

# Consultation for the Reduction of Single-Use Plastic Beverage Cups and Food Containers



*Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.*



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

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# Contents

<b>Ministers Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Introduction and background</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1. Purpose of the consultation	5
1.2. Strategic context	5
1.3. Drivers and evidence for change	6
1.4. Scope	7
1.5. Policy options	8
1.6. How would a proposed levy be used?	8
<b>2. Methodology</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1. Impact Assessment methodology	9
2.2. General questions on approach	11
2.3. Materials in scope	11
2.3.1. SUP beverage cups	11
2.3.2. SUP food containers	12
2.3.3. Materials in scope questions	13
<b>3. Results</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1. SUP Beverage cups	14
3.1.1. Ban	18
3.1.2. Levy	19
3.1.3. Voluntary retailer-led scheme	20
3.2. SUP food containers	21
3.2.1. Ban	26
3.2.2. Levy	27
3.2.3. Voluntary retailer-led scheme	29
3.3. Preferred approach	30
3.4. Administration and enforcement	31
<b>4. Summary and conclusion</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>5. How to respond to this consultation</b>	<b>33</b>
5.1. After the consultation	33

## Minister's Foreword

It was a little over 10 years ago as then Minister for the Environment that I announced that my Department would introduce a levy on carrier bags. I had hoped that a voluntary approach by industry would achieve the reduction we wished to see but sadly that did not prove to be the case. I remember only too well back then that you couldn't go very far at all without seeing discarded plastic bags hanging from trees, in hedgerows or lying on grass verges. They were a real scourge in our towns and on our beautiful Northern Ireland countryside. I am pleased to note that because of the carrier bag levy that I proposed this sight is far less common now following a huge reduction in "throw away" carrier bags.



However, even though many littered bags have disappeared the plastic hasn't. Because we rely so much on single-use plastic, every year in Northern Ireland we use over 70 million single-use plastic cups and around 150 million single-use plastic takeaway food containers that are simply discarded. What a waste!

Sadly, drinks cups and takeaway food containers made with single-use plastics are a new litter scourge. Recent surveys on behalf of my Department estimate that around 1 million single-use cups and food containers end up as unsightly litter around our countryside annually. Unfortunately the blight doesn't stop at the unsightly nature of this litter. It ends up in our waterways and ultimately in our seas with a further  $\frac{3}{4}$  million of these items estimated to make their way into the sea each year. It may be out of sight but it doesn't go away. Plastic from decades ago remains in our environment today and over the years we have continued to add to that mounting reservoir of littered plastic.

The NI Executive recognised this problem in the New Decade, New Approach agreement and gave me as Agriculture, Environment and Rural affairs Minister the task of creating a plan to do something about it. I am already addressing the collection and recycling of used plastics through co-operating with my UK colleagues on proposed reform to Extended Producer Responsibility and the creation of a Deposit Return Scheme. In June 2021 I also launched a Call for Evidence to help inform the development of a plan to eliminate plastic pollution in Northern Ireland.

I believe we need to promote alternatives to single-use plastics which is why I am introducing this consultation to look specifically at reducing plastic pollution from takeaway litter. In the consultation my department has suggested three options for plastic items: an outright ban; a levy along the lines of the Carrier Bag Levy; and a voluntary reduction approach. These options would result in a range of outcomes in terms of impact and how quickly a reduction in plastic can be achieved. If you share with me my concern for reducing plastic pollution I encourage you to respond to this consultation. We would like your feedback on the optimum solution.



**Edwin Poots MLA**

Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs



# 1. Introduction and background

## 1.1. Purpose of the consultation

This consultation presents options on the reduction of the consumption of single-use plastic (SUP) beverage cups and food containers in Northern Ireland (NI), with the aim of effecting a substantial reduction in the number of SUP beverage cups and food containers in circulation. The Department aims to encourage a more sustainable environment and circular economy for everyone across NI and the reduction in usage of all SUP beverage cups and food containers is a central building block of these targets.

The Department is seeking stakeholders' views on the suggested policy options to ensure the most effective method of reducing the consumption of SUP beverage cups and food containers is found. The results of this consultation will be used to determine the best policy options which may help to frame possible measures to promote the reduction in SUP items.

The goal of the policies is to reduce the use of the targeted types of SUP packaging, by encouraging wider take up of multi-use (MU) and/or single-use non-plastic (SUNP) alternatives.

## 1.2. Strategic context

Northern Ireland's environment is our most important asset and it is crucial to members of the public that we continue to protect and enhance it. The NI Executive's Programme for Government, Outcome 2 - we live and work sustainably, protecting the environment, aims to put a healthy environment at the heart of future Government policies whilst maintaining sustainable economic growth. In the *'New Decade, New approach'* document the NI Executive gave a commitment to prepare a plan to eliminate plastic pollution. These proposals are an important element in delivering on this commitment, as any changes to encourage the reduction of SUP beverage cups and food containers will deliver a decrease in the use of some of the most harmful plastics.

DAERA joined the UK Plastics Pact in July 2020<sup>1</sup>. The Pact is a trailblazing, collaborative initiative, delivered by WRAP (the Waste and Resources Action Programme) in partnership with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The initiative is unique because it unites governments, local authorities, non-government organisations (NGOs) and businesses involved in producing, selling, collecting and reprocessing plastic, to deliver ambitious targets for change by 2025. The overall aim of the Pact is to support the delivery of the UK Government's target of achieving zero avoidable plastic waste by end of 2042. These proposals assist DAERA in meeting the aims of the Pact.

In 2020 WRAP published the results of a survey of citizens' attitudes and behaviours associated with plastic packaging. The survey included responses from residents in Northern Ireland. The 'Plastic packaging waste: Understanding existing citizen behaviours, attitudes and openness

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/news/daera-joins-uk-plastics-pact>

to change' report<sup>2</sup> found that citizens are concerned about plastic packaging, particularly its potential impact on the marine environment and as litter.

While not focused specifically on single-use beverage cups or SUP food containers, the survey found that there was an understanding that governments, retailers, and brands had taken action to address plastic waste but there was still more that could be done.

Three quarters of all respondents said that there are things they personally could do to tackle plastic waste. When asked what actions they currently take, recycling all that they can was the most frequent response. Beyond recycling, the report found that some action is happening to reduce plastic consumption but that it is limited to the most engaged, and driven by a range of motivating factors. The report also concluded that plastic waste reduction behaviours could be simpler and often require facilitation by others, including governments, retailers, and brands.

### 1.3. Drivers and evidence for change

The high functionality and relatively low cost of plastic means that this material is increasingly used in everyday life. While plastic plays a useful role and provides essential applications in many sectors, its increasing use in short-lived applications, which are not designed for re-use or cost-effective recycling, means that related production and consumption patterns have become increasingly inefficient and linear. The steady increase in plastic waste generation and the leakage of plastic waste into the environment, in particular into the marine environment, must be tackled in order to achieve a circular life cycle for plastics. The significant negative environmental, health and economic impact of certain plastic products calls for the setting up of a specific framework to effectively reduce those negative effects.

For some SUP products, suitable and more sustainable alternatives are not yet readily available and the consumption of such SUP products is expected to increase over time if action is not taken. The primary objective of the Department for this consultation is to influence customer behaviour to promote a significant reduction in usage of SUP beverage cups and food containers.

