the service provider at the central wash-plant facility. Examples of serviced reusable returnable cup schemes include:

- CLUBZERØ – www.clubzero.co
- Green Goblet – www.green-goblet.com
- ONE Planet One Chance – www.oneplanetonechance.co.uk
- Event Cup Solutions – www.eventcupsolutions.com

Example of CLUBZERØ

CLUBZERØ offers a fully 'circular' returnable packaging service for takeaway and delivery. Their products can be integrated across restaurants and cafés in all business

types (including offices, universities, parks, stadiums and more) allowing outlets to offer a zero-waste alternative to both single use disposable cups and food packaging. Once used, packaging is placed into CLUBZERØ yellow bags and collected from locations to be washed and redelivered to hosts.



CLUBZERØ supports every element of a returnable packaging service, including packaging selection, collection, washing, logistics and marketing. CLUBZERØ partners with JustEat for Business to match corporate clients demanding zero waste deliveries with restaurant or café hosts equipped with CLUBZERØ. The app is free to use, with no deposit required, but a small charge is made if customers do not return the item within 7 days.

For partner hosts offering CLUBZERØ packaging to their customers, there is no membership fee. The only cost is that of purchasing the packaging from CLUBZERØ in the first place.

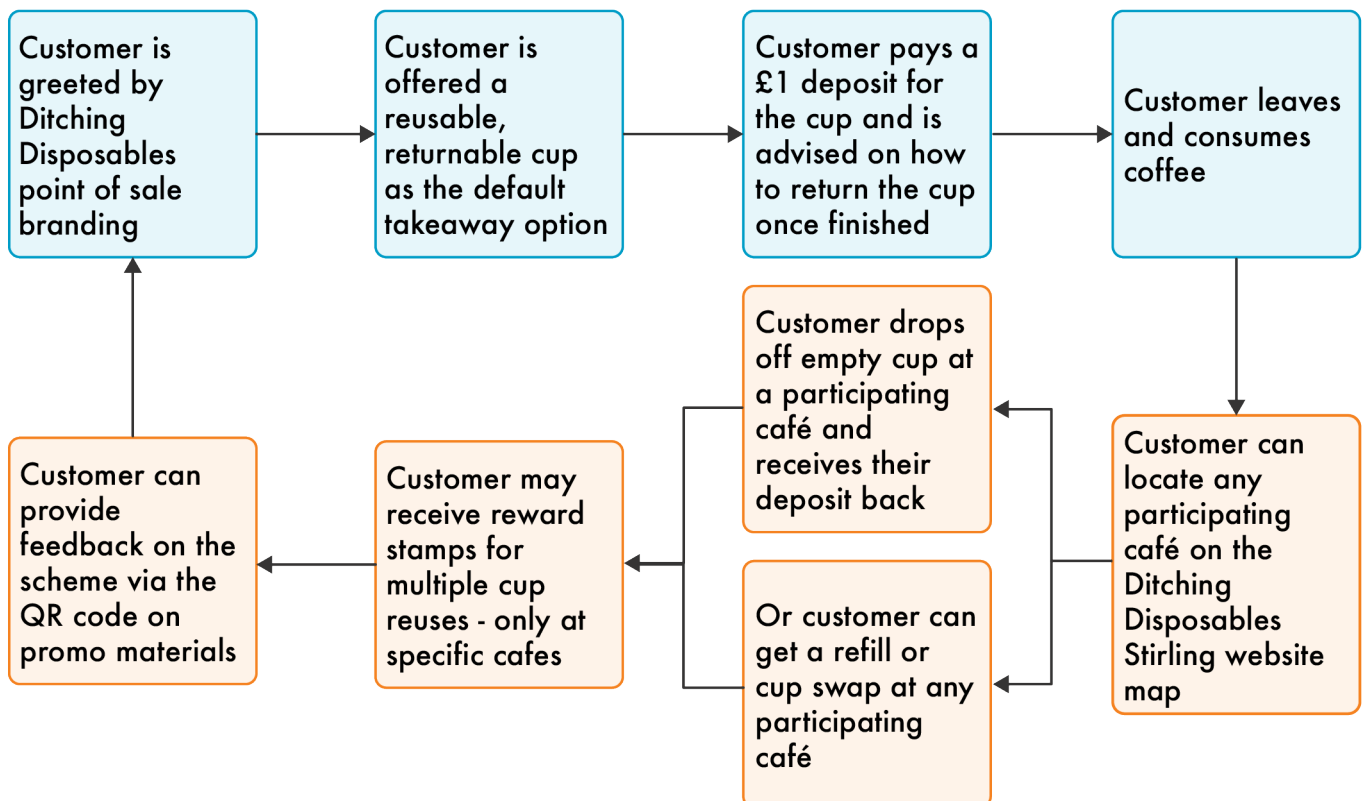
4 Establishing a customer journey

It is important for a reusable, returnable cup scheme to establish a clear customer journey so that all stakeholders involved in the scheme understand how this works. This is particularly important for the participating cafés who need to ensure that the scheme is delivered consistently across the network of participants. A sample customer journey is illustrated below, taken from the Ditching Disposables pilot scheme delivered in Stirling.

