Disposable coffee cups: Recycling and tax in the News

Press Clippings – Week of March 14th 2016
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This booklet is a compendium of the online press coverage on the paper cups issue in the UK that the Secretariat has been able to track. Around 26 relevant news items appears from March 14th onwards. You can review them here.
Coffee giants in the dock over two billion discarded cups:
Chains accused of contributing to the UK’s landfill problem after just 1% are recycled each year

- About 2.5 billion takeaway coffee cups are thrown away a year in the UK
- Less than 1 per cent of cups are recycled because of polyethylene coating
- TV cook Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall calls on major chains to take action

By Laura Lambert for The Daily Mail on March 14 2016

It has been claimed this puts councils off recycling and so the vast majority of cups from chains such as Costa and Starbucks are instead sent to landfill or incinerated.

Celebrity chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall yesterday said that only one firm in the country – Cumbria-based Simply Cups – recycles plastic-lined cups.

The food waste campaigner said 7 million cups a day were thrown away but, each year, only 6 million were recycled.

He said: ‘Like millions of other people, until very recently I thought that when I bought a takeaway coffee in a paper cup, the right thing to do was lob it in the recycling bin and it would get recycled because it’s a paper cup.

‘And then I started to hear rumblings that this wasn’t quite so straightforward. It turns out that hardly any of the paper coffee cups we take away are being recycled.’
Peter Goodwin, of Simply Cups, said that, while the cup’s materials could all be recycled, they must be separated first – a less attractive prospect for waste bosses.

He said: ‘The issue is with the polyethylene coating, which is bonded on to the virgin paper. The two materials need to be separated first, before they can be recycled, and that slows down the process.

‘Therefore recycling is less attractive [to local authorities] and, although everything in the cup is eminently recyclable, the question becomes, “Will it be recycled?”

He said: ‘One of the headline banners on the Costa website is “great taste without the waste” and they claim to have the world’s most recyclable paper coffee cup.

‘It’s only recyclable in a technical sense because of this one plant in Cumbria, so it’s not an outright lie, but I think it is definitely misleading. Whilst the public think that all these coffee cups are being recycled there is no reason for the big coffee companies to do anything about it.

‘Starbucks also claim to have a cup that is 100 per cent recyclable and again in a purely technical sense that is probably true, because if you took a Starbucks cup to this plant then they could probably recycle it.’

Starbucks said recycling of its cups was dependent on factors such as ‘local government policies and access to recycling markets’, adding: ‘This is something that needs to be tackled in collaboration.’

Fearnley-Whittingstall called for action across the industry. He said: ‘This is a solvable problem, so let’s see them solve it.’

Costa said that it was researching how best to work with the waste industry to ensure its cups were recycled.
Celebrity TV chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall has criticised top coffee companies Costa and Starbucks for misleading claims surrounding the sustainability of their single-use coffee cups.

Fearnley-Whittingstall, the winner of this year’s Resource Hot 100 poll, took to the streets of London today (14 March) in his ‘coffee cup battle bus’ to tell the public about the problem and challenge companies to do better.

An estimated 2.5 billion coffee cups are thrown away in the UK every year, according to Fearnley-Whittingstall’s River Cottage website, a figure equivalent to 5,000 cups being thrown away per minute, or seven million a day. Fearnley-Whittingstall says that just 0.25 per cent of them are recycled.

Fearnley-Whittingstall said that despite people’s best efforts to recycle their coffee cups, putting them in mixed recycling street bins or cardboard-specific collections, most are non-recyclable through normal waste collection services.

He also highlighted the work of Simply Cups, profiled in Resource last year, as the only company with a specialist facility to recycle single-use coffee cups. He said that the company handles ‘less than six million’ cups a year – ‘less than 0.25 per cent of the cups we throw away’.

**Misleading claims**

The chef has taken aim at Costa and Starbucks in particular, claiming that they make false statements to suggest that their use of disposable cups is greener than it actually is.
He said: “The coffee companies are taking advantage of the public’s false confidence in their responsible actions. They are actively encouraging the misunderstanding, with claims and statements on their websites.

“Costa claims to have ‘the most environmentally friendly coffee cup in the world, but they do not explain on what basis they make this claim. They do send some cups to Simply Cups – but our calculations suggest it’s less than one per cent of all Costa paper cups. I openly invite Costa to prove they are doing better than that. I believe they are using a tiny commitment to Simply Cups to justify statements that are basically greenwash.

“Starbucks claim on their website that they are ‘on track’ with their goal to ‘make 100 per cent of our cups reusable or recyclable by 2015’. In fact, Starbucks are not even a client of Simply Cups! So unless they have a ‘secret facility’, they are not able to recycle any of their cups in the UK.”

Fearnley-Whittingstall travelled around London today in a specially designed ‘coffee cup battle bus’, a double decker bus coated in disposable coffee cups, designed by students from Central Saint Martins College. The chef stopped outside Costa and Starbucks branches, and asked members of the public to pledge support and challenge major coffee companies to work to make their single-use cups more sustainable.

Both Costa and Starbucks have been asked to discuss the problem of cup disposal for the return of Hugh’s War on Waste BBC documentary series. Costa has refused and Starbucks has agreed, although according to River Cottage they have yet to give a date for interview.

**Levy on single-use cups suggested**

Last month, Chris Sherrington from Eunomia Research and Consulting, suggested on the company’s Isonomia blog that the principle of the five-pence charge for single-use carrier bags could be applied to single-use takeaway cups.

A charge on single-use cups, Sherrington wrote, would save small business owners money, prevent waste and litter and help raise money for good causes. He wrote: ‘While I have long advocated the notion of applying a charge to single-use takeaway cups, this view has been largely formed from the perspective of seeking to prevent waste and reduce the wider negative impacts of litter… I must admit that I hadn’t given much thought to the potential benefits to retailers.

‘However, single-use takeaway cups are (to me at least) surprisingly expensive. My friend [who runs an independent coffee shop] pays about 10p per cup and lid. Then he has to store them all inside the relatively cramped café… Finally he is more than a little concerned about the reputational issue of cups that have clearly come from his coffee-shop (there aren’t any others nearby) that end up being littered. Being a good neighbour he feels compelled to send his employees outside to pick up those that he can see.’
Coffee shop recycling claims are a lot of froth

by Ben Webster Environment Editor on March 15 2016

"Fewer than one in 400 paper cups handed out by high street coffee chains are being recycled. The Times has learnt, prompting claims that vendors are misleading their customers.

Starbucks, Costa, Caffè Nero and Pret were accused yesterday of making claims about recycling which result in people falsely believing that their cups are environmentally friendly.

About seven million paper coffee cups are used in the UK each day, amounting to 2.5 billion a year.

Cups from Costa - the biggest chain with more than 2,000 UK stores - carry the recycling symbol of three arrows in a continuous loop. Starbucks, which has about 760 shops, says on its website: "We have set a goal to make 100% of our cups reusable or recyclable by 2015."

Cardboard sleeves issued with Caffè Nero and Pret cups carry a recycling symbol. Pret's sleeves say "100% recyclable" and Caffè Nero's say "100% recycled. Customers might assume that they apply to the whole cup, campaigners say, when in fact only the sleeve tends to be recycled.

Coffee cups need to be sent to specialist recycling facilities where the plastic used to laminate the paper is removed. Fewer than 3 million were recycled last year, according to Simply Cups, which operates Britain's only paper cup recycling service.

Peter Goodwin, the company's co-founder, said that there were only two such facilities, in Kendal and Halifax. This year they are expected to recycle six million cups - fewer than the number produced in a single day.

"It's dramatically less than 1 per cent but no one knows this," Mr Goodwin said. "The consumer has trust in the brand that if they put a recycling sign on a cup then that product is being recycled. People are being misled."

The revelations are the latest waste controversy to hit Starbucks. In 2008 it was accused of pouring 23 million litres of water down the drain each day because staff had been instructed to leave taps running. The company said that the scheme was aimed at stopping germs from developing in the taps. It later changed its policy.

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, the chef and anti-waste campaigner, said that coffee chains were causing whole bags of mixed recyclable waste to be incinerated or sent to landfill because they contained a few coffee cups.
The majority of items in these bags may be recyclable, he said, but the bags are treated as contaminated because they also contain cups.

He said: "The truth is [coffee cups] are barely recyclable at all in the everyday, commonly understood sense of the word. They cannot be recycled through any of the normal public waste collection services - which are consistently diverting them to be incinerated or sent to landfill. The coffee companies are taking advantage of the public's false confidence in their responsible actions. They are actively encouraging the misunderstanding, with claims and statements on their websites."

Mr Goodwin said there was a "huge disconnect" between consumer perception and reality, adding that coffee shops should make clear that only a tiny percentage of their cups was being recycled.

"People are getting fed up with environmental stories and greenwash," he said. "We see a great cry in the marketplace for transparency. We need to tell people where the material is going to and what it is being made into." Starbucks was unable to say what proportion of cups was recycled. It said that it was exploring a "combination of approaches" but did not give details.

It gives people a 25p discount if they bring their own cups, though it is unclear how many of its customers take up the offer.

Costa said that it was "researching how best to work with the waste industry to ensure our 100 per cent recyclable cups are being recycled effectively".

Pret said: "Most of our coffee cups are disposed of outside of our shops and we are working with other companies within the industry to find ways to improve the recovery and recycling rates of takeaway cups."
Coffee chains accused of making false recycling claims

Fewer than one in 400 paper cups handed out by high street coffee chains are being recycled, it has emerged

By Camilla Turner on March 15 2016

High street coffee chains have been accused of making false claims about how many paper cups they recycle.

Starbucks, Costa, Caffè Nero and Pret leave customers with a misleading impression about how environmentally friendly they are, campaigners say, after it emerged that fewer than one in 400 high street coffee chain paper cups are recycled.