Across the Northern Ireland retail sector many retailers have already taken steps to reduce the use of SUP beverage cups by offering alternatives at point of sale or incentives to use MU cups. Several retailers have also moved from SUP food containers to ones deemed more environmentally friendly. Unfortunately there are unclear outcomes from these changes as in many cases the infrastructure to process these 'better' alternatives is likely to remain unavailable while the variety of single-use containers and beverage cups e.g. compostable and non-compostable continue to co-exist. While some actions to date are to be commended and it is clear that progress has been made in reducing the use of SUP beverage cups and food containers, further proactive and preventative action must be taken to continue to reduce usage to protect our natural environment.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/plastic-packaging-waste-understanding-existing-citizen-behaviours-attitudes>

WRAP's 'Drinks Recycling On-the-Go' (2019) report notes that the majority of take-away hot drink cups (85%) were reported to be disposed of away from home, and only 11% disposed of at home<sup>3</sup>. Take-away beverage containers all contain a plastic layer which makes them difficult to recycle through household recycling collection services. The plastic content of beverage containers has the potential to contaminate otherwise clean collected paper and card. Council recycling services in Northern Ireland do not accept single-use beverage containers.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) carried out Northern Ireland's first Litter Composition Survey in 2019. This DAERA-funded analysis identified that, at any one time, there are an estimated 600,000 items of packaging litter on the streets of Northern Ireland. Of this, 31,841 items, or 5.2%, were calculated to be single-use cups containing plastic, and 19,982 items, or 3.3%, were calculated to be plastic food packaging<sup>4</sup>.

These findings are supported by the results of KNIB's annual litter and marine litter surveys<sup>5</sup>. The 2020 Marine Litter Report<sup>6</sup> notes that 67% of all observed litter was plastic, and KNIB's litter survey (June to August 2020) found an increase in the littering of SUP packaging and cutlery.

## 1.4. Scope

The consultation considers the range of SUP beverage cups and food containers which are available. To give an indication of scope, a list of beverage cups and food containers which would be included in the proposals is included in the Scoping Document, provided alongside this report.

Definition of beverage cups for purposes of the consultation:

*Cups for beverages, including their covers and lids.*

These might include take-away coffee cups and lids, or milkshake cups and covers, for example.

Definition of food containers for purposes of the consultation:

*Food containers, i.e. receptacles such as boxes, with or without a cover, used to contain food which:*

*(a) is intended for immediate consumption, either on-the-spot or take-away,*

*(b) is typically consumed from the receptacle, and*

*(c) is ready to be consumed without any further preparation, such as cooking, boiling or heating, including food containers used for fast food or other meal ready for immediate*

<sup>3</sup> <https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/drinks-recycling-go>

<sup>4</sup> Figures calculated from the final data tables of the KNIB LCA report, and can be calculated from the published report. <https://keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.etinu.net/keepnorthernirelandbeautiful/documents/008087.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org/cgi-bin/generic?instanceID=48>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/litter-beaches-northern-ireland>

*consumption, except beverage containers, plates and packets and wrappers containing food.*

The food containers have then been divided into two scopes, Scope 1 and Scope 2, illustrated in the Scoping Document.

- **Scope 1** includes food containers that are filled at point of sale (e.g. plastic trays for chips, plastic boxes used at salad bars). Consumers would have a choice here to use a SUP food container or use an alternative.
- **Scope 2** includes pre-filled SUP food containers, used for pre-packaged, prepared foods in shops (e.g. a pre-packaged sandwich, salad bowl or prepared fruit box). Consumers would therefore not have an alternative option when purchasing their food.

It is proposed that only Scope 1 food containers should be included within the ambit of the policies at the moment. The rationale for this is that in the case of Scope 2 food containers (a) the consumer has no opportunity to choose to have the food put into a multi-use container and thereby avoid the impact of the policy, and (b) SUNP alternatives are not readily available to producers/retailers in all cases. For further detail on Scope 1 and 2 rationales, see 'Northern Ireland Single-Use Plastic Data Final Report' provided alongside this report.

### 1.5. Policy options

The primary objective of the proposals is to influence customer behaviour to promote a significant reduction in usage of SUP beverage cups and food containers. The Department worked with WRAP to consider a range of proposals and identify the most effective options for a sustained and substantial reduction in the use of SUP beverage cups and food containers. These options are summarised below and the consultation seeks your views on these proposals.

Three policies are modelled for both SUP beverage cups and food containers:

- A ban on their use;
- A levy of 25p on each cup and 50p on each food container; and
- A voluntary scheme or schemes implemented by businesses that make use of SUP cups or food containers, which may comprise a range of charges for cups/food containers, discounts for MU cups/food containers and communication efforts. This is modelled as having the same effect as a 10p levy for a beverage cup and 25p for a food container.

### 1.6. How would a proposed levy be used?

The proceeds of any levy will be collected and processed by DAERA and used to both promote and sustain the wider NI environmental sector.



The levy will be reinvested to support a broad range of local and country wide environmental projects, supporting small, medium, and large projects funded through the NI Environment Fund, which enables not for profit organisations and councils to deliver key environmental interventions.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Impact Assessment methodology

In order to conduct the impact assessment a mathematical model was created in order to assess each of the proposed policy options. The model creates a range of scenarios based on each of the policy options and compares these to a baseline 'do nothing' scenario. The scenarios include measures of plastic waste prevented, cup/food container sales, money raised from any levies, final destination of disposed containers and many other parameters.

The model consists of three layers:

- A bottom layer where the demand for SUP, SUNP and MU containers is forecasted in a series of scenarios. Outputting a year-by-year prediction of the number of beverage cups/food containers used and discarded.
- A middle layer which matches the demand scenarios with a range of user-specified parameters. This defines the total number of beverage cups/food containers estimated in the bottom layer in terms of material of construction, how may fall in each scope, the method of disposal, and the final destination of the containers.
- A top layer which compares the results of the various scenarios to the baseline scenario.

The main purpose of the model is to create scenarios for each of the policy options which can then be compared against a baseline (and each other). The model allows for various factors to be used as comparisons encompassing various indicators of plastic waste and use, as well as other factors such as money raised in levies.

See 'An Introduction to the Single-use Plastics Assessment Framework' document, provided alongside this report, for the full introduction to the Single-Use Plastics Assessment Framework.

The model work based on a set of policy definitions using data gathered from various sources for entry into the various layers of the model. Where appropriate data could not be found assumptions had to be made instead. See 'Northern Ireland Single-Use Plastic Data Final Report' for the full list of assumptions, data and policy definitions.

Assumptions were made on the supply and productions costs, manufacturing costs, demand for containers, disposal routes, and volumetric data. Key assumptions were on when SUNP containers would become available, the cost for MU food containers, the likelihood of disposal for multi-use items per year, the % of beverage cups and food containers in the scope of the policy, and how each of the policies would affect demand for beverage cups and food containers.

An example set of results from the model is the number of containers disposed each year by disposal route. Table 1 shows the baseline (2021) estimated number of SUP cups by collection method covering large, and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) businesses, also splitting out the number in the health care sector which were considered exempt. The figures in Table 1 are the baseline SUP cup collection figures which future years are built off.

**Table 1: Number of SUP Cups Collected by Method**

Business size	Household collection	Commercial collection	Street collection	Litter	Total
Large	6,714,635	30,097,897	10,743,416	6,887,038	54,442,986
SME	1,046,437	4,690,581	1,674,299	1,073,305	8,484,621
Large – excluded	7,071	671,699	21,212	7,071	707,052
SME – excluded	70,705	6,716,992	212,116	70,705	7,070,518

Table 2 shows the baseline (2021) estimated number of Scope 1 and Scope 2 SUP food containers by collection method covering large and SME businesses, also splitting out the number in the health care sector which were considered exempt. The figures in Table 2 are the baseline SUP food container collection figures which future years are built off.