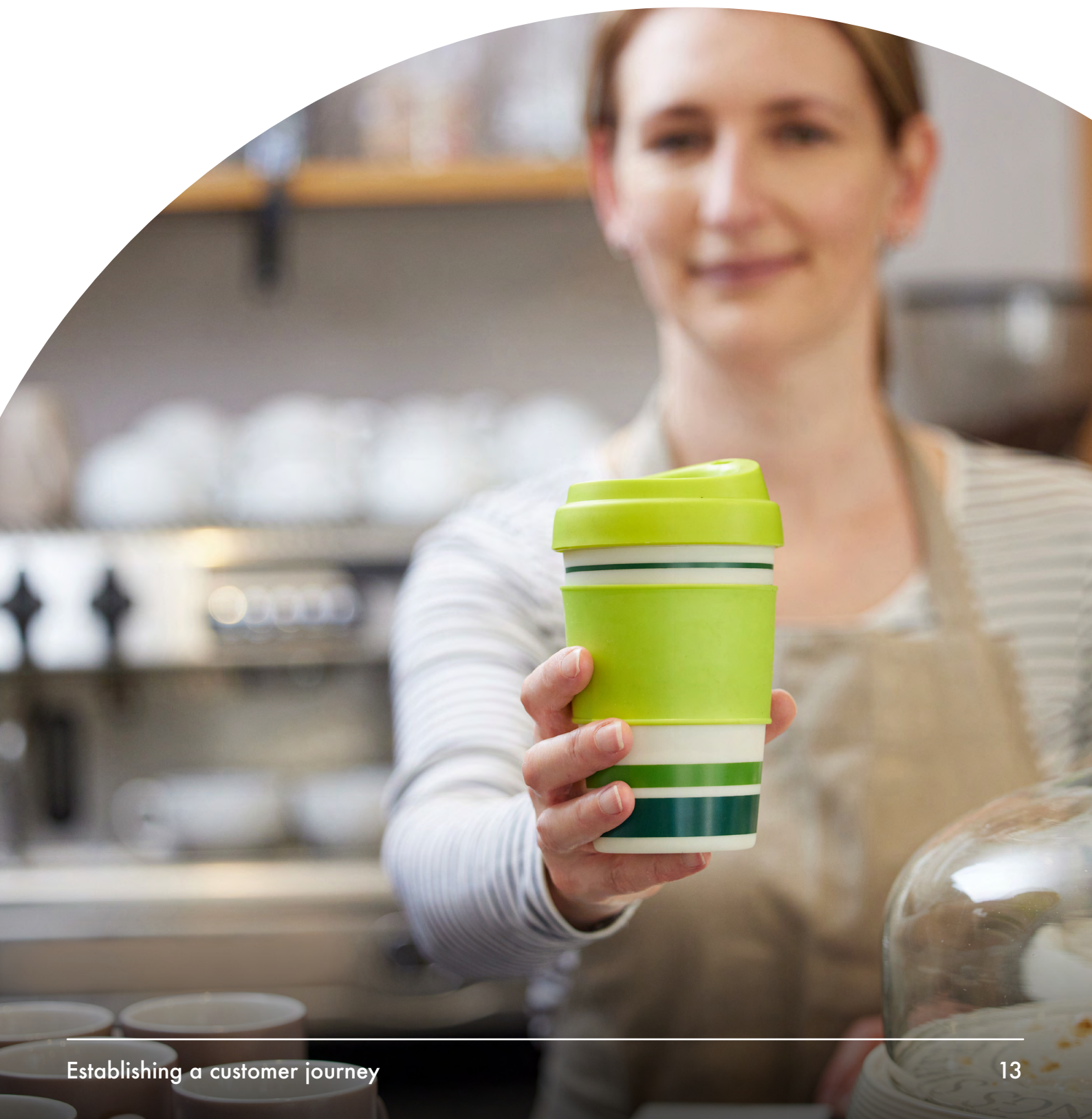
The customer journey sets out the expectations of what the customer will experience in engaging in the reusable, returnable cup service.

- At the beginning of the journey, cafés must ensure that customers are alerted to the opportunity through clear communication at the venue, using A-boards, window stickers, point of sale materials, posters, counter toppers, along with regular social media activity.

- Staff should be trained to communicate consistently with customers about the scheme and offer reusable cups as the default option for takeaway beverages. Moreover, staff should be actively encouraged and supported by senior members of staff, managers and owners, and for these to also lead by example and fully support the reusable cup scheme. Ongoing communication with the customer is key to build confidence in the scheme.
- Staff should advise customers on what to do with the cup when finished and how to get their deposit back if this type of model is employed. These messages can be reinforced throughout the customer journey through websites, QR codes, or Apps illustrating where participating cafés are located and where they can return their cup once finished with.



- Opportunities to drop off the cup in the correct place should be made as easy and convenient as possible to maximise participation and return rates. This behaviour can also be further encouraged through rewards.
- Finally, customer feedback is vital to learn what can be improved to ensure participation and long-term sustainability of the scheme. Simple customer surveys are one way of achieving this, backed by some form of participation incentive.



5 Baseline data & KPI measurements

5.1 Establishing data capture systems

The success of the scheme can only be assessed with good data. The collection of data on cup reuse is therefore an important part of the project. Cafes have different systems when it comes to processing customer transactions. Some have modern EPOS till systems, whilst others have more simplistic till operations. The process for capturing data is summarised below for both options.

5.2 EPOS till systems

It will be important to collect data on cups reused through the scheme. With an EPOS till, this should be relatively simple to collect. On EPOS, buttons can be set up on the system on the sub-total screen, as in the example below:



Above: Data capture set up on EPOS till system

5.3 Process

For gathering useful data and tracking deposits, the following buttons should be set up on the EPOS system:

- Reusable cup deposit in (incoming deposits)
- Reusable cup refund deposit (outgoing deposits)
- Reusable cup swap (cup reuse where a used cup is swapped for a fresh cup)
- Reusable cup refill (cup reuse where the used cup is filled again)
- Disposable cup (where a customer has used a disposable cup/lid)

Other buttons to include are highlighted below and these are 'optional' but very useful:

- Own cup (to capture instances of customers bringing their own reusable cups)
- Charge (Prices would be provided according to the number of cups/lids requested; for delivery and collection of the cups; for a washing service; and finally for a member of staff to help host a stand or counter for the event)
- Discount 15% (some cafés may wish to drive customer behaviour by offering a discount when choosing a reusable cup as opposed to charging for a disposable cup)

By setting up the EPOS till systems in this way, it should be possible to pull through data each week/month showing the total transactions under each category.

This will help those operating the reusable cup scheme to understand the impact achieved by tracking the total drinks sold in both reusable cups and disposable cups.

