

**NO LECTURES:
SORT IT, RECYCLE IT.**

Campaign overview

March 2025



NO LECTURES: SORT IT, RECYCLE IT

The No Lectures: Sort It, Recycle It campaign launched in October 2024. The campaign aimed to explore the barriers to recycling and highlight the importance of finding and using the right bin to increase recycling of on-the-go packaging on a university site.

The campaign builds on the experience of *Enjoy it on the way, Bin it on the go*, a previous intervention carried out by Keep Scotland Beautiful with Forth Valley College as part of the Scottish Government's National Litter and Flytipping Strategy Year One Action Plan.



ISSUES IDENTIFIED

- + No standardisation**
Students often have to navigate different systems - particularly those new to the area.
- + Communication**
Decades of recycling messaging has resulted in it often being overlooked.
- + Contamination**
Waste items are often placed in the wrong bins.

CAMPAIGN AIMS

- + Increase students and staff's understanding** of where bins are and what they should be used for.
- + Decrease contamination** across bins through the trial of a Reverse Vending Machine (RVM).
- + Update and trial** new communication designs and messaging

KEY FINDINGS

Further educational campaigns are needed.

Students are unsure of recycling when it comes to:

Cans
Aerosols
Yoghurt pots
Type 5 plastic
Pizza packaging
Contact lenses foil
Who to contact to collect recycling
Film from ready meals
Plastic grape tubs
Crisp packets
Hard plastics
Batteries
Bags

It can be challenging to make recycling an exciting topic on campus. Initial focus group participants thought it could be particularly hard to capture public attention amidst a flood of messages and that any new messaging around recycling would need to be striking and clear.

To effectively target the student population more trials are needed to further refine messaging and design materials.

65%

of students said that more recycling points/bins would increase recycling on-the-go.

50%

of students said that an incentive would increase recycling on-the-go.

Research with 216 students over the course of the No Lectures: Sort It, Recycle It Campaign.

Students were asked to rank measures to increase recycling on campus from most to least effective:

- Most**
- Having access to more bins/better infrastructure.
 - Personally gaining something from recycling (money, prize, discount).
 - Better knowledge of what happens when recycling leaves the campus grounds.
 - Enforcement on those who don't recycle.
 - More communication on the environmental consequences of not recycling.
 - Better awareness of university recycling rates and reports.
- Least**

CAMPAIGN DELIVERY

An overarching slogan
No Lectures: Sort It, Recycle It
and visual identity were designed
to create cohesion across the wider
campaign interventions.



Research
1 survey - 2 focus groups



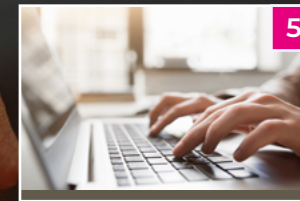
Promotional material
4 bus shelter adverts
2 weeks



Promotional material
6 banners
20 bollards



Every Can Counts event
2,000 cans
175 questionnaires



Social media
Over 65,000 views



Direct engagement
400 students



Reverse Vending Machine
2 locations
4 weeks



Digital Audio Exchange
158,324 impressions
93.5% listen through rate



Research
1 survey - 1 focus group



Report
4 key findings



REVERSE VENDING MACHINE PILOT

The quality of recycling is important. Contamination of recycling can occur when incorrect items end up in recycling collections or recyclable materials are put into the general waste. Contamination can result in increased operational costs, damage to equipment and an increase in waste disposable charges¹. Valuable materials can also be wasted due to contamination. Unpublished research carried out by Keep Scotland Beautiful with students from Forth Valley College showed that 33.8% of students surveyed put all of their waste from food on the go in the general waste². One way to combat the issue of contamination is through more efficient recycling provisions for drinks containers on-the-go. Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) use technology to sort recycled beverage containers into different compartments, allowing for more efficient, “clean loop” recycling as they do not come into contact with any other waste. This separate collection enables the beverage containers to maintain their “food-grade” status³, which allows them to continuously be recycled into new beverage containers.

As a pilot two machines were installed on campus during November 2024. To integrate this into the students’ daily habits they were placed in high footfall areas close to eating/drinking establishments to encourage the habit of recycling on-the-go. The aim of an additional recycling option in these areas was to trial if an incentive would be effective at increasing recycling rates. For each drinks container recycled students had the opportunity to donate 20p to a chosen charity. Although the donation was not a direct financial incentive for the student, the process still allowed them to “pay it forward” and positively contribute to society.