About seven million paper coffee cups are used in Britain each day, amounting to 2.5 billion a year.

Cups from Costa — the biggest chain with more than 2,000 UK stores — carry the recycling symbol of three arrows in a continuous loop.

Meanwhile the American giant Starbucks, which has about 760 shops, says on its website: “We have set a goal to make 100 per cent of our cups reusable or recyclable by 2015.”

Cardboard sleeves issued with Caffè Nero and Pret cups carry a recycling symbol. Pret’s sleeves say “100 per cent recyclable” and Caffè Nero’s say “100 per cent recycled”.

Campaigners say this may lead customers to believe that this label applies to the whole cup, rather than just the sleeve.

Coffee cups need to be sent to specialist recycling facilities where the plastic used to laminate the paper is removed.
Fewer than 3 million were recycled last year, according to Simply Cups, which operates Britain’s only paper cup recycling service.

Peter Goodwin, the company’s co-founder, said they recycle “dramatically less than 1 per cent” of coffee cups.

• John Lewis is risking the love of the nation

He told The Times: “The consumer has trust in the brand that if they put a recycling sign on a cup then that product is being recycled. People are being misled.”

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, the chef and anti-waste campaigner, said that coffee chains are in fact hindering recycling efforts by causing whole bags of mixed recyclable waste to be incinerated or sent to landfill because they contained a few coffee cups.

He said that coffee companies “are taking advantage of the public’s false confidence in their responsible actions”.

Starbucks was unable to say what proportion of cups was recycled. It said that it was exploring a “combination of approaches” but did not give details. It gives people a 25p discount if they bring their own cups, though it is unclear how many of its customers take up the offer.

Costa said that it was “researching how best to work with the waste industry to ensure our 100 per cent recyclable cups are being recycled effectively”.

Pret said: “Most of our coffee cups are disposed of outside of our shops and we are working with other companies within the industry to find ways to improve the recovery and recycling rates of takeaway cups.”
Coffee chains 'misleading customers' over recyclable cups ... and more

By Daniel Farey-Jones on March 15 2016

Coffee chains ‘misleading customers’ over recyclable cups

Fewer than one in 400 paper cups handed out by high street coffee chains are being recycled, The Times has learnt, prompting claims that vendors are misleading their customers.

Starbucks, Costa, Caffè Nero and Pret were accused yesterday of making claims about recycling which result in people falsely believing that their cups are environmentally friendly.

About seven million paper coffee cups are used in Britain each day, amounting to 2.5 billion a year.

Cups from Costa – the biggest chain with more than 2,000 UK stores – carry the recycling symbol of three arrows in a continuous loop. Starbucks, which has about 760 shops, says on its website: "We have set a goal to make 100 per cent of our cups reusable or recyclable by 2015."

Coffee cups need to be sent to specialist recycling facilities where the plastic used to laminate the paper is removed. Fewer than 3 million were recycled last year, according to Simply Cups, which operates Britain’s only paper cup recycling service.
How coffee chains are tricking customers into thinking paper cups can be recycled

By Amy Willis on March 15 2016

This is disingenuous because cups are not 100% recyclable

Metro.co.uk has asked Costa to clarify exactly what the symbol means on their cups but environmental charities and consumer group claim they can't be recyclable because there is a thin coating of plastic – polyethylene – inside the cup.

While this stops your cup going soggy, it means the cup is NOT completely made from cardboard and therefore cannot be recycled by most UK paper mills.

Coffee cups contaminate other paper waste too

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, the chef and anti-waste campaigner, says this leads to bags full of paper waste being incinerated rather than recycled due to being 'contaminated' by the mixed material cups.

‘The truth is [coffee cups] are barely recyclable at all in the everyday, commonly understood sense of the word. They cannot be recycled through any of the normal public waste collection services – which are consistently diverting them to be incinerated or sent to landfill,’ he told The Times.

‘The coffee companies are taking advantage of the public’s false confidence in their responsible actions. They are actively encouraging the misunderstanding, with claims and statements on their websites.’
JSYK coffee cups can only be sent to one specialist facility in the UK

The plastic used to laminate the inside of the cup needs to be stripped off before the paper can be recycled.

But this is something that can only be done at a special facilities and in Britain there is only one such company – Simply Cups in Kendal and Halifax.

Founder of Simply Cups Peter Goodwin said fewer than 3 million cups were recycled last year, and they expect to recycle 6 million this year. But this is far less than the 7 million used in just one day.

‘It’s dramatically less than 1 per cent but no one knows this,’ he said. ‘The consumer has trust in the brand that if they put a recycling sign on a cup then that product is being recycled. People are being misled.’

Here’s how the coffee companies responded…

Starbucks said it was exploring ‘a combination of approaches’ and highlighted that they offer a 25p discount to anyone bringing in their own cups.

Costa Coffee said it was ‘researching how best to work with the waste industry to insure 100 per cent recyclable cups are being recycled effectively.’

While Caffe Nero told Metro.co.uk: ‘We are also involved in a number of trials to increase the capture and collection of paper cups outside our stores, given that most paper cups are used by our take away customers and disposed of away from the stores. All ‘drink in’ coffees are served in china cups as standard thus reducing unnecessary waste.

‘To confirm, our cup sleeve which features the recycling symbol is widely accepted by recycling facilities as it is 100% paper / card. Our cups don’t have the recycling symbol on them even though they are fully recyclable and this is in part to reflect the point made above.

‘The issue remains, that more can be done to improve both the recovery and recyclability of these cups, and this is something that we are actively involved in finding solutions for.’

So next time you buy a coffee

Use your own cup or drink it in a china cup in store.
Updated | Less than one in 400 paper cups handed out by high street coffee chains in the U.K. are recycled, The Times reports.

On Monday, coffee giants Costa, Starbucks, Caffè Nero and Pret were accused of misleading their customers into believing that their paper cups are more environmentally friendly than they actually are.

About 7 million paper coffee cups are used in Britain each day, amounting to 2.5 billion a year, according to The Telegraph.

Starbucks, which has over 700 stores across the U.K., says coffee chains need to work together to find a solution. “The ability to recycle our takeaway cups...is dependent upon many factors, including local government policies and access to recycling markets such as paper mills and plastic processors and this is something that needs to be tackled in collaboration,” a spokesperson tells Newsweek. “Through our work and that of others in the industry we are optimistic that these complex issues can be tackled by a combination of approaches actively being explored.”

According to Simply Cups, Britain's only paper cup recycling service, less than 3 million paper cups were recycled last year, contributing to Britain's already dire landfill problem.

“The consumer has trust in the brand that if they put a recycling sign on a cup then that product is being recycled. People are being misled,” co-founder Peter Goodwin told The Times.

“People are getting fed up with environmental stories and greenwash... We see a great cry in the marketplace for transparency. We need to tell people where the material is going to and what it is being made into.”

Pret took a step towards improving transparency last year. Its cups are fully recyclable, but not all paper mills process coffee cups, so the company decided to remove the recyclable symbol from its cups last
year, to avoid misleading customers. “We understand that most of our coffee cups are disposed of outside of our shops and we are working collaboratively with other companies within the industry to find ways to improve the recovery and recycling rates of takeaway cups,” a Pret spokeswoman tells Newsweek.

Caffè Nero has approximately 600 shops across the U.K. but was unable to say what proportion of cups they recycle. “It’s difficult to monitor the numbers that are recycled as they are thrown into a wide range of bins which in turn are collected by a wide range of agencies,” a spokeswoman tells Newsweek. “We are aware of the wider issues regarding the recycling of paper cups.”

To help tackle the problem, Caffè Nero became a founding member of The Paper Cup Recovery and Recycling Group, which was launched in 2014. “We are also involved in a number of trials to increase the capture and collection of paper cups outside our stores,” adds the spokeswoman.

Costa, another chain named and shamed, has over 2,000 stores, making it the biggest coffee retailer in the U.K. Responding to the recent criticism, Oliver Rosevear, Costa’s energy and environment manager, says: “We are proud that our iconic takeaway cup and lid is 100% recyclable and its insulated design eliminates the need for paper sleeves… As a responsible retailer it is extremely important to us that we help identify ways to increase the levels of recycling and encourage change in the waste industry.”

Chef and TV personality Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall has started a campaign against waste. His series Hugh’s War on Waste, which first aired on BBC1 in January, sheds light on the U.K.’s worst offenders against the environment. He says that Costa and Starbucks are under the most scrutiny, but paper cups provided by the majority of large coffee chains “are barely recyclable at all, in the everyday, commonly understood sense of the word. They cannot be recycled through any of the normal public waste collection services, who are consistently diverting them to be incinerated or sent to landfill.”

Fearnley-Whittingstall says he has approached Costa and Starbucks to discuss the problem of cup disposal in a filmed interview for the next episode of his series. According to him, Costa refused and Starbucks agreed to an interview in principle.

It seems the high price of a cup of coffee is still nothing compared to its cost on the environment.
Caffeine hit: what happens to Britain’s 3bn empty coffee cups?

Britons drink more than 8m takeaway coffees every day – then throw away the cups. Why are so few recycled?

By Paula Cocozza on March 15, 2016

The paper coffee cup is one of modern life’s consumer conundrums. It is ubiquitous, yet coveted, pricey yet just about affordable. It confers status in a world where you need to be busy to be important, while telling everyone you had time to wait in line while the beans were ground and the milk was steamed. And now there is one more contradiction to add to the list, because the paper coffee cup, it turns out, is recyclable - yet woefully, overwhelmingly, unrecycled.

A conservative estimate puts the number of paper cups handed out by coffee shops in the UK at 3bn, more than 8m a day. Yet, supposedly, fewer than one in 400 is being recycled.