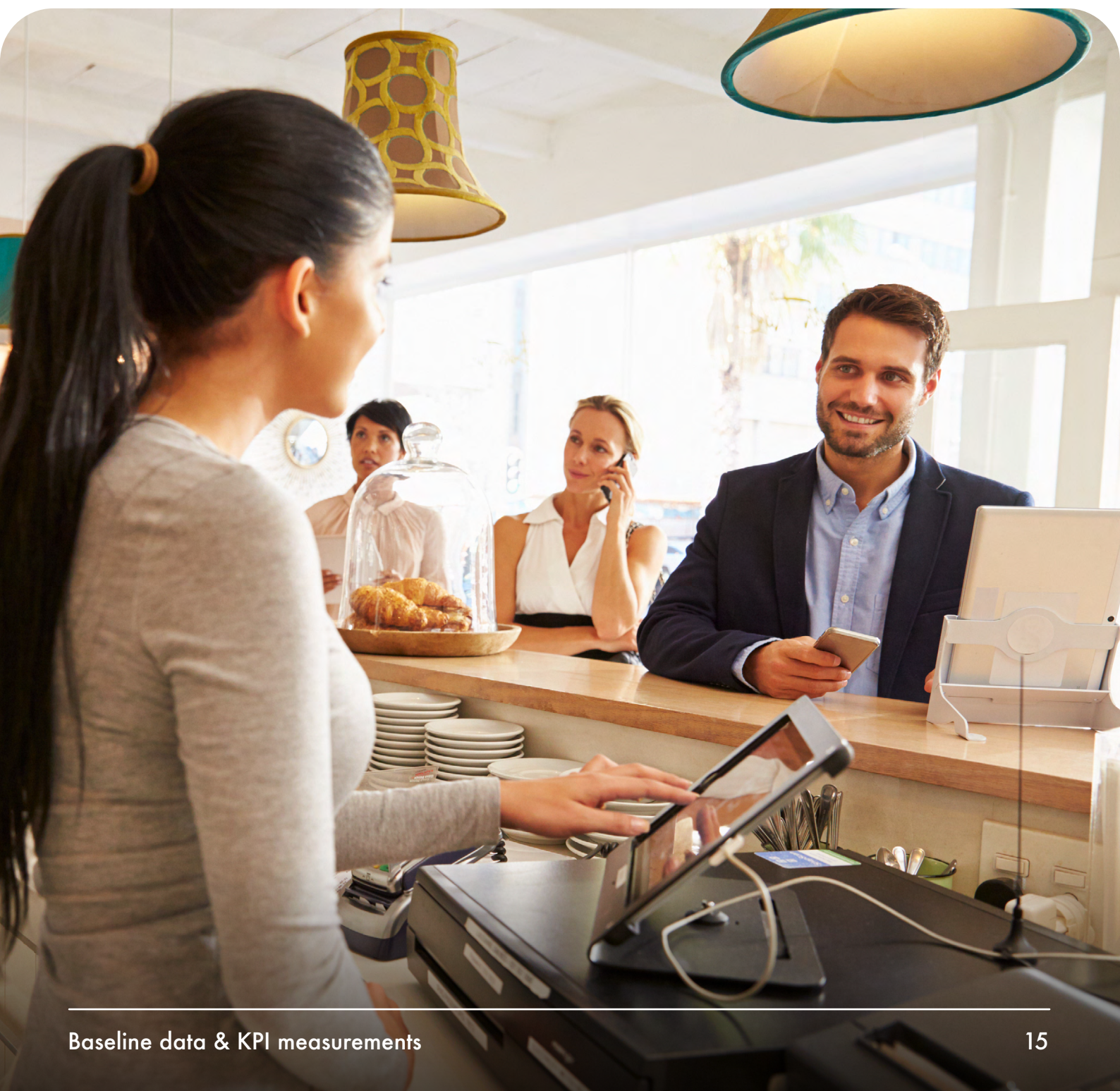
By including the 'disposable cups' button it will be possible to tell what proportion reusable cups make up of total takeaway sales and how this changes as the scheme progresses.

The data should also allow schemes to calculate the total saving on using fewer disposable cups and lids if they have a standard cost available for procurement of the disposable items.

Data can then be downloaded from EPOS under these categories as a CSV file each month during the operation of the scheme.

5.4 Manual data collection

For cafés not using EPOS tills or the equivalent, data will need to be captured manually instead. The same data can be captured manually through a simple tally table. A sample data capture sheet has been set up on the next page to monitor activity on a weekly basis:



5.5 Reusable Cup Data Capture Sheet

Start date: _____

End date: _____

Reusable cup deposit

Cup swap

Refund deposit

Refill

Disposable cup

Own cup

Process

- A copy of the tally sheet should be kept next to the till where orders are taken.
- Staff will need to be trained and instructed to tally where any of the listed transactions take place.
- If there are multiple tills, then multiple tally sheets will be required.
- Depending on how busy the café is with

takeaways, a sheet might need to be renewed once a day or once a week. However, it is recommended that these are kept in a safe place to ensure no loss of data.

- The sheet should be dated (start and end dates) and a photo taken once completed.
- This should then be sent by WhatsApp (or alternative) to whoever is responsible for inputting the data for the scheme.

6 Charging and incentives

6.1 Charging

Research undertaken by Zero Waste Scotland [14] has shown that charging customers for disposable, single-use cups is more effective than offering discounts for choosing the reusable option. Most cafés currently charge customers a single price for the drink with the single-use cup included, hidden within the overall price of the drink. However, evidence from research and trials indicate that customers are driven towards reusable options if the cost of the beverage and the cup is listed separately and clearly. With this approach, customers pay a flat fee for the beverage and can then either pay for a disposable cup, or select a reusable cup, usually by paying a deposit which they get back when they return the cup. This creates a clear financial incentive to opt for the reusable option.

In their 2018 trial with the Hubbub foundation, Starbucks [15] applied a £0.05 disposable coffee cup charge across 35 stores in London. Despite the low charge value, reusable cup rates more than doubled from 2.2% to 5.8%. Starbucks later rolled-out the charge to all 950 UK stores.

Zero Waste Scotland conducted its own trials to test these findings at four public sector catering locations over a five-week period. Overall, the average increase in relative reusable cup rates across the sites was 184%, confirming, as per previous studies, that disposable coffee cup charging is a highly effective measure for encouraging reusable cup use [16]. This was regardless of

the specific charge value or other variables between organisations and sites.

From these and other similar trials, there is strong evidence that a separate charge for the disposable cup option has a positive effect on reusable cup choices. However, businesses coming out of a challenging recent period may be risk averse and fear of being at a competitive disadvantage if other local businesses aren't also following the same business model. In addition, cafés may have invested in menus that cannot be easily altered in some cases. Disposable cup charges could be phased in once confidence in scheme builds up and sufficient lead time is given for cafés to be able to adapt. The potential for exploring disposable cup charges will need to be discussed sensitively with participants.

6.2 Incentives

Another way of encouraging customers to participate in choosing the reusable, returnable cup option is to offer additional incentives and rewards. Many cafés already have some form of loyalty or rewards scheme in place; be this a simple card that is stamped after each purchase, or a more modern App-based system.

14 Zero Waste Scotland (2019). Cups Sold Separately Report. [online] www.zerowastescotland.org.uk. Available at: <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/resources/cups-sold-separately-report> [Accessed 19 Apr. 2024].

15 Hubbub (n.d.). Starbucks 5p cup charge. [online] Hubbub. Available at: <https://hubbub.org.uk/starbucks-5p-cup-charge> [Accessed 19 Apr. 2024].