Ref 1 The Composition of household waste at the kerbside in 2021-23 ZWS Oct 2023)
Ref 2 <https://www.KeepScotlandBeautiful.org/media/25/bpabi/new-forth-valley-food-and-drink-intervention-report.pdf>
Ref 3 [Clean Loop Recycling](#)

NUMBER OF ITEMS RECYCLED IN REVERSE VENDING MACHINES AT STRATHCLYDE UNIVERSITY

Technology and Innovation Centre		
Overall items	Aluminium cans	Plastic bottles
350	160	190

Learning and Teaching building		
Overall items	Aluminium cans	Plastic bottles
128	55	73

“We have been delighted to support the innovative trial of two Reverse Vending Machines on Strathclyde University Campus as part of the No Lectures: Sort It, Recycle It campaign. Feedback from both staff and students showed a desire to support the initiative and to engage in new ways to recycle. Feedback has also highlighted the need for more consistent communications on what the machines are and the benefits of their use, suggesting that initiatives like this take longer than a month to embed and drive behaviour change.”

Amy Ritchie, Head of Sustainable Resources & Social Responsibility at Strathclyde University.

NO LECTURES:
SORT IT, RECYCLE IT.

Wee steps
BIG IMPACT

#SortItRecycleIt

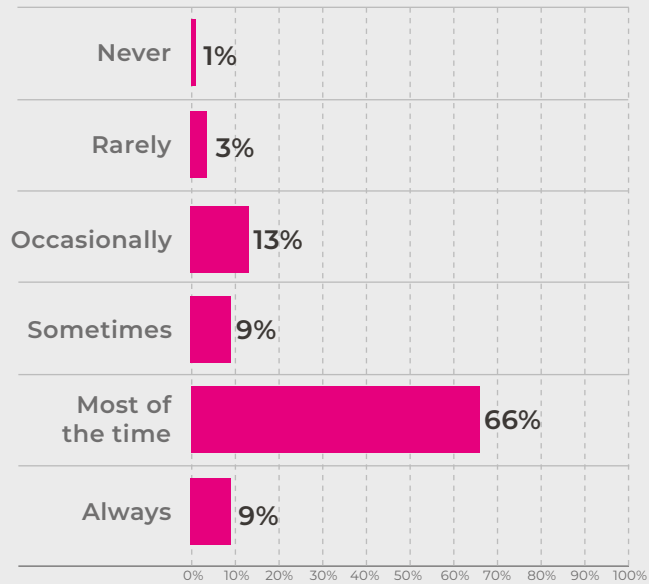
Messaging used for the design of the Reverse Vending Machine followed in line with the overarching campaign branding slogan and incorporated one of the additional tag lines No Lectures: Sort It, Recycle It combined with Wee Steps, Big Impact.

CAMPAIGN FINDINGS

STUDENT RECYCLING BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOURS

Previous research highlighted that for many students the first bin is the right bin. University of Strathclyde students were then asked in a focus group if they agreed with this statement. There was collective agreement from all January 2025 focus group participants that they agreed with this statement and a follow up discussion highlighted some of the reasoning behind this agreement. One of the reasons given was convenience for students as it was believed that students wouldn't want to walk to a further away bin. Lack of knowledge of the recycling infrastructure was also highlighted as a reason for students using the first bin.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU RECYCLE ON THE GO?



University of Strathclyde survey respondents, Diffley 2024.

REASONS FOR NOT RECYCLING

- + 57% cited that there are no separate bins just for recycling.
- + 40% reported that the messages on the bins are confusing leading to not being sure where to recycle.
- + 22% cited not knowing where recycling bins are located.
- + 16% cited not having the time to find the correct bins.
- + 8% only recycling waste when it is convenient.

University of Strathclyde survey respondents, Diffley 2024.

DESIGN AND DELIVERY

One of the aims of the campaign was to identify which messaging and design cuts through and grab students' attention. Some questions in both the surveys and focus groups were then centred on existing and potential campaign materials as a result of this.