Did you treat yourself to a coffee this morning? And if so, where did you put the cup? I ask because the path that should take a cup from the recycling box in your home – or the recycling section of a street litter bin – into a waste cart, along to a recycling plant and eventually to some form of reuse, is tortuous and fraught. You may have disposed of your cup correctly – say you checked it all over for the Mobius loop, the little triangular arrows of the recyclable logo – but on countless occasions it will still end up in landfill. (The Mobius loop, incidentally, is not a government symbol and its use is unregulated.)

“I see this as a house of cards,” says Peter Goodwin, one of the founders of Simply Cups, a company dedicated to the recycling of paper cups. By the middle of last year, his business recycled around 1m cups, and he hopes to raise that number to 6m by the end of the year. Even if he does, it will be a mere bean of our coffee consumption. “While everyone may have been under the impression that these products were being recycled, the reality is they more than likely weren’t,” he says, en route to the James Cropper mill in Kendal, Cumbria, where the Simply Cups cups are turned into new packaging. “And certainly if they were being recycled, it was to a very low grade and not within this country. So they haven’t really helped the UK green economy, as such.
“What you've got is a lot of corporate companies reporting recycling rates they are nowhere near achieving. Everyone’s patting themselves on the back, going, 'We’re doing a great job, we’re doing all this great recycling', when the reality is very different. They measure what they recycle on the weight of the container that leaves their site. Whether or not that's recyclable, they are allowed to report what goes there. I would argue that the corporates have been happy not to find that out, because it’s been told it's doing well.”

The problems all begin with the cup. It is made from paper laminated with plastic, to be watertight. But the compound creates a complicated recycling proposition. It cannot be viably treated as pure paper. First, the plastic coating needs to be separated from the high-quality paper fibre of the cup itself.

“There’s a real challenge to separate compound materials,” says Jonny Hazell of Green Alliance. This problem is not unique to coffee cups. Capri-Sun, laminated crisp packets, and pizza boxes all present similar challenges (the grease stains are deemed a contaminant). Hazell describes the purgatory of a mixed recycling box as it gets “taken off to a big shed with lots of conveyor belts. As that box of materials goes around the belts, individual materials will be pulled out. An adapted potato filter sorts the paper. There’s a magnet to pull out the metals. Jets of air to pull out the plastic.” A paper cup would not be filtered with ordinary paper.

So is a paper coffee cup recyclable? “That's a rather large question!” says a spokesperson for the Paper Cup Recovery and Recycling Group (PCRRG) – yes, there is such a thing – an industry-wide organisation. Certainly, the answer differs according to who you ask. Pret A Manger says its cups are recyclable, yet it is at pains to point out that it removed the recyclable logo from them a year ago. It now appears only on the optional sleeves – because the sleeve “is pure paper and therefore just as recyclable as office paper”. The cups, clearly, are another matter.

Richard Kirkman, the technical director at waste specialist Veolia UK and Ireland, says cups are recyclable, even from residents' recycling bins, “however, we can only take a limited amount”, owing to the difficulty of separating the parts of the compound. (The cups that aren't recycled are converted into fuel.) Partly in response to this, Veolia has teamed up with Starbucks to trial a technology “that will transform the cups into paper pulp that could even be turned into the coffee cup holders given out in stores”, says Kirkman.

But the more you ask the question, the more the answer varies.

South Oxfordshire district council topped the UK’s recycling league in 2014/15 with a rate of 67.3%, well above the national average. Where does it think someone who enjoys a takeaway coffee should put their paper cup? “Definitely recyclable paper cups can go in the green bin,” says the waste recycling executive who answers the phone. Yet the advice from Recycle Now, the national recycling campaign for England, is that they are not acceptable in household green bins. Biffa, the waste company, says that paper mills “do not like coffee cups as it contaminates good recovered fibre”, so it “has taken the decision not to include coffee cups in its dry mixed recycling collections”.

As a result, somewhere along the cup’s path from the recycling bin to the recycling plant, it gets picked out of the stream of plastic, paper and glass as a contaminant and sent to landfill or exported. Even if it makes it through the recycling plant – say on a low-grade paper belt – and arrives at the mill, it will be singled out there and removed. Goodwin says he realised there was a problem when he kept approaching businesses in the hospitality and food service industry with new packaging ideas, and all anyone wanted to talk about was coffee cups.
“The cup is an issue,” he says. “If you look at the end disposal point of paper being a paper mill, the question is does a paper mill want a paper cup? The answer is no, because it reduces the yield they get. Why would a mill buy a poly-coated material it gets less of a return on, when there is a massive available supply of non-coated material?”

“It’s not as simple as it should be,” says Helen Bingham from Keep Britain Tidy. “There is a disagreement, or lack of understanding, between the waste industry and the coffee industry. The coffee companies say the cups are completely recyclable, you can put them into paper bins, but the question is how they are going to get into the recycling stream without being a contaminant. The coffee companies and the waste industry need to talk to each other. Because it’s a hell of a lot of cups.”

To complicate matters, people tend to be much better recyclers in the comfort of their own homes than out and about. Bingham says that coffee cups are an acute litter problem in cities in particular, often being dumped with paradoxical care. You see them resting on the arm of a bench at the station, or discreetly standing on the floor. “You pay quite a lot for a coffee, your triple latte mocca chocca,” she says. “It’s a special thing. People place them very carefully, and then walk away from them, so it’s not like chucking them down.”

So why has the problem come to light now? Goodwin believes that export markets for these mixed materials have slowed, creating an imperative to find a domestic solution. But maybe, too, the rapid rise in popularity of takeaway coffee has caught some groups by surprise. Wrap, for instance, has no data on paper cups.

In fact, coffee cups – purported indicators of an enviable lifestyle, yet wasting in landfill – fit all too well with a flatlining in recycling habits in the UK generally. Between 2004 and 2010, the UK experienced massive growth in the quantity of postconsumer product it recycled, rising from 22.6% to 40.2% – the fastest improving country in Europe. But over the following four years, the rate rose by only 3.5%. “We have done all the easy recycling things for packaging materials,” Hazell says. And coffee cups – which may be luxurious, extravagant, indulgent, habitual – are not easy. Maybe, like plastic carriers, they will become just another symbol of careless consumerism. It could be time to treat yourself to a keep cup.
Hypocrisy of coffee giants: High St chains claim to be 'green' while handing out 2.5bn cups a year that are NOT recycled

By Sean Poulter and Tom Kelly on March 16 2016

An estimated 5,000 takeaway coffee cups are thrown away every minute but campaigners claim 399 out of every 400 - which comes to 2.5billion a year - are dumped.

'It shouldn't be rocket science to ensure coffee cups are recycled in the UK,' said Mike Childs of Friends of the Earth.

'It's a disgrace and hypocritical of companies to imply their cups can be and are recycled when that isn't the case. The public should be able to expect better, especially given the damage landfill does to our environment.'

Jenny Jones, a Green Party peer, said the misleading packaging was 'potentially illegal'. She added: 'I hope this issue will be picked up by the public so we can force these companies to deliver on their promises.'

The coffee industry is hugely lucrative – Caffè Nero and Starbucks made combined profits of almost £60million last year. Sales at Costa, the biggest chain, rose 16 per cent, helping parent company Whitbread make a profit of £291million.

Costa insists its cups can be recycled alongside normal paper, but there are serious doubts that this is happening. Instead councils and taxpayers foot the bill for landfill.

The scandal has been highlighted by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. The chef said a plant in Cumbria has the specialist equipment but there is no system in place for cups to be sent there.
'It's time for our biggest coffee shops to come clean,' he added. 'The takeaway cups they sell us are virtually impossible to recycle – they don’t fit our local recycling systems, so the vast majority end up being incinerated or sent to landfill.'

Willie MacKenzie of Greenpeace said: 'With an estimated 5,000 takeaway coffee cups being thrown away every minute, it's time this shocking waste of resources was put on to the agenda. There's nothing sustainable about burying this stuff in landfill.

'For too long, out of sight, out of mind has been the mantra of many different industries. It's time for businesses to take responsibility for what they produce.'

The Clean Up Britain group, whose supporters include Jeremy Paxman, Kenny Logan, Gabby Logan, Gary Lineker, AP McCoy, Andrew Flintoff, Claire Balding, Jonny Wilkinson and Julia Bradbury, said a national effort to tackle litter was needed.

The group's founder John Read said: 'We don't want to see any of these cups ending up as litter, and therefore – even if they can't be easily recycled – these companies need to actively engage in national anti-litter campaigns.' Martin Myerscough, who has designed a disposable coffee cup that can be recycled, said the major chains had been slow to recognise and deal with the problem.

'People will be shocked to find out that the paper cups they use rarely get recycled and they ought to be – it is a scandal,' he added.

'As things stand just 0.25 per cent of the more than 2.5 billion cups issued each year are being recycled. That is just wrong. We need to put an end to this environmental shame.' Samantha Harding of the Campaign to Protect Rural England said: 'This is another example of where the poor design of packaging means more landfill and litter.'

In theory, the cups used by the major chain can be recycled, which allows them to make their claims.
Costa, which has more than 2,000 outlets, uses a recycling symbol of three arrows in a continuous loop.

Starbucks, which has about 760 shops, says on its website: 'We have set a goal to make 100 per cent of our cups reusable or recyclable by 2015.' Cardboard sleeves issued with Caffè Nero and Pret cups carry a recycling symbol.

Pret's sleeves say '100 per cent recyclable' and Caffè Nero's say '100 per cent recycled'. Customers might assume from this the whole cup is recycled rather than just the sleeve.

Pret said its cups are theoretically recyclable, but because very few paper mills will accept them it removed a recyclable symbol over a year ago 'to avoid misleading customers'.

A spokesman added: 'We understand that most of our coffee cups are disposed of outside of our shops and we are working in collaboration with other companies in the industry to find ways to improve the recovery and recycling rates of take away cups.'

Caffè Nero, which uses 54million cups a year, confirmed its cups are also made with a polyethylene lining that has to separated from the cup. It said its cups were 'fully recyclable' where 'facilities exist'.