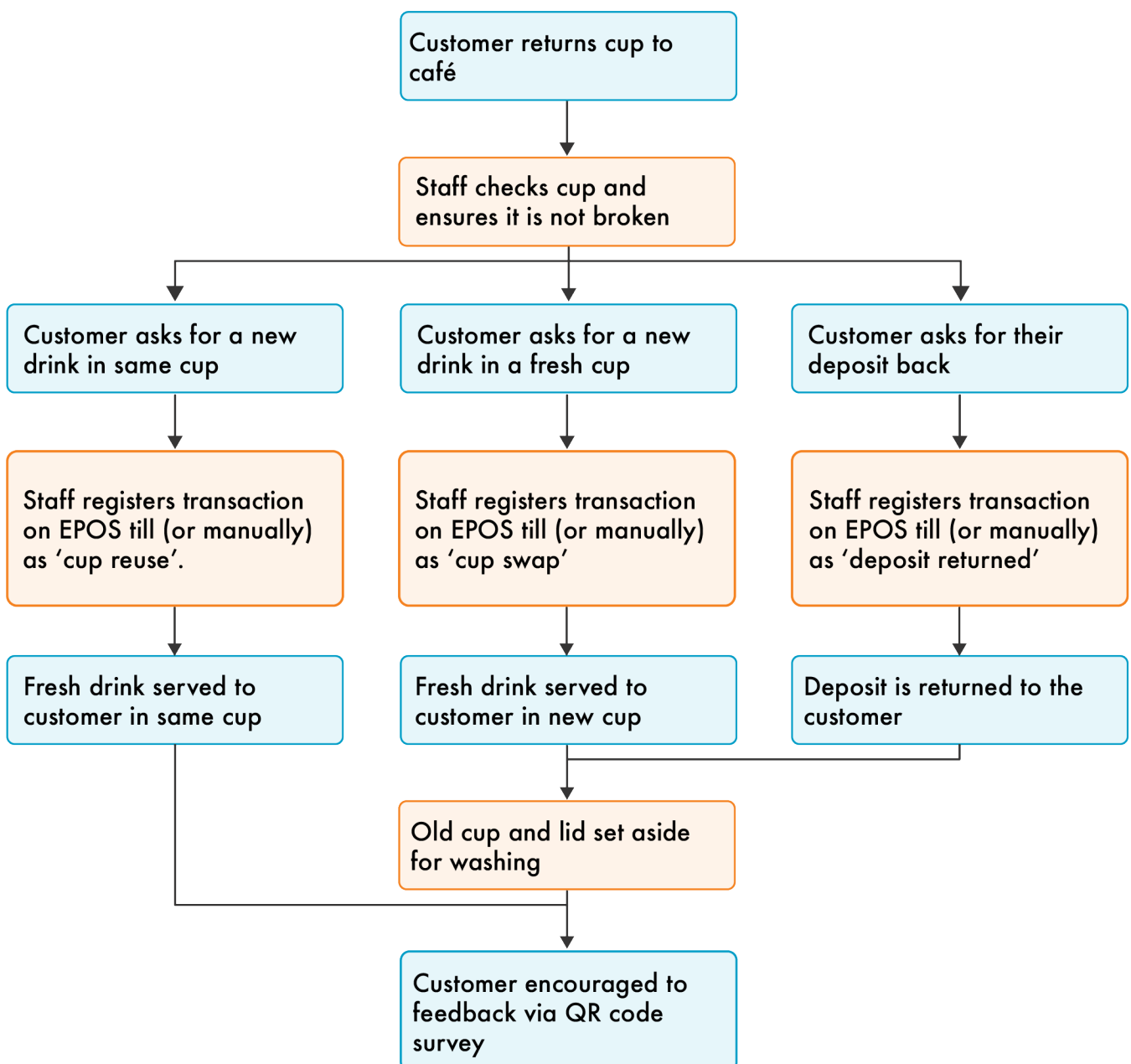
16 Zero Waste Scotland (2019). Cups Sold Separately Report. [online] www.zerowastescotland.org.uk. Available at: <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/resources/cups-sold-separately-report> [Accessed 19 Apr. 2024].

7 Systems for handling cup returns

Cafes should seek to establish a clear and consistent approach to handling returned cups from customers. This should ensure that the process is practical and easy to understand for both customers and staff operating the scheme. An example returns process, based on the Ditching Disposables project in Stirling, is illustrated below.

7.1 Returns process

The following flow diagram shows a sample process for cups returned to cafés by customers:



- The customer brings their cup back to the café and the staff should check the cup to ensure that this is still reusable, checking for cracks or damage. If the lid is missing, this is not ideal, but the cup can still be returned, and the deposit repaid. This ensures that customers are not alienated from the scheme if they have forgotten or lost their lid.
- The customer can either return their cup and get their deposit back, reuse the same cup and ask for it to be filled with a new drink, or buy another drink and swap their existing cup for a fresh one.
- There should be three buttons added to the cafés EPOS tills to reflect these different scenarios and the relevant button should be used by the serving staff according to the request made by the customer.
- The customer should then be provided with either their deposit, or a fresh beverage in either the same or a new cup.
- Some cafés may choose to reward customers for repeated use of returnable cups for takeaway beverages, either through an App, or through a manual card and stamp system.
- On leaving the café, the customer should be reminded that they can leave feedback on the cup scheme if a feedback survey has been set up.

7.2 Cup/lid cleaning

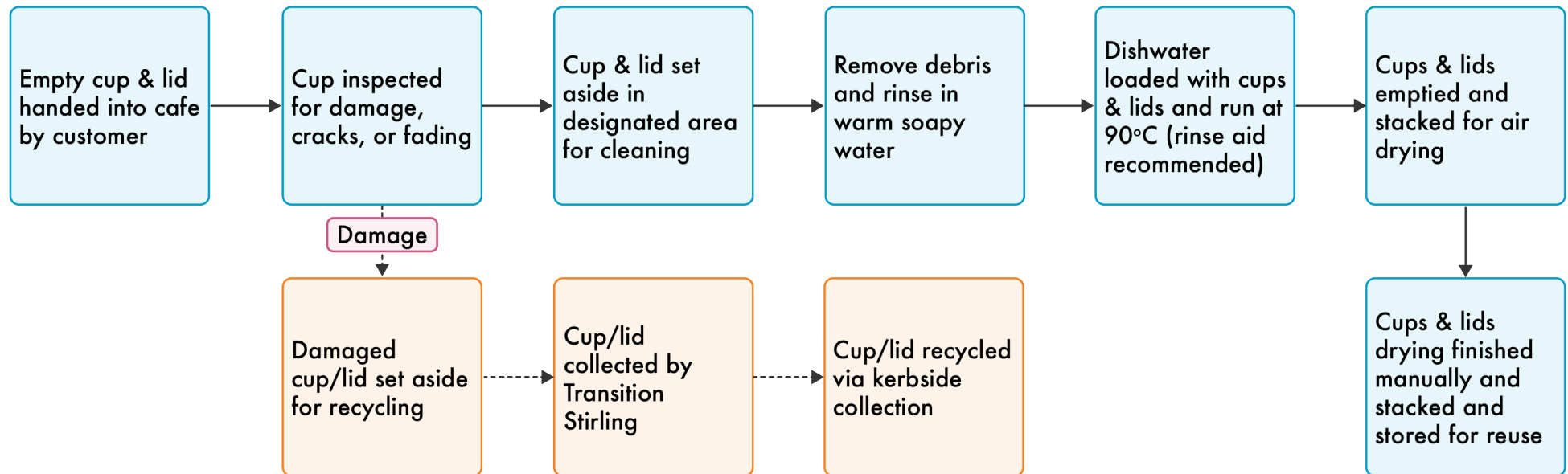
- Used cups and lids should be then stored in a designated area where there is no chance of them being used again in error whilst still unclean.
- Used cups and lids should be cleaned the same day they are returned to prevent any staining, odour accumulation and to maintain basic hygiene standards.
- Standard commercial dishwashers are required by cafés for cleaning the cups and lids. Using a rinse aid during the washing cycle will help the cups to dry more quickly afterwards.
- Cups and lids can be stacked and left to dry, before drying is completed manually by staff.
- Once dry, the cups and lids can be stacked and should be stored in an enclosed, hygienic place, ready for use.



