

PE1636/C

Hubbub submission of 28 April 2017

Hubbub supports biodegradable materials however making this petition effective would require the introduction of significant new infrastructure and a clear, consistent communications campaign to the public.

A switch to biodegradable cups would require a new separate waste stream for these cups and there is currently very limited availability in the UK of commercial composting. Hubbub's view is that the focus should be on creating a disposable cup which can be recycled in existing recycling infrastructure.

If biodegradable products are not separated out into a new waste stream then they will either be put in recycling bins which they will contaminate, or they will go to landfill where it is very difficult for them to de-compose because of the lack of oxygen. Landfill sites also generate methane which is a far more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, not to mention that we are running out of landfill space.

To effectively dispose of compostable products it is vital they reach a suitable industrial composting facility. These facilities must be prepared for the addition of these products and they must be collected in such a way as to separate them from other packaging types. This is the same issue as with current plastic-lined paper cups, however there are now ways to recycle the current cups as demonstrated by the recent Square Mile Challenge campaign in London.

Biodegradable / compostable products certainly have a place. They can work well for in-house solutions, where there is enough waste and enough space for an on-site composting facility, for example in universities. However, at high street coffee shops / restaurants most drinks cups will be taken off site, and therefore need a solution that can be supported by local authorities across the nation. Recycling is not only more widely accessible, but is also higher up the waste hierarchy.

Finally, such steps should be considered in a broader context of all on-the-go food packaging, not just drinks cups.

Best wishes,