**Table 2: Number of SUP FCs Collected by Method**

Inclusion	Business size	Household collection	Commercial collection	Street collection	Litter	Total
Scope 1*	Large	3,532,431	7,064,861	2,119,458	1,412,972	14,129,722
	SME	3,532,431	7,064,861	2,119,458	1,412,972	14,129,722
Scope 2	Large	10,173,400	55,105,917	12,716,750	6,782,267	84,778,335
	SME	1,526,010	8,265,888	1,907,513	1,017,340	12,716,750
Exempt	Large	14,130	1,342,324	42,389	14,130	1,412,972
	SME	141,297	13,423,236	423,892	141,297	14,129,722

\*Scope 1 large and SME business have the same values as each is estimated to be 50% of Scope 1 food containers

## 2.2. General questions on approach

The proposed policies could affect business of all sizes in Northern Ireland from large multinationals to small local businesses. The size of the organisation affected could alter the potential impact. As such it is important to carefully consider the scope of which organisations should be affected by these proposed policies.

What size of businesses should the proposed policies apply to? (select all that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small (1-49 employees)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medium (50-249 employees)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Large (250+ employees)
<input type="checkbox"/>	None of the above

The potential policies selected for this consultation are broad and have seen use elsewhere however, they are not completely exhaustive. Other potential policies may exist that could also achieve the stated policy aims.

Are you aware of any other policy options, not including those already listed, that would be suitable to achieve the stated policy aims?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No
If 'yes' please explain	

## 2.3. Materials in scope

### 2.3.1. SUP beverage cups

Three policies are modelled for SUP cups:

- A ban on their use, which could be implemented fully immediately or phased in over a period of time giving companies time to adapt;
- A levy of 25p on each cup; and
- A voluntary scheme or schemes implemented by businesses that make use of SUP cups, which may comprise a range of charges for cups, discounts for MU cups and communication efforts. This is modelled as having the same effect as a 10p levy.

It is proposed that the levy should take the form of a charge that is visible to the consumer - so it would be shown on menus, receipts or similar. For the ban and the levy, the policy would provide

for an exemption for uses in the healthcare sector, where SUP items may be needed for the purpose of infection control. No exemption is needed within the context of a voluntary scheme.

### **2.3.2. SUP food containers**

Three policies are also modelled for Scope 1 SUP food containers. As defined, the policy options applied to Scope 1 food containers are broadly similar to those modelled for cups:

- A ban on their use, which could be implemented fully immediately or phased in over a period of time giving companies time to adapt;
- A levy of 50p on each SUP food container; and
- A voluntary scheme or schemes implemented by businesses that make use of SUP food containers, which may comprise a range of charges for food containers, discounts for consumers who use MU food containers and communication efforts. This is modelled as having the same effect as a 25p levy.

The proposed levy is higher than that proposed for a SUP beverage cup, because although the value of foodstuffs sold in SUP food containers varies considerably, a meal sold in a food container may often be of significantly higher value than a cup of tea or coffee, making the impact of a 25p levy proportionately smaller.

There is an exemption for Scope 1 food containers used in the healthcare sector, and in the current modelling Scope 2 food containers have not been included as explained in the introduction.

Which of following items, if any, should be included within the scope of proposed policy measures? (select all that apply)

- Plastic single-use cups
- Card single-use cups lined with plastic
- Takeaway food containers (food containers provided with meals purchased to take off the premises) – Scope 1
- Pre-filled food containers – Scope 2
- Self-fill food containers (food containers that the customers fill themselves before purchase e.g. at a salad bar) – Scope 1
- Other

If 'other' please explain below

Consumers have limited alternative options when purchasing food in pre-filled (Scope 2) containers. That is, the consumer does not have an option to make a purchase without the container. For this reason, it was not possible to model the impact of policies on pre-filled (Scope 2) food containers, however, these are included within the scope of this consultation.

In your view is it practical to include pre-filled (Scope 2) plastic food containers, including those which are plastic-lined, within the scope of these policies?

	Yes
	No
	Don't Know
If 'yes' please explain	

### 2.3.3. Materials in scope questions

The current proposed measures focus on plastics for the reasons outlined in the introduction. In the future further measures or updates to the proposed measures may expand to cover other materials.

In addition to plastic, should any other materials be included in future measures? (select all that apply)

	Metal
	Glass
	Paper/card
	None of the above
	Other
If 'other' please explain below	

In the proposed measure the levy is applied at the point of purchase and targeted at consumers. This has been chosen as it maximises the visibility of the levy making sure the consumer is aware they are paying it and therefore increasing the chance of behaviour change. The levy could instead be placed on producers, this would mean the levy was less visible. Producers could still potentially pass the levy onto consumers, but the consumer would not see this as a

separate cost but instead combined into the total.

If a levy were to be introduced, who should pay it, producers or consumers? (select one)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Producers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consumers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
If 'other' please explain below	

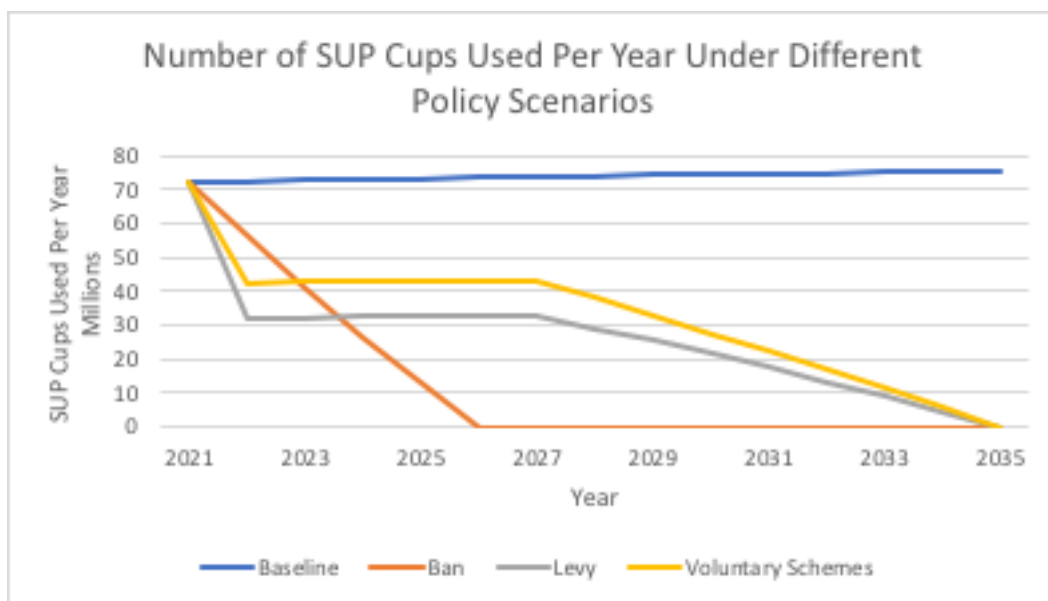
### 3. Results

#### 3.1. SUP Beverage cups

The Department worked with WRAP, in conjunction with Eunomia and Red Scientific, on an impact assessment (IA) to analyse the impact of each of the options. This was done by using a series of models to evaluate the impact of each option.

Please note, the references to the voluntary scheme are made on the assumption that the majority of retailers would join the scheme and that the scheme has longevity. Any differences to these assumptions could undermine the effectiveness of a voluntary scheme.