8 Systems for cleaning returned cups

8.1 Cup cleaning process for cafés

The following is a standard process for checking and cleaning incoming cups and lids from customers. Further guidance can be found on the [Food Standards Agency \(FSA\) website](#). Any damaged cups should be segregated for recycling.



8.2 Cleaning process based on FSA guidelines

The following is a risk assessment for cleaning and hygiene, based on good practice from the FSA and developed by the 'Borrow' reusable cup scheme developed by [Green Street Bradford](#) and funded by [Hubbub](#). This approach outlines good practice for maintaining high standards of hygiene for a reusable cup scheme.

Item	Cups returned
Safety points/risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microbiological contamination of container if not disinfected correctly • Risk of allergenic contamination • Risk of cross contamination • Risk of physical contamination • Chips/ cracks
Frequency of cleaning	After every use/return
Precautions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not overload dishwasher • Use gloves (if required)
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean the reusable cups in the same method you would with any ceramic cups. • Dishwashers wash items thoroughly at a high temperature, so this is a good way to clean equipment and kill pathogens (disinfect) and allergens. • Wash and Rinse in the dishwasher - cups can be washed in all types of commercial dishwashers. • Leave to air dry or use a clean cloth to dry before stacking ready for reuse. • If you overload the dishwasher, it may not wash effectively. • We also recommend dishwasher racks which have a hold down grid or special dish rack designed to clean cups. • Cups can be cleaned with standard rinse aid or a specialist rinse aid to help the cups dry quicker. • Extra care must be taken to ensure cups are fully clean, free of cracks or damage and safe for use, to avoid cross contamination. • Always use either disposable paper cloths or a new or freshly cleaned and disinfected cloth to wipe work surfaces, equipment or utensils that will be used with ready-to-eat food. • Cloths cannot be used for both floors and other surfaces. If using reusable cloths, make sure they are colour coded, thoroughly washed, disinfected, and dried properly between tasks (not just when they look dirty). • Ideally, wash cloths in a washing machine on a very hot cycle. • If you wash and disinfect cloths by hand, make sure all the food and dirt has been removed by washing in hot soapy water before you disinfect them. • After washing, you can disinfect by using boiling water or a suitable disinfectant, following the manufacturer's instructions (please note bleach is not a suitable disinfectant).

9 Suggested script guidance for staff

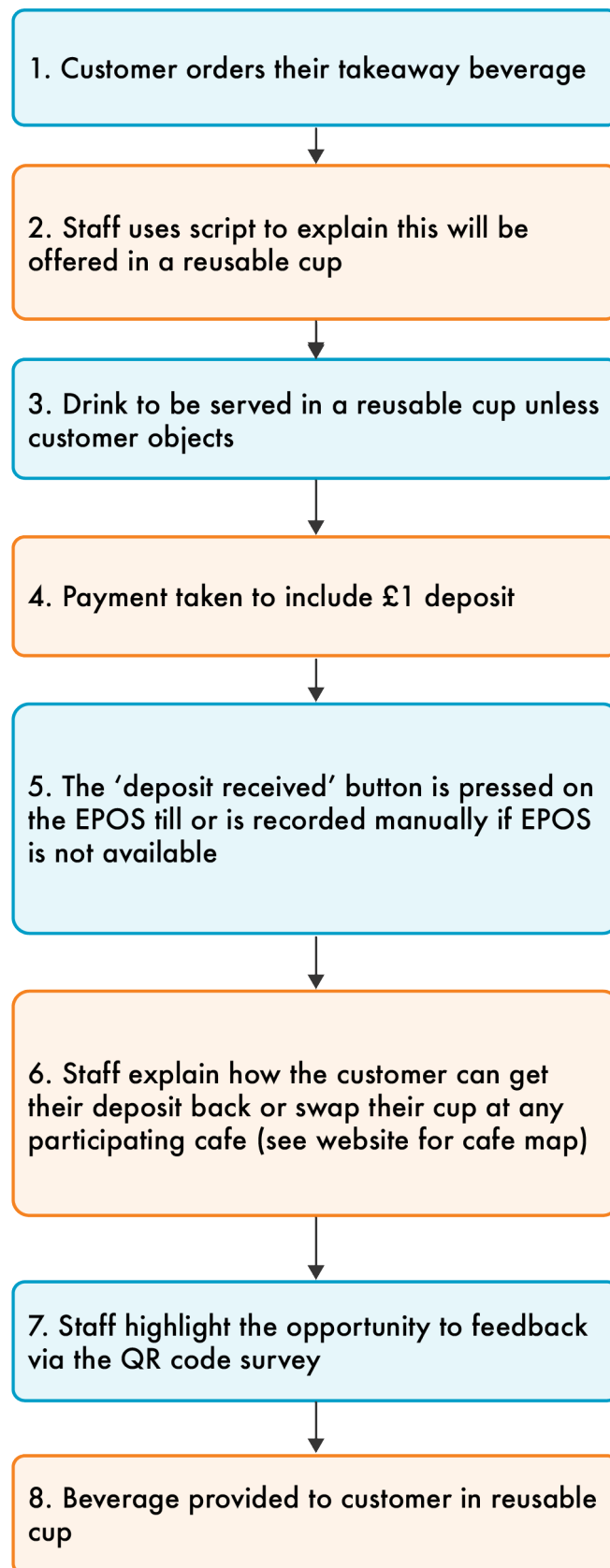
To effectively promote the reusable cup scheme to customers, it is important that all café staff are clear about the ordering process and have a clear, concise, and consistent way of explaining the scheme to customers. To help facilitate this, it is important that a clear process flow is developed with an accompanying script that can be used as an aide for staff to communicate the scheme to customers.