Only Costa said its cups did not need to have the polythene coating separated from the paper to be recycled.

A spokesman said: 'The coating used within our takeaway cups is accepted in mixed paper recycling.'
More than three quarters of McDonald’s cups are not recycled. But 350 restaurants are trialling a scheme to send cups to a specialist recycling plant.

Starbucks said the recycling of its cups depended on 'local government policies and access to recycling markets which is limited in the UK'.

A spokesman said: 'We continuously work with cup vendors and other packaging innovators to identify new coating technologies to improve cup recyclability.'

Caffè Nero confirmed that none of the used takeaway cups it collects are sent to the Cumbria plant.

But it said this facility is the ‘proposed destination’ for an initiative it is launching to increase the ‘capture and collection’ of cups.

**Britain’s rubbish at recycling**

*By Geoffrey Lean*

So, you’ve drunk your expensive cup of coffee, bought from a trendy chain, and all you have left is the paper cup. What do you do with it? Toss it out for recycling of course, and go on your way feeling virtuous as well as refreshed.

Or maybe not. For very few of the apparently ‘recyclable’ cups are in fact recycled. Worse, they are made in such a way as to make recycling difficult – with a plastic polyethylene coating bonded to the paper.

The problem symbolises the confusion that increasingly surrounds recycling in England, with the public left at a loss about what best to do. As a result, recycling rates, which soared for a decade, have now stagnated.
The storm in the coffee cup was unveiled by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, the celebrity chef, who revealed that only one firm in the country could separate the coating from the paper so that both can be recycled.

The coffee cup scandal was highlighted by chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall who said a plant in Cumbria has the specialist equipment to recycle them but there is no system in place for cups to be sent there.

As a result, only about six million of the 2.5 billion coffee cups thrown away annually are expected to go through the eco-friendly process.

In practice, this can only be done in bulk, so it is only possible to recycle cups from stores: fishing them out of other rubbish would be too time-consuming and expensive.

So just a few cups could cause whole bags of mixed waste to be considered 'contaminated' and sent to be incinerated or to landfill instead.

It amounts to quite a betrayal of trust. For people believe in recycling: 96 per cent of us want to do it. But we are being comprehensively let down by ministers, councils and green pressure groups alike.

English households produce more than 22.3 million tons of waste a year, of which more than ten million tons are recycled. About four million tons of this is garden waste, mainly composted, and about 300,000 tons is waste food.

Of the remaining 5.8 million tons – the bulk of our bins – about two-fifths is paper, another fifth is glass and the rest is material such as plastic, metals, and textiles.

But councils vary over what they collect and what they do with it – so much so that the Government admits that there are 300 different systems across England.

They fall into two main categories; the minority of councils that demand householders separate waste into different bins, and those that let them put it all into one bin and get it sorted later.

The pre-sorted material goes directly for recycling. All the newsprint made in Britain, for example, is now made from recycled paper, and 80 per cent of glass put out for recycling is turned into new bottles and jars.

But about 73 per cent of the recycling collected directly from households must be sorted at one of the country's more than 120 so-called 'materials recovery centres', where it is put onto long, highly automated conveyor belts. First, materials that should not be there – ranging from carpets to concrete blocks, and would include coffee cups – are removed by hand and sent to landfill sites.

What is left is goes through a series of drums and screeners, which sort it for size and type. Paper and glass fly off on different conveyors, magnets separate steel and aluminium, and infra-red light sensors sort out the few types of plastic that can be recycled from the more than 20 that crop up in the bins. There are often manual checks so that stuff that has mistakenly got through can be removed, and then crushed and baled for reuse. What remains goes to landfill or is incinerated.

WRAP, the country's official 'sustainable waste' body, refuses to say whether it thinks forcing people to sort their own recycling is best, leaving the decisions to councils.
Certainly, pre-sorting is more environmentally friendly and produces purer recycled materials, which fetch a higher price from manufacturers. But people find using lots of separate bins a nuisance and so less is recycled.

Some councils use both techniques – providing separate bins for one type of recycling and letting all the rest to be lumped together.

However, all the systems are prone to contamination – the wrong materials being put into the bins. These range from toxic materials to coffee cups – which, at times can cause whole loads of recycling to be rejected. But since different councils recycle different things, it can be hard for householders to know what can they can put into the bins, and what they cannot. And that is only part of the problem.

Much of the waste is 'exported' to Third World countries – using a loophole in European law – supposedly for recycling, but often to be put in landfill.

The coalition government cut funding for WRAP from £53.5million to £17.9million a year. Meanwhile, local councils were criticised because of the over-zealous enforcement of recycling rules, and many environmental pressure groups have turned their attentions to other causes.

As a result, English recycling rates, which soared from 12.5 per cent of household waste in 2001 to 43.2 per cent in 2011, have plateaued since.

It's an awful shame. If recycling were done properly, it has been calculated, some 50,000 new jobs could be created (it employs ten times as many more people per ton as landfill), and GDP would grow by some £3billion a year.

And, as well as doing away with the need for so many unsightly landfill sites, it would cut carbon pollution by saving energy – what we do already is the equivalent of taking five million cars off the road.

Alas, to the question: 'What do you think of the country's recycling policy so far?'; there's only one honest answer. Rubbish!
Disposable coffee cups ‘virtually impossible’ to recycle, say campaigners

By Business Reporter on March 16, 2016

Disposable coffee cups handed out in their billions are “virtually impossible” to recycle despite major cafe chains claiming theirs are eco-friendly, campaigners have warned.

According to some estimates fewer than 1% of the 2.5 billion paper and plastic cups used in the UK each year are recycled, leading to criticism of high street cafes for stamping them with recycling logos.

While some of the leading chains say they work to make recycling cups easier and even offer incentive schemes to encourage consumers to use their own, there are calls for big brands to take greater responsibility for the waste.

Television chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, whose #wastenot campaign has gathered more than 300,000 supporters, said: “It’s time for our biggest coffee shops to come clean.”

Speaking to the Daily Mail, he added: “The takeaway cups they sell us are virtually impossible to recycle – they don’t fit our local recycling systems, so the vast majority end up being incinerated or sent to landfill.”

Disposable coffee cups pose a challenge to recycling plants due to the combination of plastic and paper in their design.

There are just two specialist facilities in the UK, both in the North, that have the equipment to separate the materials.

Peter Goodwin, co-founder of Simply Cups, the sites’ operator, told The Times he expects them to recycle six million cups in 2016 – fewer than the number produced each day.

He said: “It’s dramatically less than 1% but no-one knows this.

“The consumer has trust in the brand that if they put a recycling sign on the cup then the product is being recycled. People are being misled.”
Coffee Chains Accused of Duping Customers Over Recycling Claim

By Food Ingredients First on March 16, 2016

Britain’s high-street coffee chains have been accused of deceiving customers and contributing to Britain’s landfill problem after it was discovered that only one in 400 paper cups are actually recycled.

The discovery, originally reported in The Times newspaper, found that of the 2.5 billion paper coffee cups thrown away every year less than one percent is recycled.

This is due to the fact that the cup’s polyethylene coating must be removed before the cup can be recycled.

Due to the extra work involved, it is claimed cups are not been recycled through public waste collections and are instead sent to landfill or incinerated.

Café Nero, Costa, Starbucks and Pret have all been accused of making false claims about recycling, hoodwinking customers into believing their cups are environmentally friendly.

Cups from Café Nero and Pret both carry a recycling symbol. The sleeves of Pret cups says “100 percent recyclable” while Café Nero’s says “100 percent recycled.”

Critics say that customers might assume that whole cup is being recycled, when it tends to be only the sleeve which is recycled.

Peter Godwin, the co-founder of Simply Cups, which operates Britain’s only paper recycling service, told The Times that it expected to recycle just six million cups this year, compared to the 2.5 billion that are used in Britain a year.

Goodwin said: “It’s dramatically less than one percent but no one know this. The consumer has trust in the brands that if they put a recycling sign on a cup then that product is being recycled. People are being misled.”

“People are getting fed up with environmental stories and greenwash. We see a great cry in the marketplace for transparency. We need to tell people where the material is going to and what is being made into.”

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, the anti-waste campaigner, said: “The truth is [coffee cups] are barely recyclable at all in the everyday commonly understood sense of the word.”

“They cannot be recycled through any of the normal public waste collection services- which are consistently diverting them to be incinerated or sent to landfill.”

Starbucks did not give details of the percentage of the cups its recycles.
Costa said it was researching how to ensure its cups were recycled effectively.

Pret said it was working with other companies within the industry to find ways to improve the recovery and recycling rates of takeaway cups.

Separately, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has pledged to support the charity WRAP to make food and drinks produce and consumption more sustainable in the future.

The FSA is supporting WRAP’s Courtauld 2015 campaign which aims to:

• Reduce the resource intensity of the UK’s food and drink by one-fifth, saving £20 billion in 10 years.

• Bring together leading organisations from across the food chain to work together to tackle food and drink waste, greenhouse gas emissions and water intensity.

• Gather signatories including all major UK food retailers, brands, food service companies, trade bodies and local authorities (90 are already signed up).

Michael Wight, head of food safety at the FSA, said: “Food is a valuable commodity and this is why we cannot afford to let food go to waste. We welcome WRAP’s initiative and will be focusing on food waste this year for Food Safety Week.”
ess than 1% of takeaway coffee cups get recycled – or “dramatically less than 1%” in the striking phrase of Peter Goodwin, co-founder of the UK’s only paper-coffee-cup recycling business. It takes a specialist company, because the plastic used to laminate the cups has to be removed before the paper is pulped. A bit like the fruit juice cartons that, as any eager recycler will know, are not to be confused with cardboard and are processed alongside paper cups in Stainland, West Yorkshire, at the UK’s only carton recycling plant.