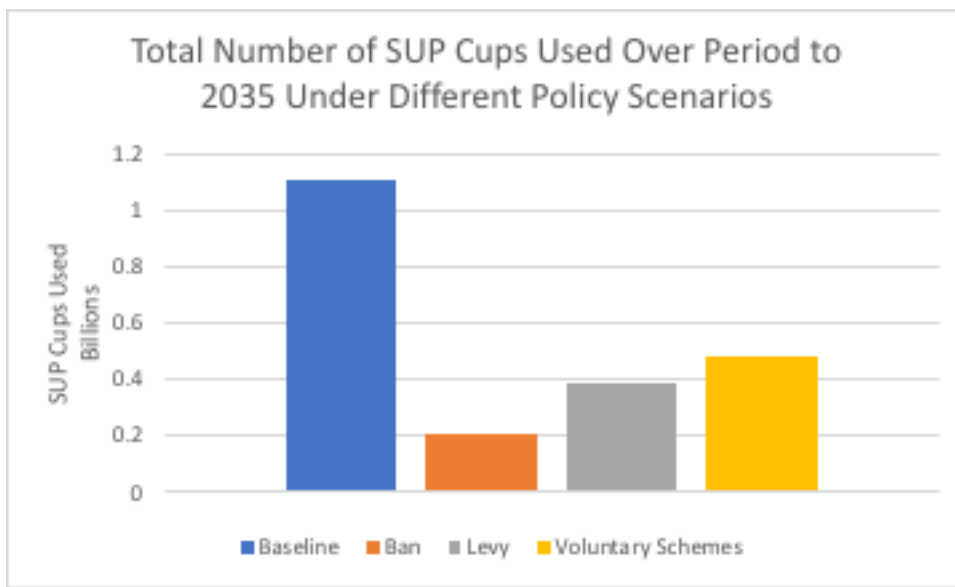
Figure 1



The results of the impact assessment on the number of SUP beverage cups used per year up to 2035 are summarised in the line graph at Figure 1. The statistics assume that the ban, levy

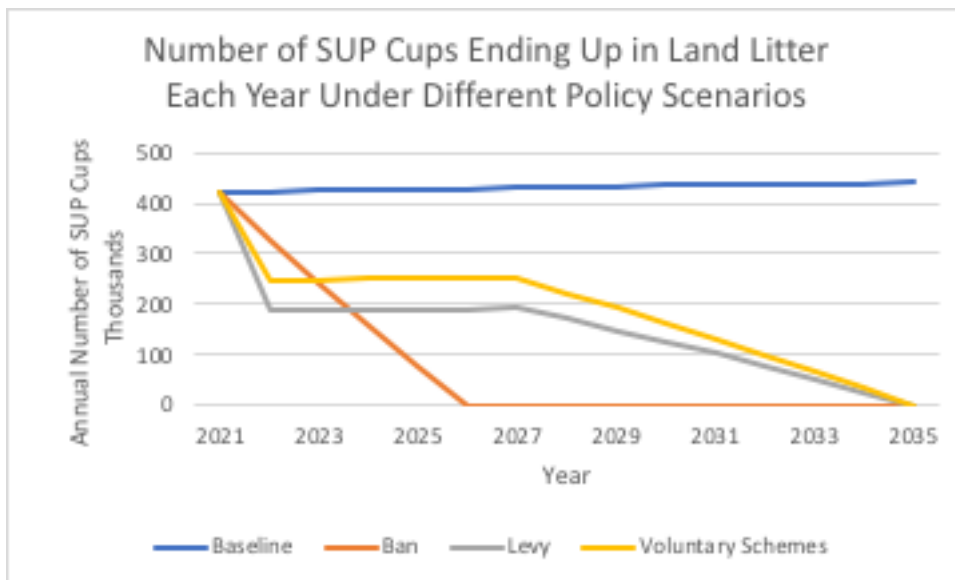
or voluntary scheme would begin 1 January 2022 for the purposes of modelling. They show that a ban would have the most immediate impact, with all SUP beverage cups phased out by 2026. A levy would have the next most effective reduction, with a drop of approximately 40 million cups used per year by 2022 and reducing to zero by 2035. This assumes the availability of alternatives which would lead to this decrease. The voluntary scheme follows a similar trajectory to the levy, but with a higher rate of usage of SUP beverage cups. The baseline ('do nothing') shows a gradual increase in number of SUP beverage cups used each year.

Figure 2



The overall number of cups used over the period until 2035 is summarised in Figure 2. The baseline or do nothing approach would mean almost 1.1 billion SUP beverage cups used by 2035. The ban has the most impact on reducing SUP beverage cups, with 200 million cups being used in this period if a ban were to be introduced (this is taking into account a possible phased approach or lead-in time to a ban). The levy would lead to the usage of approximately 400 million SUP beverage cups in the same period, whilst the voluntary scheme would mean a usage of approximately 500 million cups over the period.

Figure 3



The IA also considered how each option impacted on land litter. Figure 3 shows that the ban has a significant impact on SUP land litter, reducing to zero by 2026. Once again, the levy is the next most effective scenario and meets the same levels of land litter from discarded SUP beverage cups as the ban by 2035. The voluntary scheme follows a similar trajectory to the levy, but with slightly higher levels of land litter. Whilst the baseline scenario sees land litter rise slightly.

Figure 4

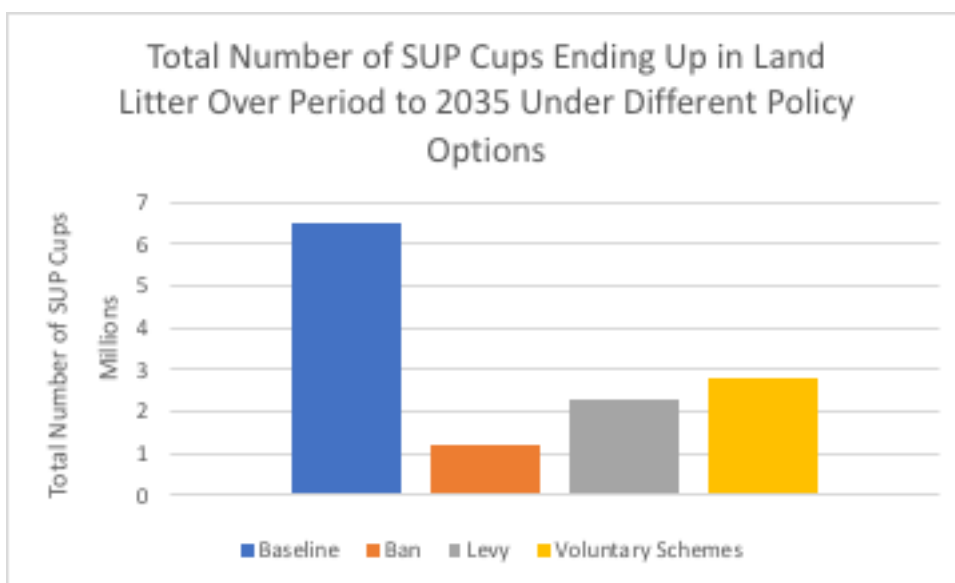
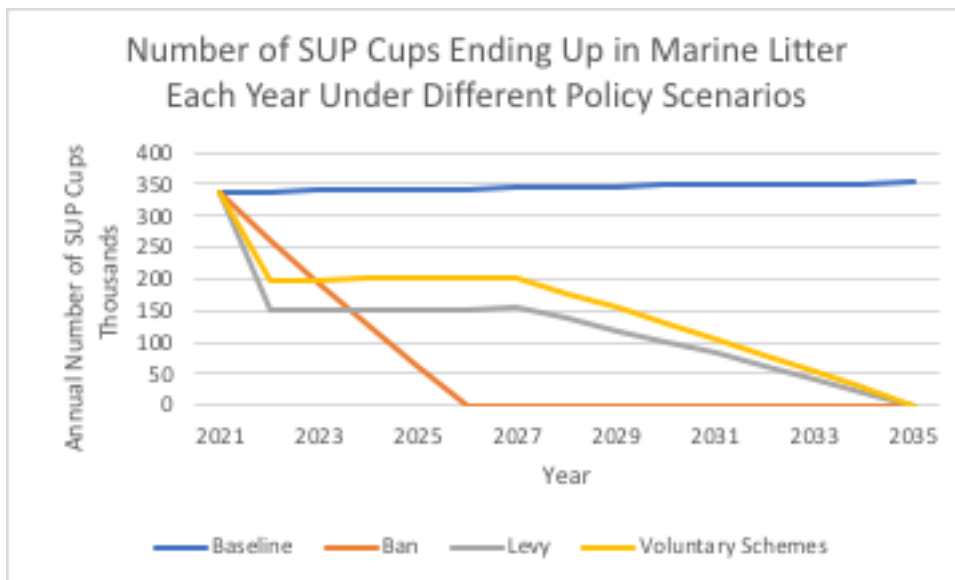


Figure 4 shows total number of SUP beverage cups which would end up as land litter. Clearly, the ban has the biggest impact, with approximately 1 million SUP cups in land litter, compared to 6.5 million cups if no action is taken. A levy would see just over 2 million SUP beverage cups as land litter and the voluntary scheme would result in almost 3 million cups littered.