These are very simple and short descriptions and are intended to be a succinct way of consistently engaging customers. The scripts should be used across all participating cafés to ensure a consistent approach to introducing the scheme. The process flow in this guidance is taken from the Ditching Disposables Stirling scheme.

9.1 Ordering process

The process for the café staff to follow when offering customers beverages in returnable, reusable cups is illustrated to the right. Customers should already be alerted to the scheme by promotional materials in the café window, at point of sale, and by the visibility of the reusable cups being used by customers. When customers order their beverage, staff should draw the customers' attention to the fact that takeaway beverages are now being served in reusable, returnable cups to eliminate waste.

Staff should refer to the script below when providing this introduction to the reusable cup offering. The reusable cup should be used as the default option, with customers only offered the usual disposable cup on request. Payment should be taken in the form of a £1 deposit by cash or card, depending on the cafés approach. This deposit is logged be



pressing the 'Deposit Received' button on the EPOS till. If this is not possible, the deposit is recorded manually on the designated logging sheet. Staff then explain that customers can either get their deposit back, use the same cup again, or can exchange for a fresh cup at any of the participating cafés.

Staff should highlight that customers can provide feedback on the scheme via whatever option has been made available (where applicable). The beverage should then be served to the customer in the reusable cup.



9.2 Script for café personnel introducing the cups

After the customer has chosen their takeaway beverage, staff can engage the customer in the scheme through the following narrative:

"We're now offering takeaway drinks in reusable, returnable cups rather than in single-use disposable cups.

We ask for £1 deposit for the cups, which you get back by returning the cup to any participating café, once finished.

This will help us to significantly reduce waste impacts from single use cups.

Are you happy to take your drink away in one of our returnable cups?"

9.3 Script for taking payment

On taking payment for the beverage and deposit, staff should again remind the customer of the process for returning their cup to receive their deposit back. This specific example is taken from the Ditching Disposables Stirling scheme:

"You can return your cup to any of the participating cafés to get your deposit back. Or you can use the cup again, or swap for a fresh cup when you buy back your next drink.

There's a map of all participating cafés on the Ditching Disposables website.

The link is on the promo posters."

9.4 Script for handing over the beverage

On handing over the beverage, staff should alert the customer to the opportunity to provide feedback on the scheme. Again, this specific example is taken from the Ditching Disposables scheme:

"We'd love to hear your feedback on how you find the cups.

You can feedback by scanning the QR code on the promo posters and completing the survey (where applicable or offer an alternative).

Thanks!"

9.5 Prompt sheet

Zero Waste Scotland has developed a visual aid that can be printed, laminated, and used as a prompt to visually take customers through the process when explaining the scheme to them.

A visual aid is always helpful for customers to grasp a new process.

Let's reduce single-use.

HOW IT WORKS

- **Order**

Order your drink to-go in our reusable cup and pay a £1 deposit.
- **Drink**

Enjoy your drink!
- **Return**

Return your cup to any participating café and get your £1 back.
- **Reuse**

The cup and lid will be washed, ready to be reused!



Scan to discover participating cafés

and give feedback on the scheme to be entered into a **£100 prize draw!**



10 Redistributing cups across a scheme

For reusable cup schemes involving multiple outlets across a village, town, or city, customers will usually be permitted to drop off their cups at any participating café. As a result, cups can end up migrating across the participating cafés, with outlets either ending up with more, or less, cups than they started with.

For small schemes of 4 or 5 outlets located closely together, the cafés can organise the cup and lid redistribution themselves. For larger schemes, a third-party organisation is likely to be required to manage this process on an on-going basis. In many cases, this is a third sector or not-for-profit organisation, already active in the local community with a body of volunteers and a track record of delivering collaborative, local projects.

Whilst such organisations will have access to willing volunteers, the management of a reusable cup scheme involving multiple cafés will take time and effort, and these costs will need to be covered. One example is the [Shrewsbury Cup scheme](#), which was set up as a Community Interest Company.

Participating cafés pay a £20 membership per month, receiving support with the management of the scheme and network, using the branding, social media, receiving training, and getting support with initial promotion to customers. The membership costs are covered through the savings generated from reduced costs of procuring disposable cups and lids. The [Ditching Disposables Stirling scheme](#) was a pilot project funded by Zero Waste Scotland which explored a similar model to Shrewsbury cup. In Stirling, 15 cafés are part of the scheme, with some located outside of

the centre of Stirling [17].

The scheme was managed by local community group, Transition Stirling. They utilised an electric cargo bike to redistribute the cups across the cafés. The cafés reported back each week on their existing stock of cups compared to the starting stock they were given at the outset of the scheme.

Transition Stirling then redistributed the cups across the participating cafés, as and when required. The methodology used for this redistribution method is outlined below and provides a simple, easy to follow approach that could be adopted by other schemes. E-cargo bikes represent a low-environmental impact means of transporting cups and lids and funding can sometimes be available through local authorities for organisations to trial and test them. Bikes are also available to rent if the upfront capital costs are too steep. Funding has previously been made available, for example [Transport Scotland's ebike Grant Fund](#) in 2022/23, businesses may wish to consider seeking similar funding in future.

10.1 Returnable Reusable Cup Redistribution Method

The following is a sample method statement for cup redistribution taken from the Ditching Disposables Stirling scheme.

How does the system work?

- Customers choosing returnable, reusable cups will be able to access these for a £1 deposit and then drop off the used cup at any one of the participating cafés

17 Zero Waste Scotland and Change Works (2022). Ditching Disposables Final Report. [online] Zero Waste Scotland. Available at: <https://cdn.zerowastescotland.org.uk/managed-downloads/mf-u6jjro5n-1681915427d>.

involved in the scheme.

- Whilst customers will often return their cup to the same café that they sourced it from, we anticipate that cups, over time, will migrate across the network of cafés.
- This means that some cafés are likely to end up with less cups than they started with and some more.
- As the holder of spare stock, local community group, Transition Stirling, will be on hand to redistribute the cups amongst the participating cafés.