In fact the number of takeaway coffee cups recycled in the UK, either in Stainland or at a cup recycling plant in Cumbria, is 3m out of an annual total of an estimated 3bn – around 0.1%, or one in 1,000 cups (another few million are sent for recycling abroad). Some newspapers, citing unnamed “campaigners”, this week blamed the coffee chains, some of whom print the recycling symbol of three arrows on their cups. Consumers, they said, believe the symbol means the cups are destined for recycling and, since this isn’t the case for 99.9% of them, are being misled.

The truth is that whether or not our paper cup has a chance of rebirth as a newspaper or an egg box depends on where we throw it away – and whether the council that collects it recycles paper cups or not. The bad news for lovers of hot drinks on the move is that the council almost certainly doesn’t and even if it did, the worst place to throw anything away is a bin on the street. Statistics on street bin recycling rates are hard to come by. But Helen Bingham of Keep Britain Tidy says Britain is bad at on-street recycling because it is “inconsistent and confusing”. Some councils offer separate bins for cans, glass and general litter while others don’t. Nobody wants to stop and study the signs when they are desperate to get shot of their lukewarm dregs. Contamination is rife, meaning that even if you do take the trouble to dispose of things properly, chances are they will end up in landfill anyway.

Giant retailers such Costa and Starbucks have a responsibility, as Starbucks recognised when it launched a scheme giving customers a 25p discount for bringing their own cup. But reusable cups made of silicone and rubber have not really caught on, probably because they need washing up. Cups are not reusable in the same way as plastic bags, and if this means we are stuck with paper-plastic hybrids,
retailers should contribute to the cost of getting rid of them in an environmentally responsible way, either through higher taxes or by helping local authorities design workable cup recycling schemes. Non-takeaway hot drinks should, of course, be served in ceramic cups.

In our homes we have made progress, with 44.9% of our annual household waste of 27m tonnes recycled at the latest count, and an EU target of 50% by 2020. Here too the lack of consistency is an issue. Not perhaps if you have lived in the same village for 30 years, and know perfectly well that the brown wheelie bin for compostable waste must be left out on alternate Tuesdays. But if you are moving between addresses and across borough boundaries – more likely in London than anywhere else, because 32 local authorities plus the City of London are separated by just a few miles – you will understand why the capital has such a poor record, with rates as low as 17.7%.

Councils should be incentivised to harmonise their arrangements. The new combined authorities of the northern powerhouse could lead the way. As for London, the mayor should take the lead – bang some rubbish bags together and join things up, partner successful councils with failing ones and launch a citywide scheme – for street recycling if nothing else. If the Germans can manage 62%, why not us?

But the bigger point is the same as with greenhouse gases, and everything else that pertains to the environment. Our planet’s resources are finite. Just as we are filling up the air with carbon dioxide, so we are filling up giant holes in the ground with rubbish. This week we have learned that takeaway coffee cups are taking up too much space in these smelly pits. Next time you buy a coffee, think about it.
Why Are So Few Coffee Cups Recycled?

By Dana Hatic on March 16, 2016

Are your favorite coffee chains guilty of false recycling claims?

To-go coffee cups are a billion dollar business, and though many of these paper or composite vessels are recyclable, according to a new report, they are not being recycled in the UK (older reports demonstrate this problem exists in the U.S. and Canada as well). This week, Starbucks, Costa Coffee, Caffè Nero, and Pret were called out for claiming to recycle when in fact they were not, according to The Telegraph. Great Britain uses about 7 million paper coffee cups each day and 2.5 billion every year.

Apparently, when you break down the numbers, fewer than 1 in 400 paper cups given to customers in the UK get recycled. On the one hand, this has more to do with how consumers are disposing of them; once a barista hands that latte over to the guest, the shop no longer has control over what happens to the cup.

At issue is the fact that these paper products often bear the recycling symbol, but they can't just be placed into a city's recycling bin. Because of a plastic laminate coating on their interior (so as to prevent hot beverages from seeping through the paper), they have to go through a special process to be recycled, according to Simply Cups, a service that collects and properly recycles these types of disposable cups.

According to Simply Cups, fewer than 3 million paper coffee cups were recycled last year. The company's co-founder Peter Goodwin told The Times: "The consumer has trust in the brand that if they put a recycling sign on a cup then that product is being recycled. People are being misled."

Britain's largest chain, Costa, has more than 2,000 stores and brands its cups with the recycling logo, according to The Telegraph, while Caffè Nero and Pret detail recycling information on their sleeves. Environmentalists say this may mislead customers into believing the cup itself is also recyclable. When these coffee cups are found in recycling bins they are often sorted out as trash because they cannot be processed by the same plants that process paper, glass, and plastic.
Previous exposés found that this trend was also prevalent in Canada and the U.S. Starbucks admits recycling its coffee cups remains an issue in many countries due to logistics and factors beyond its control. The company has focused its efforts on encouraging consumers to use reusable cups by providing affordable options and incentivizing customers who bring their own cup. The company also says it is "working with companies and organizations along the value chain as a member of the Food Packaging Institute's Paper Recovery Alliance and Plastics Recovery Group" so as to offer more recycling options, particularly in areas where Starbucks operates.

Spokespeople for Pret, Caffè Nero, and Costa told Newsweek they were working to deal with the issues surrounding recycling of the paper cups, and Starbucks has a section on its website describing its goal to "develop comprehensive recycling solutions for our paper and plastic cups." If that doesn't work maybe these big coffee brands should take a page from KFC. Last year the company introduced edible coffee cups in the UK and coffee drinkers went bonkers.
14. **Independent**


**Disposable coffee cups 'impossible to recycle'**

By Ryan Wilkinson March 17, 2016

Disposable coffee cups handed out in their billions are "virtually impossible" to recycle despite major café chains claiming theirs are eco-friendly, campaigners have warned.

According to some estimates, fewer than 1pc of the 2.5bn paper and plastic cups used in the UK each year are recycled, leading to criticism of high-street cafés for stamping them with recycling logos.

While some leading chains say that they work to make recycling cups easier and offer incentive schemes to encourage consumers to use their own cups, there are calls for brands to take greater responsibility for the waste.

TV chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, whose #wastenot campaign has gathered more than 300,000 supporters, said: "It's time for our biggest coffee shops to come clean."

He added: "The takeaway cups they sell us are virtually impossible to recycle - they don't fit our local recycling systems, so the vast majority end up being incinerated or sent to landfill."

The cups pose a challenge to recycling plants due to the combination of plastic and paper in their design.

There are just two specialist facilities in the UK that have the equipment to separate the materials.

Peter Goodwin, co-founder of Simply Cups, said he expects the firm to recycle six million cups in 2016, fewer than the number made each day.

He said: "The consumer has trust in the brand that if they put a recycling sign on the cup then the product is being recycled. People are being misled."

Costa and the great recycled coffee cup con: High street giant declares it's greener than the other chains but waste firms rubbish the claims

By Sean Poulter on March 17, 2016

- 399 out of 400 coffee cups used by customers end up getting dumped
- Most of the cups, such as those from Costa are unsuitable for recycling
- The company claims its cups can be recycled along with ordinary paper
- However the coffee cups have a polyethylene lining on the interior

Britain’s biggest coffee chain has been accused of misleading customers with ‘cynical greenwash’ claims about the recycling of its cups.

Costa has been telling the world that its cups can be recycled alongside ordinary paper waste, however one of its business partners has vehemently denied this.

In fact, more than 99 per cent of the chain’s cups end up being thrown into landfill or incinerated.

The industry is in the dock over concerns that 399 cups out of every 400 handed to customers – more than 2.5billion a year – are simply dumped. The cups are difficult to recycle because they are sealed with a polyethylene lining on the interior.

Costa, which has more than 2,000 outlets, has apparently attempted to set itself apart from other chains such as Starbucks, Caffe Nero and McDonald’s.
It said its cups did not need to have the coating separated from the paper to be recycled. A spokesman said: ‘The coating used within our takeaway cups is accepted in mixed paper recycling.’

However, the specialist coffee cup recycling business, Simply Cups, which has a contract with Costa to process a small number of its cups, insists this is not the case. A spokesman for Simply Cups said: ‘Categorically, no ifs or buts, Costa’s cups can’t be recycled along with ordinary paper waste by local councils.

‘The reason is they have a polyethylene lining on the inside of the cup that keeps the liquid in and stops the paper going soggy. It is bonded very tightly to the paper.

‘The cups that Costa uses are no different to those used by Starbucks, McDonald’s and others. They will not be accepted.’

The spokesman said there are only two specialist recycling plants able to process the cups, one in Cumbria and another in Halifax.

Simply Cups has a contract to recycle a small number of Costa cups from the chain’s outlets in offices. Millions of others collected from high street outlets go into the general waste stream.

Asked about Costa’s claim that its cups are accepted in mixed paper recycling, the spokesman from Simply Cups said: ‘I don’t know why they told you that, because that is not the case.

‘Mixed recycling would simply not be able to detach the plastic. The cup would be treated as a contaminant and rejected. It would then go to landfill or incineration.’

The industry’s failure to recycle the cups has been highlighted by chef and anti-waste campaigner Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, who has been backed by environment and anti-litter groups.

Mr Fearnley-Whittingstall said: ‘Costa’s claims are absolutely extraordinary. It is almost as if they are saying their cups are extra special in some way and so they can be recycled in the normal way, but everyone else’s can’t. Their claims seem to me to be at best wilfully misleading. This looks to me like corporate greenwash of the worst and most cynical kind.’

Costa’s website boasts that its cups are ‘one of the world’s most environmentally friendly’.

Despite what Simply Cups says and the fact that other coffee shop chains admit their cups cannot go in normal waste paper recycling, Costa, refused to change its stance.