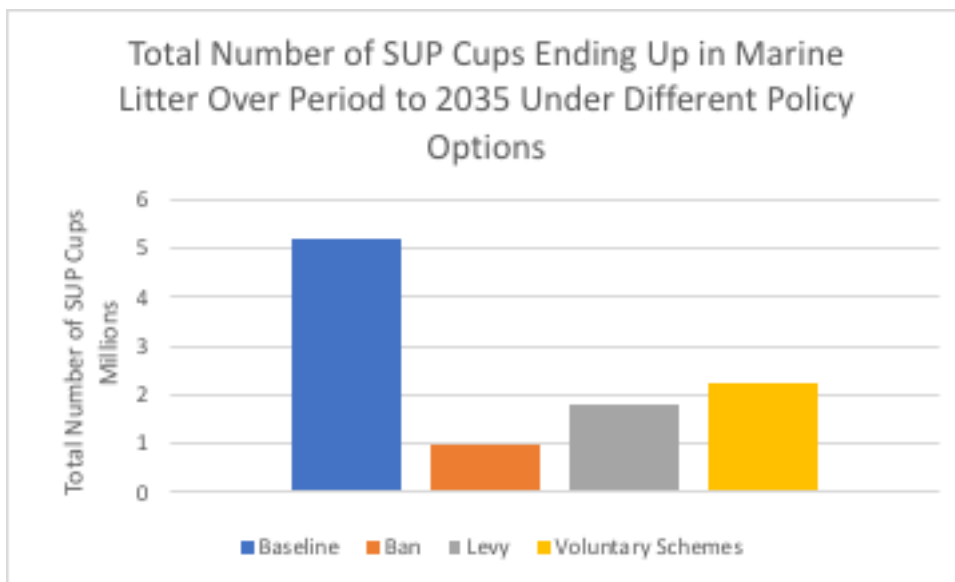


Figure 5



Figures 5 and 6 show the expected tonnage of marine litter from discarded SUP beverage cups over the period. Figure 5 gives a very similar picture to that of land litter, with the ban having the most immediate impact, the levy being next most effective, with the voluntary scheme following a less effective trajectory and all reaching the same level by 2035. Figure 6 similarly shows that the ban would have the biggest reduction in the number of SUP beverage cups finding their way into marine litter, closely followed by the levy and then the voluntary scheme.

Figure 6



Over its life span the IA predicts a levy would raise around £70 million pounds reaching a maximum of around £7.3 million in 2027 and falling to £0 in 2035 with the elimination of SUP cups. The ban and voluntary scheme policy options would raise no funds as they do not contain a levy element.

A key assumption in the IA is the availability of single-use non plastic alternatives to SUP cups, especially the date at which they will become widely available. The model is particularly sensitive to the availability of these alternatives as it impacts when SUP beverage cup consumption can be replaced outside of the use of multiuse cups which are assumed to only be used by a minority of the population even in 2035.

In your view, if no policies or measures were to be introduced, what is the earliest date that the market might develop and supply single-use non-plastic cups? (select one)

	They are already available
	The market would not develop and supply single-use non-plastic cups
	2022
	2023
	2024
	2025
	2026+
	Don't know
	Other

If 'other' please explain below

Please describe the single-use non-plastic cup that is already available. (Only answer if 'they are already available' was selected for the previous question)

### 3.1.1 Ban

The government estimates that 4.7 billion plastic straws, 316 million plastic stirrers, and 1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds were used in England every year. Many of these items ended up discarded and polluting waterways and the ocean. The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) therefore introduced a ban on supplying plastic straws, plastic stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds in England on 1 October 2020. By banning these items, it was government's aim to protect marine wildlife from these sources of avoidable plastic waste.

If a ban on SUP beverage cups were introduced in Northern Ireland, it could be introduced gradually, with SUP beverage cups phased out over a period of time. A single date for an outright ban could also be considered, to give all parties time to prepare.

If a ban were to be introduced on SUP beverage cups (including plastics or bioplastics) how should the ban be implemented? (select one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Fully implemented from the outset
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phased in over 6 months
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phased in over 1 year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

If 'other' please explain below

If a ban on were to be introduced on SUP beverage cups (including plastics or bioplastics) what year should a ban on SUP beverage cups be introduced? (select one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	2022
<input type="checkbox"/>	2023
<input type="checkbox"/>	2024
<input type="checkbox"/>	2025
<input type="checkbox"/>	2026+
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

If 'other' please explain below

### **3.1.2 Levy**

A levy could be introduced on all SUP beverage cups (as outlined in the Scoping Document). It is proposed that the levy should take the form of a charge that is visible to the consumer - so it would be shown on menus, receipts or similar. The levy would be introduced from a set date to be determined. From that date forwards, the levy would apply. Consumers could choose to pay the levy or opt instead to use a MU cup or SUNP alternative, provided by the retailer. The levy charge is suggested at 25p per SUP beverage cup.

It is believed that the levy will encourage behaviour change, very much like the carrier bag levy

has done. The carrier bag levy is a good example of the impact that can be made. Published annual usage statistics for the existing levy show that the introduction of the levy across NI in 2013 had a significantly positive impact, reducing carrier bag use by 73.2% (in excess of 1.5 billion bags) from the 2012 baseline figure of 300 million carrier bags.

If a levy were to be introduced on SUP beverage cups (including plastics or bioplastics) what year should a levy on SUP beverage cups (of any scope) be introduced? (select one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	2022
<input type="checkbox"/>	2023
<input type="checkbox"/>	2024
<input type="checkbox"/>	2025
<input type="checkbox"/>	2026+
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

If 'other' please explain below

If a levy were to be introduced on SUP beverage cups (including plastics or bioplastics) what level should it be set at? (select one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	£0.10-£0.24
<input type="checkbox"/>	£0.25-£0.49
<input type="checkbox"/>	£0.50-£0.74
<input type="checkbox"/>	£0.75-£1.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

If 'other' please explain below

### 3.1.3 Voluntary retailer-led scheme

A voluntary retailer-led scheme could be initiated and set up by the retail sector. Some organisations might choose to work together as part of a joint initiative, although they might follow different plans in their aims to reduce the usage of SUP beverage cups. A voluntary scheme might see retailers adding a charge to the SUP beverage cup, or offering incentives for customers to use alternatives, for example.

A good example of a voluntary scheme is Ireland’s Conscious Cup campaign, a non-profit organisation started in 2016 by a group of concerned individuals who, inspired by similar initiatives of cafes and citizens around the world, are aiming to reduce and eventually eliminate single-use cups in Ireland. Their goal is to eliminate single-use in the Cafe and Food to Go sector by encouraging cafes and other outlets to incentivise customers to bring their own.

