PE1636/G

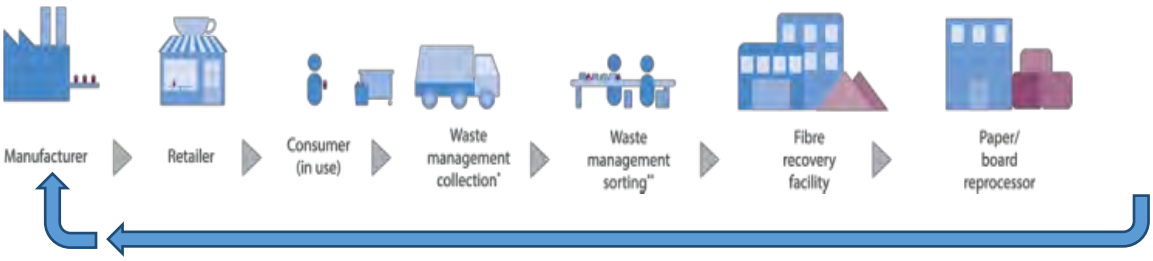
The Paper Cup Recovery and Recycling Group submission of 26 May 2017

The Paper Cup Recovery and Recycling Group (PCRRG) represents 40 organisations from across the paper cup supply chain including members from the coffee retailers, waste recycling and reprocessing, and local authority sectors. The group acts as a forum to create a non-competitive environment for collaboration, and its members are proactively taking a market-led voluntary approach to increase paper cup recovery and recycling in the UK.

There is a common misunderstanding that paperboard cups coated in Poly-Ethylene (PE) cannot be recycled; this is not the case. They can be recycled and there are UK facilities that can do this, including ACE UK and James Cropper Paper PLC.

The PCRRG believes that harnessing opportunities to develop effective national infrastructure, services for paper cup collection and processing supported by consumer engagement campaigns are essential.

The creation, use and recycling of a paper cup involves up to seven different stakeholders. For a paper cup to be recovered and recycled, end to end collaboration across the supply chain is key. A paper cup supply chain for PE coated cups typically looks like the schematic below.



*Either a dedicated used paper cup collection or paper cups collected through in a dry mixed recycling service.

**It is anticipated that both collection solutions will require a level of sorting e.g. separating a dry mixed recycling material stream into various materials types and / or removal of unwanted items like cup lids, stirrers and discarded food before the materials go to the fibre recovery facility[1]

Successful recycling requires involvement from each stakeholder in the process.

- The cup design needs to consider the available collection and recycling infrastructure available at end of life.
- Consumers need to place the empty cup, limiting contamination, in the specified recycling collection container.
- The waste collector must empty the bin and take the contents to a MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) or reprocessor.
- The MRF must sort cups from the other items (or have the capacity to include them in mixed paper bales), which will only happen if the MRF operator feels

[1] The fibre recovery and paper board reprocessor can be the same facility.

there is a value (given the economic associated with operational costs and commodity prices) in doing so (or if the MRF has been designed to do so).
- The cup must be sent to the correct type of reprocessor. Biodegradable and non-biodegradable cups need to be processed in different types of infrastructure.

The PCRRG believes that there is a role for different material and cup formats in reaching effective recovery and recycling solutions, but these cannot be developed in isolation of scalable infrastructure at an appropriate scale and educating consumers on the appropriate disposal behaviour.

The important factors for consideration in cup design are their: scalability, safety, fitness for purpose, compliance with food contact, hygiene and other regulations, sustainability and recyclability.

A full understanding of the environmental impacts associated with both raw materials and use and end-of-life phases at all stages of the supply chain are important.

The group acknowledges the role of compostable cups in the market place. These cups require a dedicated collection infrastructure, and joined up approach across the supply chain to ensure their collection is maximised, that they can be suitably processed in an industrial facility and that they do not contaminate dry recycling streams.

Biodegradable products that are not certified compostable are unlikely to fulfil the requirements of any industrial reprocessing facility. This is because re-processing facilities work on strict guidelines on the acceptance of packaging in order to help ensure the quality of end products.