It said: ‘The coating used within our takeaway cups is accepted in mixed paper recycling. The cup is made from coated (PE plastic) board – the same used on sandwich and porridge packets, for example.

‘We know that coated board is widely recycled across the UK, in addition there are re-processors in the UK – Ace UK in Halifax and James Croppers in Cumbria – who are proactively recycling paper cups specifically.’

UK’s sole cup recycler handles 10m a week (but only if they’re unused)

THE only firm in the UK fully recycling paper coffee cups does not process used ones.
James Cropper takes in 10 million a week from chains including Starbucks and Caffe Nero – but they are manufacturers’ off-cuts and sub-standard cups.

The 170-year-old company, in Kendal, Cumbria, turns them into high-quality paper for stationery, gift sets and luxury packaging, which can be recycled in turn.

Scientists spent four years developing a process to separate the paper body from its thin plastic liner, which is sent off to be made into garden furniture. The paper pulp is churned, dyed, stretched and dried in just one hour. Any leftover minerals are sold to local farmers for fertiliser.

Rival plants recycle the whole cup but their low-quality paper end product contains plastic flecks and so is often turned into the cardboard sleeves used on hot coffee cups, which then end up in landfill anyway.

Phil Wild, Cropper’s chief executive, said: ‘Paper made from recycled cups elsewhere will be flawed. Our process has no waste and we make a high-quality biodegradable product that is environmentally friendly.

‘It’s excruciatingly difficult and expensive to do. But we want to reduce our carbon footprint and make a great product.’

Mr Wild said his firm has trialled processing used cups from 150 McDonald’s branches and hopes more buyers will specify paper made from recycled coffee cups: ‘We offer a “coffee” range of paper, 50 per cent of which was once a coffee cup. We are very proud of them but only hope we can do more.’
Where to get your morning coffee in a biodegradable eco-cup in London

By Frankie Mccoy on March 17, 2016

Eco-warriors beware: turns out that your beloved organic, small-batch, single-origin, sustainably sourced long black isn’t saving the planet. Because takeaway coffee cups are plastic-coated inside to stop them dissolving into a brown, squidy pulp, they can’t be treated like cardboard, so fewer than one in 400 paper cups from chains end up being recycled.

Leaves a bitter taste, doesn’t it? But it doesn’t have to be a toss-up between eco-pocalypse and your commuting cappuccino: the Belgians, for one, have the green goods. Le Pain Quotidien insists its cups are “100 per cent compostable and 100 per cent recyclable”, with inner linings made from biodegradable plant starch, not plastic. Its cups aren’t Forest Stewardship Council-certified, but Le Pain insists they could be.

If you want something more independent, head to Caravan in King’s Cross and Exmouth Market, where takeaway cups are single-walled and made from sustainable forest paper, and where Caravan Coffee Roasters’ head of operations Mike Logue is feverishly pushing Uppercup’s über-hip reusable cups on customers.

Then there’s the Department of Coffee and Social Affairs, which now has 10 outlets across central and east London. Yes, there might be paperwork in their takeaway cups, but that’s all there is: they’re not lined with plastic. CEO Ashley Lopez insists that they want to be “eco champions” and plans to roll out a range of reusable “Keep Cups”.

The best way to get customers to remember their reusable coffee cups is to draw them in with a discount. Starbucks has deflected criticism of the tiny amount of recycled cups by pointing to the 25p customers save on coffee if they bring their own flask. Surprisingly few of London’s indie coffee shops, who so proudly tout their ethical credentials, offer anything similar.

One bizarre exception is Kentish Town halal restaurant Bintang, which devotes a page of its website to infographics on the damage done by disposable packaging and encourages customers to bring their own receptacle with the promise of a 10 per cent discount.

Obviously, this only works if you’re the sort of zealous list-maker who packs their bag the night before. For everyone else whose last three reusables are in the sink, overflowing with mould, a fully compostable vessel is a better bet.

You could probably fertilise your garden yourself after dining at “rawcentric” vegetarian restaurant Wild Food Café in Covent Garden. But you can also do it with their cups: they only use biodegradable ones from London Bio Packaging, which they insist are “recyclable — and they disintegrate anyway in the...
rubbish”. Elsewhere, eco-packaging company Biopac provide cafés with fully compostable cups that break down in 12 weeks: look out for their “I'm a Green Cup” at festivals.

You see, green bean addicts? Your cup runneth over with takeaways that don't cost the earth — merely the best part of a fiver.
RECYCLING ASSOCIATION HITS BACK AT DAILY MAIL CRITICISM OF RECYCLING PERFORMANCE

By Paul Sanderson on March 17, 2016

The Daily Mail has been savaged by the Recycling Association for linking the problem of recycling coffee cups with overall recycling performance.

In the article, the newspaper suggested that millions of coffee cups were not being recycled and this “symbolised the UK’s wasteful ways”.

Recycling Association chief executive Simon Ellin said: “The recyclability of coffee cups is undoubtedly challenging due to the nature of the material and the difficulty in separating the cups when they are consumed by the public while on the move.

“Let’s put this into context though – paper coffee cups account for less than 0.00005% by weight of the UK’s total waste production (commercial and municipal), so although ideally we should be recovering more, the impact on the environment per se is negligible.

“To then relate this to UK recycling performance generally, is a cheap shot and is counterproductive. I would argue that misrepresenting information like this has a far more negative impact on the environment than does the paper cup problem, because it disengages the public when it comes to recycling.”

He also criticised the Daily Mail for writing about a loophole that it said meant material was exported to third world countries for recycling, but ended up in

SECONDARY COMMODITY MARKETS Conference 2016

The conference on the global trade of recyclable materials takes place on 12 April.

Simon Ellin added: “The Daily Mail cited a European Loophole that allows us to export material for recycling. I would love to know what this ‘loophole’ is.

“European Transfrontier Shipment Regulations allow and assist us to compliantly export materials all over the world.

“For example, the UK only has reprocessing capacity to recycle 40% of the 8 million tonnes of paper we collect per annum; the plastics industry only has the capacity to re-process circa 25% of the materials recovered, so what a fabulous example of a circular economy is demonstrated in sending cardboard or plastics back to the countries from where it was produced in the first place on what would otherwise be an empty shipping vessel.
“To suggest that this material often then ends up in landfill is a shameful and counter-productive piece of journalism. Why would a company in the UK pay for material to be shipped halfway around the world to be landfilled? Why would an importer purchase a commodity in the UK to then pay for it to be landfilled? The Daily Mail allegation contains no sense of commercial logic.”

Mark Lyndon Paper Enterprises managing director Paul Briggs added: “By focussing on small issues such as paper cup recycling and then relating this to a series of headline grabbing misnomers the Daily Mail fails to acknowledge the massive steps the UK has made in the recycling arena in recent years.

“We may not always get all the small detail right, but the strides the UK has made to positively contribute to the circular economy in a relatively short space of time should be applauded.

“We are constantly evolving and improving and the services we provide in the UK make both a significant contribution to the UK’s green credentials and to the economy. I would urge Daily Mail to report all the positive messages too – this engages the general public as opposed to turning them off and therefore positively contributes to the industry we are rightly proud of.”
Coffee cups could face new tax based on 'plastic bag model'

By JAMIE BULLEN on March 17, 2016

A new tax could be added to takeaway coffee cups to stop millions of them being thrown away, an minister has suggested.

Environment minister Rory Stewart admitted it was a “huge problem” days after it emerged that less than one in 400 coffee cups sold by high street chains are recycled each year.

He said one possible solution was to add a charge similarly used for plastic bags which he said had been a success.

Labour MP Rob Marris asked Mr Stewart in the Commons for the Government to intervene in the “wretched number” of plastic-lined paper takeaway coffee cups that hardly ever get recycled.

Mr Stewart replied: “I absolutely agree. It's a huge problem and there are tens of millions of these things being produced and thrown away.

"As you have pointed out, many of these things cannot be recycled either by the way they're disposed or because of the composition of the cup.

"Having tackled plastic bags, which I hope everybody in the House would agree the plastic bag tax has been a success, coffee cups seem to be a very good thing to look at next."

Speaking outside the Commons, Mr Marris said he was pleased with the response but added he didn't think a 5p or 10p tax for coffee cups would completely solve the problem.

He said: “I am pleased with the response from the minister

"I hope the Government will make this a priority in the near future because I suspect a lot of consumers are inadvertently being misled.

"My initial reaction is charging 5p or 10p for the cup will not work - it will not encourage people to take their own cups in if a coffee goes up from £1.90 to £1.95."

"I suspect a more technological answer is what we need - either the composition of the disposable cups being changed so they're more easily recyclable, as it's quite a palaver at the moment, or changing the technology in the recycling."

"I think the Government should take a lead in encouraging research into a better product to begin with or better technology."

On Tuesday, it emerged that fewer than one in 400 paper cups given out by high street coffee chains are being recycled.
The revelations led to Starbucks, Costa, Caffè Nero and Pret being accused of making up claims about recycling which led to people wrongly believing their cups are environmentally friendly.

A Defra spokesperson said: "While the minister acknowledged more needs to be done to recycle coffee cups there are no plans to tax them."
Is a coffee cup tax next? Tory minister hints disposable holders could be treated like 5p plastic bags'

By RICHARD WHEELER and DAN BLOOM on March 17, 2016

He's managed a plastic bag levy - now is the Chancellor going to tax coffee cups?

Coffee cups could be taxed to prevent tens of millions being thrown away, a top Tory has hinted.

Environment minister Rory Stewart said plastic-lined paper cups were a huge litter problem - and highlighted the success of the new 5p levy on carrier bags.

He added: "Having tackled plastic bags, which I hope everybody in the House would agree the plastic bag tax has been a success, coffee cups seem to be a very good thing to look at next."

Officials were quick to stress there are no plans in the pipeline for a coffee cup tax.

But figures show plastic bag use has been slashed since a 5p tax was introduced in England and Wales last October, MPs heard today.