Do you believe a voluntary scheme for SUP beverage cups, of any form, would be effective in meeting the goal of a significant reduction in SUP cup use?

Yes

No (If answered no, do not complete next two questions)

What design of voluntary scheme would be successful in terms of administration, monitoring, and applications?

What are the key elements for a successful voluntary scheme for SUP beverage cups? (select all that apply)

The ability to in some way enforce signatories to enact the agreement

For either internal or external monitoring to be conducted

For a significant amount of the affected organisations (by sales volume) to be signed up

A consumer facing communications campaign explaining the purpose and aims of the agreement

For the agreement to contain agreed action for all signatories to undertake

For signatories to the agreement to have flexibility in achieving the aims of the agreement

Other

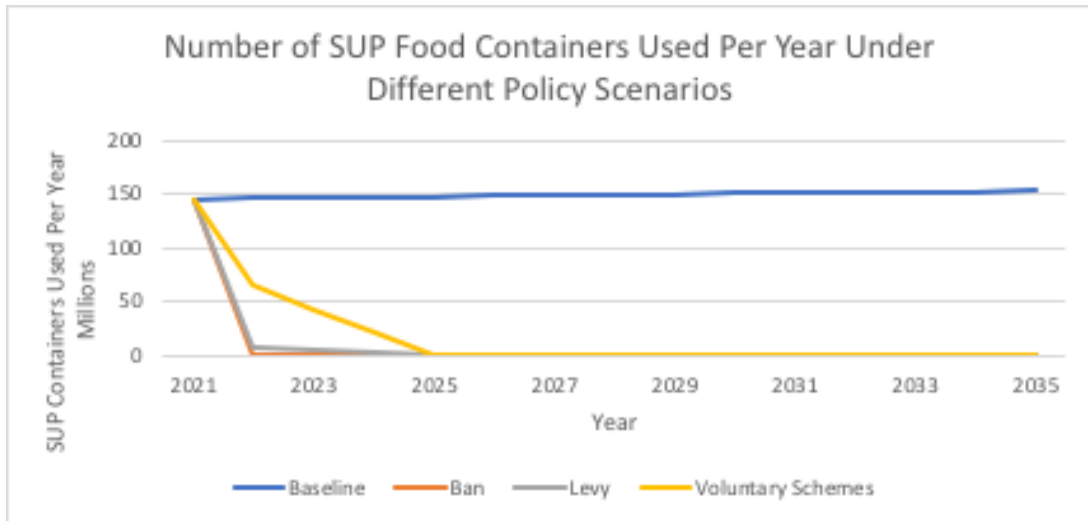
If ‘other’ please explain below

### 3.2 SUP food containers

The results of the impact assessment on the number of SUP food containers used per year up to 2035 are summarised in the line graph at Figure 7. This shows that both the ban and the levy

have a similar impact on the reduction in the usage of food containers. The voluntary scheme has a slower trajectory but may perform similarly to the other two options by 2025 if the voluntary scheme has significant uptake across all retailers and continues for the whole period.

Figure 7



Once again, Figure 8 shows a dramatic reduction in the number of SUP food containers used in the period up to 2035 with either the ban or levy options. Over the period to 2035, the baseline (do nothing) usage is approximately 2.2 billion containers used. The ban achieves reductions of around 146 million total containers and the levy leads to a reduction of approximately 160 million total containers used over the period. The voluntary scheme also leads to a reduction to approximately 275 million containers used over the period.

Figure 8

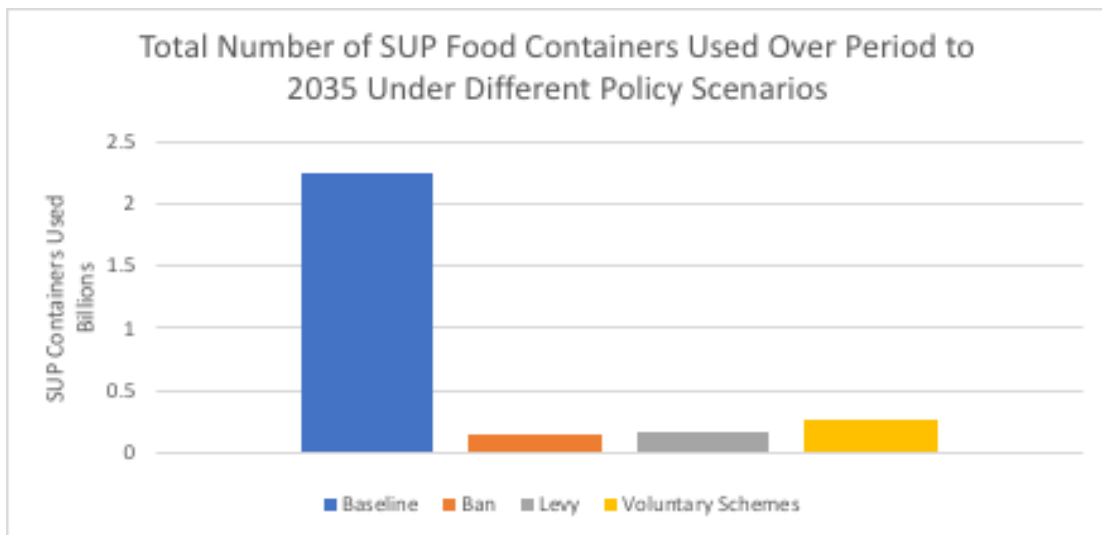


Figure 9

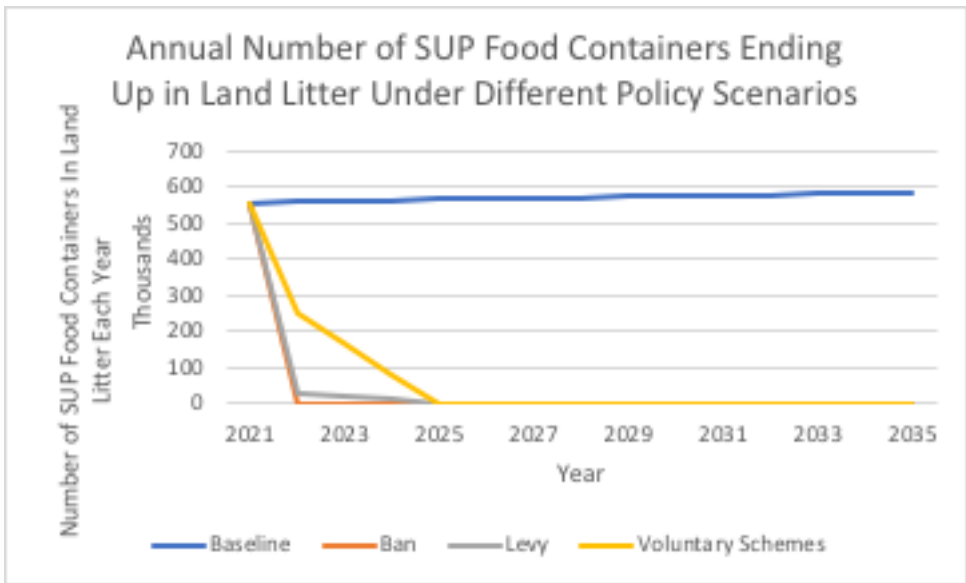


Figure 9 shows the impact on land litter of the various scenarios. Once again, both the ban and levy have a similar impact, with a reduction to almost zero after the first year, and the voluntary scheme meeting the same reduction by 2025. Whilst the baseline scenario sees land litter rise slightly. Figure 10 shows the overall reduction in SUP food containers in land litter up to 2035 and the ban and levy have a very positive impact, with the voluntary scheme, if widely applied, very close behind.

