

# PLASTIC FREE

NORTH DEVON

## PLASTIC FREE SPORTS EVENT TOOLKIT

Developed by Croyde Ocean Events and Plastic Free North Devon  
in association with The Pickwell Foundation



Pickwell Foundation  
FOR PEOPLE & PLANET

# INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the organisers of the Croyde Ocean Triathlon engaged in a partnership with The Pickwell Foundation and Plastic Free North Devon to deliver what is believed to have been the first Plastic Free Sports Event of its kind. Surfers Against Sewage awarded the organisers with Plastic Free Champion status, rewarding their greater consideration for the environment while still delivering a fantastic event.

Peter Wright, Race Director says:

*"We are the first Plastic Free sporting events company in the UK. We want to show that it is possible to put on incredible events in beautiful locations without damaging the environment in the process. We want to lead the way in making events as environmentally sustainable as possible and will share our lessons and experiences with other event organisers in the UK and beyond."*

This plastic-free toolkit has been specifically developed for mass-participation sports events, however the principles can be applied to any event, of any scale, as a one-off or on a regular basis.

The focus here is on the reduction of single-use plastics, but over time you will be able to develop events that are entirely environmentally sustainable.





# WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Some of the activities and measures suggested in the toolkit will save you money, some will get you more customers and recognition as an event or business, but ultimately all the measures you implement will reduce the amount of unnecessary plastic that ends up in landfill and/or our oceans - protecting our wildlife and our planet in the process.

Follow-up surveys from Croyde Ocean Events have demonstrated that the move towards environmental awareness and sensitivity as an event organiser is something that the public value and appreciate. When asked, more than 75% of those who took part said that they would be 'likely' or 'very likely' to only take part in events which considered their environmental impact; a statistic well worth bearing in mind for all event organisers in the UK and beyond.



# THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit is an opportunity to review all aspects of your event to see where it is possible to reduce the use of plastic.

## REDUCE

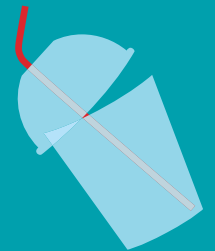
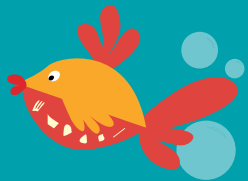
DO YOU REALLY NEED TO USE IT?  
IF NOT, DON'T

## REUSE

IF YOU REALLY NEED IT,  
MAKE SURE IT CAN BE  
REUSED OVER AND OVER

## RECYCLE

CAN'T REUSE IT?  
MAKE SURE IT  
CAN BE  
RECYCLED



# IDEAS FOR YOUR EVENT

## 1. VENDORS/CONCESSIONS/CATERERS

All concessions present at your event should be committed to zero single-use plastic. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Not selling soft drinks (incl water) in plastic bottles, no straws, plastic cutlery etc.
- Using compostable food packaging where reusable is not possible.
- Not giving out plastic bags.



## 2. SUPPLIERS

Croyde Ocean Events worked with their suppliers to ensure they did not receive excess plastic packaging with their orders. Examples of this included their medal supplier who replaced zip-lock bags for individual medals with tissue paper wrapping. Another supplier ensured there was no plastic used in the packaging of the bamboo reusable cups all competitors received, and they ensured that the single-use plastic wrapping for "Drybags" was replaced with fully recyclable cardboard boxes.

This engagement with suppliers has a fantastic knock-on effect, and as a result, many are now adopting these practices with all future orders they receive. Suppliers want your business and will usually be very happy to look at reducing their plastic packaging – they probably just haven't been asked before.



### 3. WATER AVAILABILITY

Consider the use of a Water Bar at the start/finish area of your event. Plastic Free North Devon have created a portable water bar which was used by Croyde Ocean Events at their triathlon eliminating the need for 1200 plastic bottles. For more information, please contact [plasticfreenorthdevon@gmail.com](mailto:plasticfreenorthdevon@gmail.com), where someone will happily discuss your options with you.

For 'on course' drink stations, you could dispense tap water from large containers. You could also provide compostable cups that can be composted at the end of the event by a sponsor. Or why not provide collapsible cups, which are becoming more popular. These can be filled using jugs from water stations. Competitors can clip them onto running belts or they can be compacted under clothing.





## 4. FOOD FOR PARTICIPANTS

At the finish line, provide something nutritious for your competitors that is not wrapped in plastic. Croyde Ocean Events provided handmade energy and protein balls (provided through sponsorship). Another option is bananas - which have great natural wrapping!

Encourage competitors not to use energy gels - instead provide them with recipes so they can make homemade versions instead.

Consider disqualification/penalty for littering. This emphasises that you are serious about sustainability and providing a plastic-free event.

Provide a gel wrapper collection box at the finish line for those who do use them (these can be bulk recycled by a specialist company such as Terracycle).

## 5. PRIZES, GIVE-AWAY ITEMS AND MERCHANDISE

Consider what you provide to competitors and whether it can be replaced by plastic-free alternatives. One option is to provide a practical item for competitors to take away, rather than an object for display. Croyde Ocean Events research found that two out of three people would prefer a usable item over a display item such as a medal. eg. You may like to give reusable water bottles.

Sports events are often sponsored, and sponsors sometime like to give away promotional leaflets or gifts in an event goodie bag. Discuss with your sponsors how best to ensure a plastic-free and sustainable vision is maintained while still promoting their businesses.

Try not to sell souvenir merchandise that have no real use. Cheap sports clothing contains plastic microfibers that are released into the ocean with every wash - consider if it is necessary to provide every competitor with a t-shirt or why not look at more sustainable alternatives such a merino wool or fairtrade cotton.



## 6. EVENT SIGNAGE

Signage can be used for many events and reused again and again. Just make sure they aren't dated. If other events are organised within the vicinity, reach out to see if there is an opportunity to rent or share signage.

Reusable cable ties are available, and are inexpensive when the re-use is taken into account (payback in 1.9 events) and as every events organiser knows - they are extremely useful!

## 7. INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS, SPECTATORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Sharing your mission is powerful and can create a domino effect of change. Event information and your green credentials should be created digitally and shared via email and social media. Please don't print me!

## 8. ENGAGING WITH SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

Having an environmental focus to an event is a positive message that can be used to engage with sponsors and partners, whose values align with those of your event. It gives a clear vision for them to support and engage with the event.

## 9. WASTE MANAGEMENT

Waste management may seem simple, but can easily be overlooked. Whilst the goal must be to REDUCE waste, particularly single-use plastic, events MUST provide good recycling and composting facilities for all waste produced – including for plastic, cans, cardboard, paper and food. Also, if compostable cups are being provided as an alternative to conventional disposable cups, well-signed composting bins must also be provided.



# WHAT NEXT?

- Consider the information provided, and what will work for your event. Not all of these steps will work for you but some definitely will and every little helps.
- Get in touch with Plastic Free North Devon. We are more than happy to help you with every step of the process
- **Save the planet - one event at a time!**

[plasticfreenorthdevon@gmail.com](mailto:plasticfreenorthdevon@gmail.com)  
[www.plasticfreenorthdevon.org](http://www.plasticfreenorthdevon.org)



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