Labour MP Rob Marris told the minister: "Could the Government have a look at the problem of the wretched number of plastic-lined paper takeaway coffee cups, the overwhelming majority of which never get recycled because of the difficulties of ripping out the plastic lining of the paper?"

"It's a huge problem."

Mr Stewart replied: "I absolutely agree. It's a huge problem and there are tens of millions of these things being produced and thrown away.

"As you have pointed out, many of these things cannot be recycled either by the way they're disposed or because of the composition of the cup."

Speaking outside the Commons, Mr Marris said: "I am pleased with the response from the minister."
"I hope the Government will make this a priority in the near future because I suspect a lot of consumers are inadvertently being misled."

But he added: "My initial reaction is charging 5p or 10p for the cup will not work - it will not encourage people to take their own cups in if a coffee goes up from £1.90 to £1.95.

"I suspect a more technological answer is what we need - either the composition of the disposable cups being changed so they're more easily recyclable, as it's quite a palaver at the moment, or changing the technology in the recycling."

Mr Marris added: "I think the Government should take a lead in encouraging research into a better product to begin with or better technology."

A spokesman for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said there were "no plans" as events stand to tax coffee cups.
Why Devon’s TV chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall is ‘delighted’ over unrecycled coffee cups latest

By David Wells on March 17, 2016

Devon-based TV chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall says he is “delighted” that the problem of unrecycled coffee cups has attracted Government attention.

This is despite its prompt dismissal of an environment minister’s suggestion that they could be taxed.

The celebrity chef, who has the River Cottage restaurant at Plymouth’s Royal William Yard, is a leading campaigner against waste and food waste.

Conservative frontbencher Rory Stewart told MPs there is a "huge problem" with plastic-lined paper cups.

He insisted the plastic bag tax has been successful since it was introduced in England and Wales last October, adding non-recyclable coffee cups seem to be a "very good thing to look at next".

The 5p charge on plastic bags was aimed at reducing litter and environmental damage caused by retailers handing out billions of single-use carrier bags.

Now concerns are growing over the lack of takeaway coffee cups recycled.

However, shortly after Mr Stewart made his comments, his department Defra issued a comment saying: "While the minister acknowledged more needs to be done to recycle coffee cups, there are no plans to tax them."

Fearnley-Whittingstall, who is based at Axminster in East Devon and whose #wastenot campaign has gathered more than 300,000 supporters, said: "I'm delighted that the issue of unrecycled, and barely recyclable, coffee cups has been raised in the house today.

"It should help focus the coffee company’s minds on finding a solution.

"If the Government is looking at interesting ways to incentivise that, or to penalise continued inaction, that could be a good thing.

"But this is a problem that should be solved regardless. It should be solved because it's the right thing to do."

Speaking earlier in the Commons, Labour MP Rob Marris (Wolverhampton South West) told Mr Stewart: "Could the Government have a look at the problem of the wretched number of plastic-lined paper takeaway coffee cups, the overwhelming majority of which never get recycled because of the difficulties of ripping out the plastic lining of the paper?"

"It's a huge problem."
Mr Stewart replied: "I absolutely agree. It's a huge problem and there are tens of millions of these things being produced and thrown away.

"As you have pointed out, many of these things cannot be recycled either by the way they're disposed or because of the composition of the cup.

"Having tackled plastic bags, which I hope everybody in the House would agree the plastic bag tax has been a success, coffee cups seem to be a very good thing to look at next."

Campaigners have warned that disposable coffee cups handed out in their billions are "virtually impossible" to recycle despite major cafe chains claiming theirs are eco-friendly.

According to some estimates, fewer than 1% of the 2.5 billion paper and plastic cups used in the UK each year are recycled, leading to criticism of high street cafes for stamping them with recycling logos.

While some of the leading chains say they work to make recycling cups easier and even offer incentive schemes to encourage consumers to use their own, there are calls for big brands to take greater responsibility for the waste.

Disposable coffee cups pose a challenge to recycling plants due to the combination of plastic and paper in their design.

There are just two specialist facilities in the UK, both in the North, that have the equipment to separate the materials.

A Starbucks spokesman said: "We are working closely with industry partners to crack the difficult problem of cup recycling.

"To incentivise environmentally friendly behaviour we offer a reusable cup discount of 25p on drinks if you bring your own reusable cup to our stores. This can be any reusable cup, not only a Starbucks one."
Quickest u-turn on record? Department says minister wrong to suggest coffee cup tax'

By Steve Swinford on March 17, 2016

Government says "no plans" to tax coffee cups after Rory Stewart, the environment minister, suggested they could be subject to a similar tax to plastic bags

A Government minister has been apparently contradicted by his own department after he suggested coffee cups could be taxed to tackle a "huge" recycling problem.

Rory Stewart made the remarks in the House of Commons after it emerged that just one in 400 coffee cups are recycled every year.

But a spokesman for Mr Stewart's department said there are "no plans" to create a new tax just hours later.

Mr Stewart said that the 5p charge on plastic bags has been a success, adding non-recyclable coffee cups seem to be a "very good thing to look at next".

Most cups are made from trees that take 80 years to grow, yet the cups are used for only a few minutes before being thrown away.

The 5p tax on plastic bags aimed to reduce the litter and environmental damage caused by retailers handing out billions of single-use carrier bags, with concerns now growing over the lack of takeaway coffee cups recycled.

Rob Marris, a Labour MP, asked Mr Stewart in the Commons: "Could the Government have a look at the problem of the wretched number of plastic-lined paper takeaway coffee cups, the overwhelming majority of which never get recycled because of the difficulties of ripping out the plastic lining of the paper? It's a huge problem."

Mr Stewart replied: "I absolutely agree. It's a huge problem and there are tens of millions of these things being produced and thrown away.

"As you have pointed out, many of these things cannot be recycled either by the way they're disposed or because of the composition of the cup.

"Having tackled plastic bags, which I hope everybody in the House would agree the plastic bag tax has been a success, coffee cups seem to be a very good thing to look at next."

Speaking outside the Commons, Mr Marris told the Press Association: "I am pleased with the response from the minister.

"I hope the Government will make this a priority in the near future because I suspect a lot of consumers are inadvertently being misled."
Asked about the idea of introducing a tax on cups, similar to the one applied to plastic bags, Mr Marris said: "My initial reaction is charging 5p or 10p for the cup will not work - it will not encourage people to take their own cups in if a coffee goes up from £1.90 to £1.95.

"I suspect a more technological answer is what we need - either the composition of the disposable cups being changed so they're more easily recyclable, as it's quite a palaver at the moment, or changing the technology in the recycling."

Mr Marris added: "I think the Government should take a lead in encouraging research into a better product to begin with or better technology."

However just hours later the minister was slapped down over his remarks, as a Government spokesman contacted journalists to add: "While the minister acknowledged more needs to be done to recycle coffee cups there are no plans to tax them."
Suggestions that disposable coffee cups should be taxed like throwaway shopping bags ignited a row between ministers last night.

Environment Minister Rory Stewart told MPs yesterday that the disposable cups could be taxed to prevent billions ending up in a tidal wave of rubbish.

He said the waste caused by the cups was a ‘huge problem’ and the idea of a levy would be a ‘very good thing to look at’.

Such a tax could have a similar effect to the plastic bags levy – which has seen demand for non-biodegradable carriers plummet.

However, the comments triggered disarray and in-fighting within Whitehall, with officials apparently ordered to try to kill off the idea.

And just three hours after the minister addressed MPs, his own department issued a statement saying there were ‘no plans’ to tax coffee cups.

The reason for the confusion is unclear. However, it seems likely that Mr Stewart’s boss, Environment Secretary Liz Truss, stepped in to order a climbdown.

Chancellor George Osborne may also have been involved in an attempt to assert his authority over the Government’s tax and spending plans. The last thing the Chancellor needs as critics attack Budget measures such as the sugar tax and disability benefits is a row over taxing coffee cups.

It is believed that ministers are keen to not antagonise the food and drink industry, which has enormous financial and lobbying power.

They want to smooth relations with the industry and with retailers. They have been left seething by the surprise inclusion of the tax on sugary drinks in the Budget. Many of the chains that would be hit by a coffee cup tax would also be expected to apply the sugar tax when it comes into effect in two years.

The coffee cup issue has come to the fore as a result of campaigning stories in the Daily Mail and the work of the chef and anti-waste advocate Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall.
More than 2.5 billion plastic-lined cups are handed out each year by the likes of Costa, Starbucks, Caffe Nero, McDonald’s and many others. However, just one in 400 are recycled. The rest go into landfill or are incinerated.

The cups have a plastic film coating which means they cannot be recycled in the normal council waste paper systems. The point of introducing a fee – possibly 5p – would be to encourage the chains to switch to a different cup design that is easier to recycle.

Mr Fearnley-Whittingstall welcomed the fact that the Environment Minister had put the need to tackle the scandal on the agenda.

‘It is great that this issue has so rapidly found its way into debate in the House of Commons,’ he said. ‘If the Government is now saying it will look at ways to strongly incentivise the coffee shops to address the problem, that is very a good thing.’

The 5p charge on plastic bags has brought about dramatic change. Tesco, for example, has cut the number of bags customers use by 78 per cent – or 30 million a week. At the same time, the millions of pounds raised are supporting charities and environmental causes.

The coffee cup problem was raised in the Commons by the Labour MP Rob Marris, who favours a change in cup design over a levy.

He asked: ‘Could the Government have a look at the problem of the wretched number of plastic-lined paper takeaway coffee cups, the overwhelming majority of which never get recycled because of the difficulties of ripping out the plastic lining of the paper? It’s a huge problem.’

Mr Stewart said: ‘I absolutely agree. It’s a huge problem and there are tens of millions of these things being produced and thrown away.