Figure 10

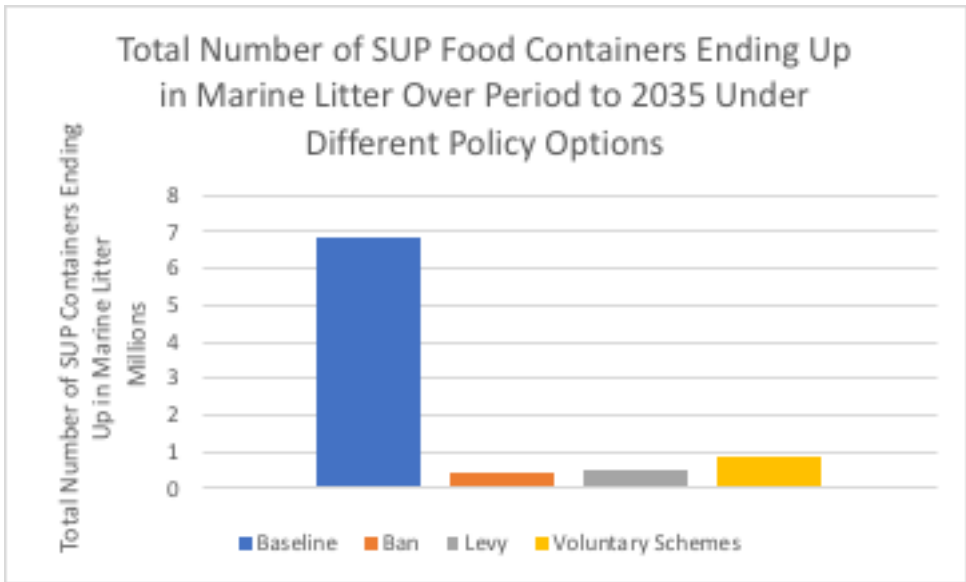
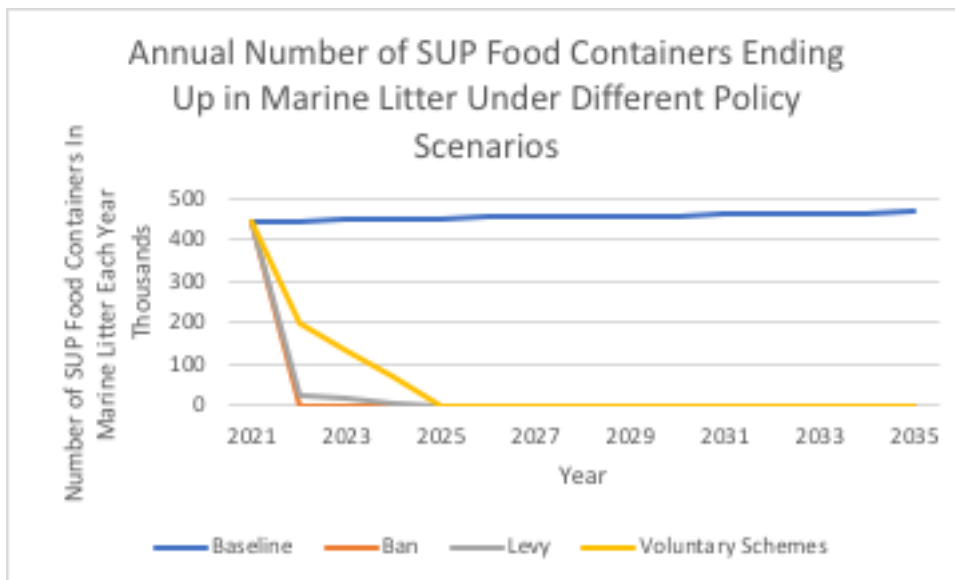
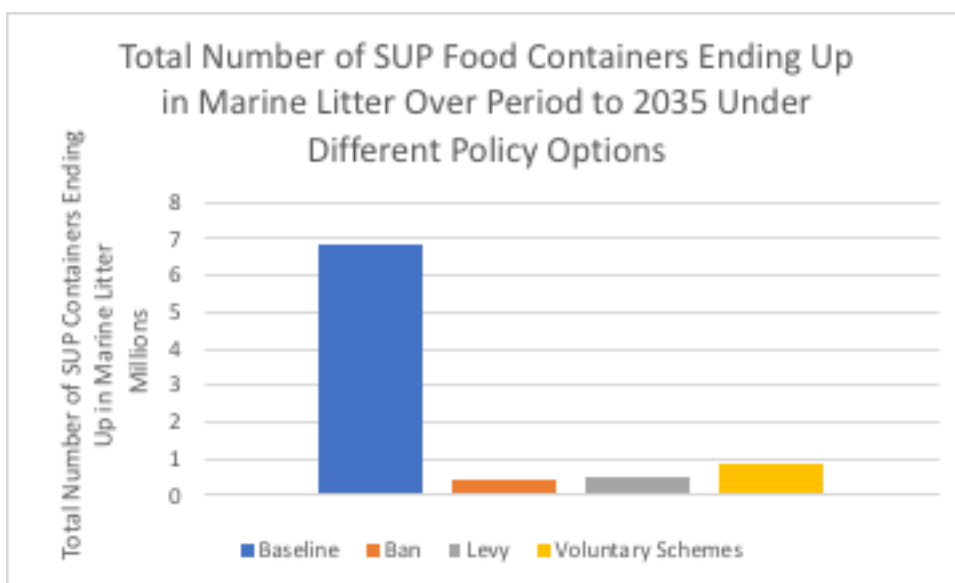


Figure 11



Figures 11 and 12 show similar results on the impact on marine litter. The ban and the levy have the greatest and most immediate impact in Figure 11, with the voluntary scheme potentially achieving a similar reduction by 2025. Figure 12 shows that both the ban and the levy have very similar impact on the reduction of marine litter, with well under 1 million items found, with the voluntary scheme close behind.

Figure 12



Over its life span the IA predict a levy on Scope 1 food containers would raise around £1.4 million pounds reaching a maximum of around £0.7 million pounds in the 2022 year and falling to £0 in 2025 onwards with the elimination of SUP food containers. The ban and voluntary scheme policy options would raise no funds as they do not contain a levy element. The statistics assume that the ban, levy or voluntary scheme would begin 1 January 2022 for the purposes of modelling.



A key assumption in the IA is the availability of SUNP alternatives to SUP food containers, especially the date at which they will become widely available. The model is particularly sensitive to the availability of these alternatives as it impacts when SUP food container consumption can be replaced outside of the use of multiuse food containers which are assumed to only be used by a minority of the population even in 2035.

In your view, if no policies or measures were to be introduced, what is the earliest date that the market might develop and supply SUNP (including plastic lining) food containers? (select one)

	They are already available
	The market would not develop and supply SUNP food containers
	2022
	2023
	2024
	2025
	2026+
	Don't know
	Other

If 'other' please explain below

Please describe the SUNP food container that is already available. (Only answer if 'they are already available' was selected for the previous question)

What types of food containers should be targeted by the proposed measures? (select all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Takeaway food containers (food containers provided with meals purchased to take of the premises)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-filled food containers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-fill food containers (food containers that the customers fill themselves before purchase e.g. at a salad bar)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

If 'other' please explain below

### 3.2.1 Ban

If a ban were introduced, it could be introduced gradually, with SUP food containers phased out over a period of time. A single date for an outright ban could also be considered, to give all parties time to prepare.