Focus group participants in June 2024 thought that short, clear messages were seen to work best, in concisely highlighting the health or environmental benefits of recycling, versus the disadvantages of not recycling.

University of Strathclyde focus group participants, Diffley 2024.

What messaging do you think will motivate students to recycle more?	
Focus area	Responses
Personal benefits such as rewards or incentives.	53%
Wider climate and environmental benefits of recycling.	35%
Focus on consequences of not recycling.	12%
Focus on economic benefits of recycling.	0%

STUDENTS' FAVOURITE DESIGNS

Survey participants were asked to choose their preferred campaign poster, below are the top three selected.



DELIVERY

The use of physical promotional materials being used as part of a recycling campaign was brought up in both the June focus groups and the January focus group. Some participants thought physical assets should be minimised to avoid unnecessary waste and to keep in line with the purpose of recycling.

Findings from both focus groups suggested that in-person events could help integrate recycling into the campus culture, increasing its appeal to students.

ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

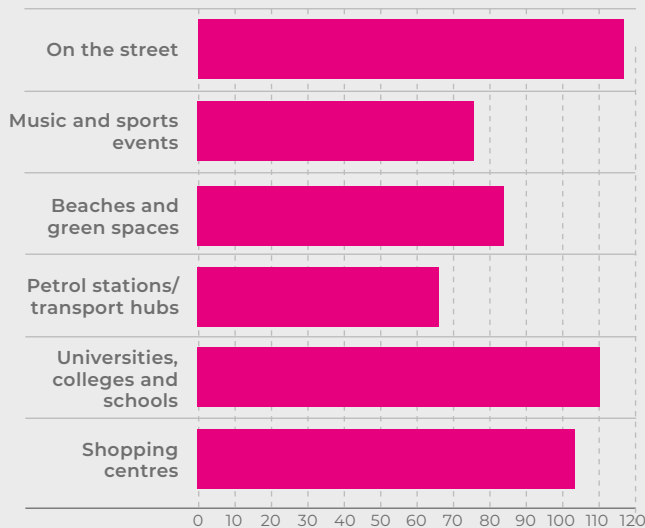
Focus groups participants believed that educational institutions, like colleges and universities, have a role to play in promoting recycling among students.

“On registration, [the university] could have a programme [students] complete to get to know about the facilities ahead of joining. Like, we already have diversity and inclusion programmes, so we could add a recycling one as well.”

University of Strathclyde focus group participant, Diffley 2024.

Data collected on campus by Every Can Counts during Nov 24 showed that 64% of respondents thought there needed to be more recycling points at universities, colleges and schools.

WHERE DO YOU THINK MORE RECYCLING POINTS ARE NEEDED?



Data from Every Can Counts

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite gaining valuable insights in the higher education sphere in both the Forth Valley Intervention and this intervention further research and practical on-the ground trials like these are necessary to ensure the successful introduction and wider roll-out of a Deposit Return Scheme in Scotland.

Ahead of the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme in Scotland we need further investment into on-the-ground trials.

- + Further trials are needed to test different types of incentives to determine which are the most effective at engaging students, improving recycling rates and reducing contaminated waste on campus.
- + A longer lasting campaign with a greater lead in time to introduce students to new infrastructure. Returning students already have embedded habits that need disrupted and new students are already required to take in a lot of new information. Having campaign interventions spread out throughout the academic year would allow more opportunities for meaningful engagement and lasting behaviour change.
- + Introducing new waste management infrastructure, such as Reverse Vending Machines, requires extensive collaboration with partners, and often with contacts across different departments with varying priorities. Ample time should be built into trials to ensure that contacts can be identified and briefed so that specific logistical and practical challenges and concerns can be resolved.

“Having access to more bins only works up to a certain point – then there is a plateau... you have to enforce it, but more so you have to incentivise it because people are more prone to thing that are giving them something back instead of you know working to pressure or force.”

University of Strathclyde focus group participant, 2025.

The No Lectures: Sort It, Recycle It campaign was made possible through a collaborative effort supported by University of Strathclyde and funded by Coca-Cola Europacific Partners. If you're interested in working with us on a recycling or waste reduction intervention get in touch:



Heather McLaughlin

Campaigns and Social Innovation Manager

heather.mclaughlin@keepscotlandbeautiful.org