‘Having tackled plastic bags, which I hope everybody in the House would agree the plastic bag tax has been a success, coffee cups seem to be a very good thing to look at next.’ Despite the strong words, officials subsequently issued a hastily prepared one-line statement which appeared to slap down Mr Stewart.

The Keep Britain Tidy group sided with the minister. A spokesman said: ‘The plastic bag charge has reduced carrier bag use by up to 80 per cent and there is certainly a case for looking at how similar charges could be used to reduce the amount of packaging of all types that ends up as litter.’

Mike Childs, of Friends of the Earth, praised the Daily Mail for highlighting the problem. ‘Coffee chains have ignored this issue for a long time,’ he said.

‘The industry needs to be put on notice that unless it takes this issue seriously, the Government will take action.’ Starbucks said: ‘We are working closely with industry partners to crack the difficult problem of cup recycling.’

McDonald’s said: ‘We are already trialling the full recycling of our coffee cups in a quarter of our restaurants.’ There was no comment from Costa or Caffe Nero.
Coffee cups might get a tax like plastic bags

By Tariq Tahir on March 18, 2016

Coffee drinkers could be next to face a new tax amid mounting concern over the billions of cups that end up in landfill every year, a minister has suggested.

Customers of chains including Costa and Starbucks could face a charge for using the containers, which can be hard to recycle as they are often made of a blend of paper and plastic.

The plan, which follows the 5p levy on plastic bags and the Budget announcement of a tax on sugary drinks, was raised by environment minister Rory Stewart.

Replying to a question in the Commons, he said: ‘Having tackled plastic bags with a tax that I hope everybody in the House would agree has been a success, coffee cups seem a very good thing to look at next.’

Mr Stewart’s comments were welcomed by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, who has launched a campaign for the design of the cups to be changed. ‘It should help to focus the coffee companies’ minds on finding a solution,’ the TV chef said.

‘If the government is looking at interesting ways to incentivise them, that could be a good thing.’

However, Christopher Snowdon, of the Institute for Economic Affairs think tank, said: ‘Sugar, carrier bags and now coffee cups? Day after day, our politicians look for new ways to increase the cost of living.’

Starbucks said: ‘We are working with industry partners to crack the difficult problem of cup recycling.

‘We offer a reusable cup discount of 25p on drinks if you bring your own reusable cup to our stores.’
Defra says minister was wrong to suggest levy could be introduced after revelation only one in 400 cups is recycled

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has said one of its own ministers was wrong to suggest coffee cups could be taxed to tackle a “huge” recycling problem in Britain.

Rory Stewart made the remarks in the House of Commons after it was revealed that just one in 400 coffee cups are recycled each year.

The environment minister pointed to the success of the 5p charge on plastic bags and said non-recyclable coffee cups could be the next consumer item to face such a levy. But within hours he was contradicted by a spokesman for Defra, who said there were no plans to create a new tax.

Britain’s biggest coffee chains, including Starbucks, Costa, Caffè Nero and Pret, were accused this week of making misleading claims about recycling that led to consumers falsely believing their cups were environmentally friendly.

Seven million paper coffee cups are used in Britain each day, amounting to 2.5bn a year. They are difficult to recycle because of a polyethylene lining on the inside which stops the cardboard going soggy.

Labour MP Rob Marris asked Stewart in the Commons: “Could the government have a look at the problem of the wretched number of plastic-lined paper takeaway coffee cups, the overwhelming majority of which never get recycled because of the difficulties of ripping out the plastic lining of the paper? It’s a huge problem.”

Stewart responded: “I absolutely agree. It’s a huge problem and there are tens of millions of these things being produced and thrown away.

“As you have pointed out, many of these things cannot be recycled either by the way they’re disposed or because of the composition of the cup.

“Having tackled plastic bags, which I hope everybody in the house would agree the plastic bag tax has been a success, coffee cups seem to be a very good thing to look at next.”

Marris subsequently told the Press Association: “I am pleased with the response from the minister. I hope the government will make this a priority in the near future because I suspect a lot of consumers are inadvertently being misled.

“My initial reaction is charging 5p or 10p for the cup will not work – it will not encourage people to take their own cups in if a coffee goes up from £1.90 to £1.95.”
“I suspect a more technological answer is what we need – either the composition of the disposable cups being changed so they’re more easily recyclable, as it’s quite a palaver at the moment, or changing the technology in the recycling.”

Hours later a government spokesman told reporters that “while [Stewart] acknowledged more needs to be done to recycle coffee cups there are no plans to tax them”.

Although Stewart referred to a plastic bag tax, the 5p supermarket customers have had to pay on bags in England since last October is in fact a charge, with the revenues going to charity rather than the state.
Defra Has “No Plans” To Create 5p Disposable Cup Tax

By Darrel Moore on March 18, 2016

The Department for Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is not considering a levy on disposable cups, a spokesperson has said, following comments from resources Minister Rory Stewart, who suggested coffee cups could be taxed to tackle a “huge” recycling problem.

Rory Stewart made the comments in the House of Commons, after it emerged that just one in 400 coffee cups are recycled every year, according to cup recyclers, Simply Cups.

But a spokesman for the department, however, said there are “no plans” to create a new tax.

The comments by the Minister came about following statistics published in a report by Simply Cups. National media reported high street coffee chains have misled the public about how many paper cups they recycle, after it emerged that fewer than one in 400 high street coffee chain paper cups are recycled.

Fewer than 3m were recycled last year, according to Simply Cups, which operates Britain’s only paper cup recycling service.

During a House of Commons session, Rory Stewart admitted there is a “huge problem”, as millions of plastic-lined paper takeaway cups, which cannot usually be recycled, are disposed of in landfill.

Responding to demands from Labour MP Rob Marris that the Government consider cracking down on the “wretched number of plastic-lined paper takeaway coffee cups”, Stewart said: “I absolutely agree. It’s a huge problem and there are tens of millions of these things being produced and thrown away.

“As you have pointed out, many of these things cannot be recycled either by the way they’re disposed or because of the composition of the cup.

“Having tackled plastic bags, which I hope everybody in the House would agree the plastic bag tax has been a success, coffee cups seem to be a very good thing to look at next.”

Not Deliberately Misled

Peter Goodwin, co-founder of Simply Cups, said that it is apparent the application of the recycling symbol on a product (from whatever industry) bears no guarantee that a product – whilst recyclable – is actually going to be recycled.

He said: “At best, we believe that this may undermine confidence and create scepticism in what brands are trying to communicate to their consumers and, at worst, render the recycling logo completely worthless.
“Simply Cups, however, believes that consumers are not being deliberately misled about why their used cups and cartons end up on a rubbish heap rather than made into second-life materials. Indeed, the lack of effective recycling will have surprised many brands and companies in the supply chain, who have historically passed the problem back down the line, without necessarily asking what really is happening to their waste.

“Whilst the waste industry is often criticised for its inability to provide solutions for every waste stream, it should not be its responsibility alone to solve the problem, nor is it acceptable to lay the blame wholly at their door.

“Product stewardship means that it is the responsibility of everyone in the supply chain – producers, users and brands – to ensure that the waste industry has the ability to extract the economic value it needs to ensure a commercially viable solution.

“It is now evident that brands can no longer use the recycling symbol as a defence mechanism to absolve responsibility but, instead, they should be engaging and collaborating with others in the supply chain in order to come up with workable solutions to tackle material segregation, collection and reprocessing.”

Simply Cups has set a target of recycling six million cups by end of 2016.
Government has 'no plans' to tax coffee cups

By BBC on March 18, 2016

The government says it has no plans to tax coffee shop cups after a minister suggested it could repeat its "success" in cutting plastic bag waste.

Rory Stewart told MPs there was a "huge" problem with unrecyclable, plastic-lined paper cups.

He said the plastic bag tax had worked well and cups would be a "very good thing to look at next".

But Mr Stewart's department Defra released a statement saying there were "no plans" for a tax.

Campaigners say that disposable coffee cups handed out in their billions are "virtually impossible" to recycle despite major cafe chains claiming theirs are eco-friendly.

Composition

According to some estimates, fewer than 1% of the 2.5 billion paper and plastic cups used in the UK each year are recycled, leading to criticism of High Street cafes for stamping them with recycling logos.

Answering a Commons question from Labour MP Rob Marris, Environment Minister Rory Stewart said: "It's a huge problem and there are tens of millions of these things being produced and thrown away.

"As you have pointed out, many of these things cannot be recycled either by the way they're disposed or because of the composition of the cup.

"Having tackled plastic bags, which I hope everybody in the House would agree the plastic bag tax has been a success, coffee cups seem to be a very good thing to look at next."

In October, England became the last of the UK's nations to bring in a 5p charge on plastic bags, aimed at reducing litter and environmental damage caused by retailers handing out billions of single-use carrier bags.

A Defra spokesman said: "While the minister acknowledged more needs to be done to recycle coffee cups, there are no plans to tax them."

Mr Stewart is to meet industry representatives to discuss ways of tackling the issue, but Defra would not say what these might include.

Incentive schemes

Disposable coffee cups can be difficult to recycle because most are made with a combination of paper and plastic.

There are just two specialist facilities in the UK that have the equipment to separate the materials.
Some coffee shop chains say they work to make recycling their cups easier and offer incentive schemes to encourage consumers to use their own.

A Starbucks spokesman said: "We are working closely with industry partners to crack the difficult problem of cup recycling.

"To incentivise environmentally friendly behaviour we offer a reusable cup discount of 25p on drinks if you bring your own reusable cup to our stores. This can be any reusable cup, not only a Starbucks one."

TV chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall has said he is "delighted" that the problem of unrecycled coffee cups has attracted government attention.

Mr Fearnley-Whittingstall, whose #wastenot campaign has gathered more than 300,000 supporters, said Mr Stewart's intervention should "help focus the coffee companies' minds on finding a solution".
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