If a ban on SUP food containers were introduced how should the ban be implemented? (select one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Fully implemented from the outset
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phased in over 6 months
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phased in over 1 year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

If 'other' please explain below

Is there an alternative method of introducing the ban, not mentioned in this consultation?	
	Yes
	No
If 'yes' please explain	

In what year should a ban on SUP food containers be introduced? (select 1 option for each row, put cross in selected box)						
Takeaway food containers	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Later
Pre-filled food containers	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Later
Self-fill food containers	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Later

### 3.2.2 Levy

A levy could be introduced on all SUP food containers. It is proposed that the levy should take the form of a charge that is visible to the consumer - so it would be shown on menus, receipts or similar. The levy would be introduced from a set date to be determined. From that date forwards, the levy would apply. Consumers could choose to pay the levy or opt instead to use a MU container or SUNP alternative, provided by the retailer. The levy charge is suggested at 50p per SUP food container.

If a levy on SUP food containers were introduced what level should it be set at? (select one)

£0.25-£0.49

£0.50-£0.74

£0.75-£0.99

£1.00-£1.24

£1.25-£1.50

Other

If 'other' please explain below

Effectively, a levy on pre-filled SUP food containers places the emphasis on change with the producer, as the consumer has no choice but to accept the levy if they wish to purchase the food and there is no clear way to place the levy directly on the consumer. The only way for pre-filled containers to 'offer alternatives' is for the producer to make the change to SUNP. This means a levy on pre-filled SUP food containers would not be as visible to consumers and there may not be the opportunity for consumer to change their own behaviour.

Would a levy be effective in reducing the consumption of pre-filled plastic food containers?

Yes

No

Don't know

How could a levy on pre-filled plastic food containers be implemented in terms of scheme administration, monitoring, and applications? (Only answer if 'yes' was selected for the previous question)

Why would a levy on pre-filled SUP food containers be ineffective? (Only answer if 'no' was selected for the previous question)

Would a levy on producers be more or less effective in reducing consumption of SUP packaging than a levy on consumers? (select one)

<input type="radio"/>	More
<input type="radio"/>	The same
<input type="radio"/>	Less
<input type="radio"/>	Don't know

### 3.2.3 Voluntary retailer-led scheme

A voluntary retailer-led scheme could be initiated and set up by the retail sector. Some organisations might choose to work together as part of a joint initiative, although they might follow different plans in their aims to reduce the usage of SUP food containers. A voluntary scheme might see retailers adding a charge to the SUP food containers, or offering incentives for customers to use alternatives, for example.

National retailers are also beginning to introduce more loose and unwrapped produce to reduce single-use plastic packaging. Consumers can, for example, bring their own refillable container, use retailer-provided containers (e.g. paper bags) or purchase and take home items without using packaging at all.

Asda successfully ran a trial of its 'Refill Zone' at a store in Leeds, where shoppers can buy loose and unpackaged items. The scheme is now being extended to more Asda stores. Marks and Spencer has introduced its 'Fill Your Own' trial to 11 of its stores, including its Lisburn store. Results from Waitrose's 11-week 'Unpacked' refill trial in 2019, found that 98% of single-use packaging was eliminated across the 200 products in their trial, and that all plastic packaging (including single-use and re-usable) was reduced by 83%. The scheme also proved popular with consumers and has been extended to more Waitrose stores.

Do you believe a voluntary scheme for SUP food containers, of any form, would be effective in meeting the proposed reductions?

<input type="radio"/>	Yes
<input type="radio"/>	No

If 'yes' what design of voluntary scheme would be successful in terms of scheme administration, monitoring, and applications?

What are the key elements for a successful voluntary scheme for SUP food containers? (select all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	The ability to in some way enforce signatories to enact the agreement
<input type="checkbox"/>	For either internal or external monitoring to be conducted
<input type="checkbox"/>	For a significant amount of the effected organisations (by sales volume) to be signed up
<input type="checkbox"/>	A consumer facing communications campaign explaining the purpose and aims of the agreement
<input type="checkbox"/>	For the agreement to contain agreed action for all signatories to undertake
<input type="checkbox"/>	For signatories to the agreement to have flexibility in achieving the aims of the agreement
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

If 'other' please enter below

### 3.3 Preferred approach

This consultation proposes a number of options to tackle the increase of SUP beverage cups and food containers. It summarises the findings of the modelling which was done to analyse each option. The aim of the consultation is to seek views on the most effective way to ensure a sustained and substantial reduction in SUP beverage cups and food containers. With this in mind:

Do you agree with the results of the modelling? (one per row)

Cups	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Food containers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

If 'no' for cups please explain here

If 'no' for food containers please explain here

What is your preferred option to meet the proposed reductions? (one per row)							
Cups		Ban		Levy		Voluntary scheme	Other
Food containers		Ban		Levy		Voluntary scheme	Other
Cups 'other' please specify							
Food containers 'other' please specify							
Please describe why this is your preferred option for cups.							
Please describe why this is your preferred option for food containers.							

### 3.4 Administration and enforcement

What should the proposed measures include to be successful/effective? (select all that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Penalties for non-compliance, for example, fines
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provision of clear guidance on, scope, obligations, actions etc...
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creation of a scheme administrator/regulator
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provision of independent monitoring
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
If 'other' please explain below	

Who should monitor the impact of the measures? (select only one)

- DAERA
- The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
- An independent organisation (e.g., a charity)
- A newly created public body
- The companies affected
- Don't know
- Other

If 'other' please explain below

If a levy were adopted how should any funds raised from the collection of levies be distributed? (Please pick only 3 including 'other')

- Regulation and enforcement of the measures
- Waste reduction initiatives
- Litter campaigns
- To encourage recycling
- Wildlife/ecological initiatives
- SUP reduction activities
- Other

If 'other' please explain below



## 4 Summary and conclusion

Officials will use the results of this consultation to guide final policy decisions.

There is renewed emphasis on minimising the use of SUP in line with the UK Government's 25-year Environmental Plan. Promotion of a greater awareness by members of the public in NI of their environment and how we all use and dispose of our natural resources must be paramount in our thinking at both local and global levels. While the NI Assembly work primarily for everyone in NI we also must consider global environmental concerns and as such "*Act Locally, Think Globally*".

## 5 How to respond to this consultation

Responses are invited via Citizen Space at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations>

By email via: [epgni@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:epgni@daera-ni.gov.uk)

Or by post to: SUP and Waste Legislation Team,

Klondyke, Cromac Avenue,

Gasworks Business Park, Lower Ormeau Road,

Belfast, BT7 2JA.

**We would encourage an online response in order to limit any environmental impact.**

**Those Affected:** This is a public consultation, open to all who may have an interest and who wish to be part of improving the environmental impact of SUP beverage cups and food containers. It is hoped that many will take an interest in this consultation and provide feedback. Retailers, producers, those involved in environmental issues, local authorities and members of the public. All views are welcomed by the Department.

**Duration:** This consultation will run for a period of 8 weeks. It will open on **18 October 2021** and close on **17 December 2021**.

## 5.1 After the consultation

**Confidentiality:** The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request.

**Data Protection:** Section 8(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 permits processing of personal data when necessary for an activity that supports or promotes democratic engagement. Information provided by respondents to this consultation exercise will be held and used for the purposes of the administration of this current exercise and subsequently disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority (the Department in this case). This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances.

The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature;
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.
- For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office:

Email: [ni@ico.org.uk](mailto:ni@ico.org.uk)

Website: [Information Commissioner's Office](#)

## Alternative Formats

This document is also available on the DAERA website at:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-reduction-single-use-plastic-beverage-cups-and-food-containers>

You can request a copy of this document in other formats, such as:

- Paper Copy
- Large Print
- Braille
- Other languages

To get a copy of this document in another format contact:

Single Use Plastic and Waste Legislation Team

Email: [epgni@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:epgni@daera-ni.gov.uk)