The redistribution process will run as follows:

Starting Stock

- The scheme management organisation, Transition Stirling, will hold a stock of cups and lids.
- Cafes will be allocated their own stock of cups and lids at the start of the project (for free) based on their weekly takeaway sales.
- This will be termed their 'starting stock'.

Reporting Stock

- At the end of each week, the cafés will report on their current stock levels by counting the cups (and lids) available in-house.
- These numbers will be reported directly to Transition Stirling via WhatsApp through a private message.
- Transition Stirling will request data only once each week and if no response is received then they will assume no redistribution is required.
- Transition Stirling will compare the number of cups against the café's starting stock in their tracker spreadsheet.
- Some cafés may have too few cups or excessive surplus cups.
- Not all cafés will need support with

redistribution each week and cafés with ~30% stock either side of the starting stock should be targeted.

Deficit stock

- Transition Stirling will then take the e-Cargo bike and sell clean cups/lids to cafés that are low on stock for £1 each (i.e., cup with lid included).
- This will cost the cafés no money of their own.

The redistribution process

- Cafes will purchase the cups/lids for £1 each in cash using the deposits they have accumulated.

Surplus stock

- Transition Stirling will then visit cafés with surplus cups and buy their excess stock in cash for £1 each.
- In doing so, Transition Stirling will rebalance the cafés' cup levels to their starting stock by the end of the process.
- The cafés must ensure that the cups and lids being sold back to Transition Stirling are clean.

Frequency

- If weekly redistribution is too frequent, this can be reduced to fortnightly or monthly redistribution instead.
- We will test this as the scheme progresses.
- If there is an exceptional day's trading and a café runs short of cups, Transition Stirling can be contacted, and additional cups issued to cover the shortfall temporarily

What about damaged or unusable cups?

- Some cafés may find that returned cups are damaged or cannot be reused.
- Customers should not be given their deposit back if damaged cups are returned.

- That deposit can then be used by the café to replace the cup via Transition Stirling's main stock.

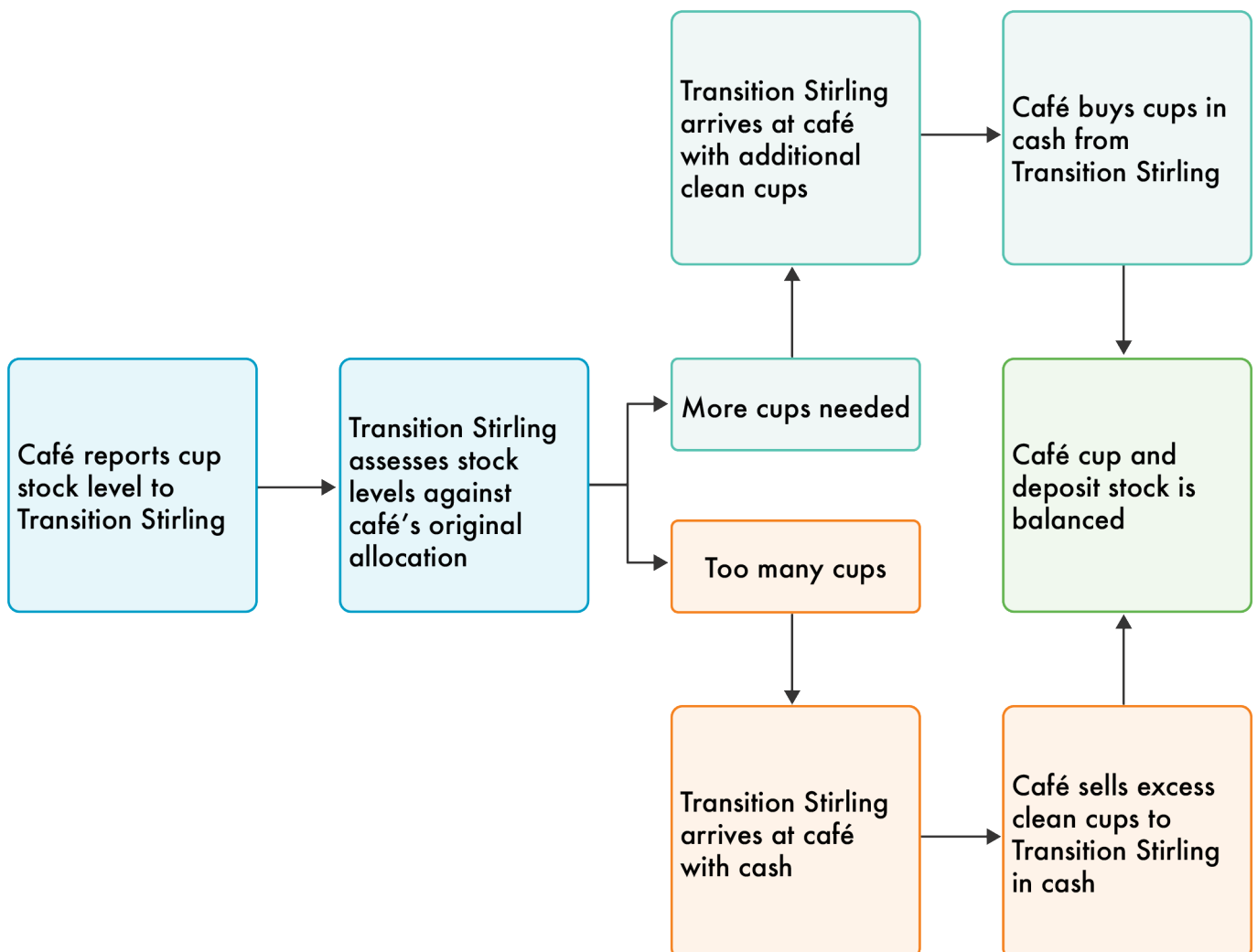
Will deposits be handled in cash or card?

- Cafes can issue or receive deposits to and from customers in cash, card or both methods depending upon their preference.
- However, Transition Stirling will only redistribute deposits amongst cafés in cash (£1 coins).
- If a café wishes to purchase cups to replenish its stock, it must do so in cash.
- If a café wishes to sell cups back to Transition Stirling, it will receive the money in £1 coins.
- Cashless cafés are advised to keep a float of coins for this purpose and ensure that

this is clearly labelled and separated from tip trays/pots.

What about missing lids?

- It is likely that some cups will be returned by customers to the cafés without the lids.
- Our suggestion is that customers should still get their deposit back if lids are missing.
- This will encourage participation and engagement of customers in the scheme.
- Transition Stirling is likely to need to top up missing lids at cafés, for free, every so often.
- A surplus stock of lids will therefore be held by Transition Stirling to meet this requirement.



11 Participation agreement

A consideration for those setting up a reusable, returnable cup scheme across multiple cafés, is to develop a shared agreement of terms. This should set out the key expectation for all parties and develop a consensus on the approach to be taken. A sample participation agreement from the Ditching Disposables Stirling project is provided below as a basic example of some of the content that should be included in this type of document.

11.1 Ditching Disposables Stirling Participation Agreement

The Ditching Disposables project is funded by Zero Waste Scotland to support cafés in Stirling to reduce the consumption of disposable, single-use cups and lids.

The Ditching Disposables Stirling scheme will run from April to October 2023 and will be managed by Green Gain and co-ordinated on the ground by Transition Stirling.

This agreement sets out the basic terms for participating in the scheme. If you wish to drop out of the scheme during the pilot period, that is not a problem. However, you will be required to return all cups and lids in stock. For any cups not returned, you will be required to reimburse the deposits to Transition Stirling. If you leave the scheme with more cups that you started with, Transition Stirling will reimburse you with deposits for the surplus cup stock.

By participating in the scheme, you agree to the following basic terms of operation:

- To encourage customers to use reusable cups for takeaway beverages.
- Offer a reusable cup to customers for a

£1 deposit.

- Record data (via EPOS or manually) on reusable cups in/out, reusable cup swaps, reusable cup refills, and disposable cups sold.
- Report this data back fortnightly to Transition Stirling.
- Implement staff training using the scripts and materials provided.
- Wash the cups according to the process provided.
- Host promotional materials and promote the scheme via social media, where possible.
- Report on cup stock levels directly to Transition Stirling on a weekly basis.
- Engage in brief feedback surveys to help us improve the scheme.

Ditching Disposables agree to:

- Provide a starting stock of cups and lids for free.
- Promote the scheme via social media and other promotional channels.
- Provide POS promotional materials to implement the scheme.
- Provide training materials to implement the scheme.
- Provide support with business onboarding prior to scheme launch.
- Redistribute cups on an ongoing basis throughout the scheme.
- Provide ongoing support with troubleshooting.

- Handle data responsibly in a GDPR compliant way.
- Consolidate and analyse data to provide an end of scheme profile on café reusable cup activity.
- Use café and customer feedback to help adapt the scheme operation, where required.
- Explore options for a long-term sustainable model to continue to run the scheme permanently.

Café name	
Contact name (capitals)	
Date	
Signature	

12 Reusable returnable cup scheme checklist

It is recommended that all reusable schemes develop a project implementation checklist to ensure that the planning and implementation phases run smoothly. A sample check list has been set out below, adapted from the Ditching Disposables Stirling project.

Stage	Objectives and tasks	Tick
Defining the scope of the project	Define the process	
	Define the basic scheme model (e.g., deposit scheme, App based etc.)	
	Develop a customer journey	
	Define the process for customers ordering reusable cups	
	Define the logistics process for returning reusable cups	
	Define the process for washing/drying reusable cups	
	Define the geographical scope	
	Determine the reusable deposit and disposable cup charge	
	Determine how deposits and charges are presented to customers (language used)	
	Determine a method for calculating the reusable cup requirement per café	
	Develop a method for redistributing cups across the café over time	
	Develop a rewards system methodology	
	Develop a method for managing deposits across cafés	
	Develop a plan for reducing related disposables (stirrers, sachets etc)	
	Develop method for refunding deposits for cafés	
	Defining data capture	
	Confirm KPIs to measure and determine scheme's success	
	Confirm process for gathering data from cafés (via EPOS/manual methods)	
	Confirm data required from baseline audits of the participating cafés	
	Develop logistics with the central organisation managing the scheme	
	Identify area for cup storage	
	Research options for e-cargo bike for redistributing cups across the scheme	
	Define roles and responsibilities	

Stage	Objectives and tasks	Tick	
Defining the scope of the project	Develop a methodology for redistributing cups		
	Review methods for data capture		
	Recruit café partners		
	Undertake initial recruitment visits of cafés		
	Secure commitment to participate		
	Secure capital items		
	Order cups and lids		
	Determine a method for replacing lost stock during the project (use deposits?)		
	Order E-Cargo Bike		
	Order dish washers (if required)		
	Understand qualitative data requirements		
	Develop a customer feedback survey and link this to the promo materials (QR code)		
	Develop a feedback survey for the participating cafés (for during implementation)		
	Develop an interim and final survey to be undertaken with the participating cafés		
	Develop a method for boosting survey participation (e.g., prize draw)		
	Understand health and safety requirements		
	Assess standards to be met for washing the cups		
	Get sign off for the cleaning process at each café		
Implementation Phase	Develop processes and procedures		
	Design a system for logging and reporting cups and deposits at each café		
	Develop process documents for central organisation managing the scheme		
	Develop process documents for café roles and responsibilities		
	Develop process guidance documents for cafés		
	Develop a script for staff to explain the scheme		
	Develop rewards system for use by the cafés		
	Design and test the customer QR code survey		
	Establish an inter-café WhatsApp group		
	Cafe baseline audits		
	Review participating café menus, drinks sold, and pricing		
	Visit all cafés to discuss trial tasks, pricing, logistics, timing and conduct baseline audit		
	Determine total cups required per café (including spare stock)		
	Identify any practical challenges with specific cafés		

Stage	Objectives and tasks	Tick
Implementation Phase	Mobilise central organisation managing the scheme	
	Review processes and ensure roles and responsibilities are clear	
	Finalise shelving for storage	
	Mobilise dishwasher (if required)	
	Ensure stock of cups/lids is in place	
	Ensure E-cargo bike is in place (if required)	
	E-Cargo Bike training (if required)	
	Marketing	
	Order design work on point of sale and marketing materials	
	Develop website for scheme and a live map of cafés (using free Google My Maps)	
	Order print run of point of sale and marketing materials	
	Purchase any point-of-sale counter/table toppers and marketing stands	
	Draft press releases, social media and other marketing materials	
	Mobilising participants	
	Distribute point of sale and marketing materials	
	Allocate cups to the cafés	
	Agree on a price for charging for disposable cups (e.g., 25p per cup & lid)	
	Run through deposit in/out system along with the rewards system with cafés	
	Ensure participating cafés have updated their EPOS till systems	
	Train managers at cafés on procedures and how to explain the offering to customers	
	Produce training video clips for website resources	
	Ensure any data capture methods are installed and café staff trained	
	Conduct final café visits to check they are happy prior to launch	
	Plan Launch	
	Identify location and photocall	
	Finalise Invitations, dates, timings, photographer	



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