ELIMINATING SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

OLYMPIA

All waste streams managed by Olympia are tracked to their final destination, which means we can make a fully traceable and auditable claim of zero waste to landfill. Over 98% of the waste we manage is recycled with less than 2% ending up as refuse-derived fuel (RDF). Some of the material making up this RDF is unrecyclable plastic, or contaminated plastic.

The re-processing of plastics is an energy-intensive process, and we believe our emphasis should be on eliminating, rather than recycling it. According to WRAP (The Waste and Resources Action Programme):

> *"The world's annual consumption of plastic materials has increased from around 5 million tonnes in the 1950s to nearly 100 million tonnes today".*

We recognise we have a responsibility to promote best practice. We commissioned a plastics audit at an event to identify common issues and recommendations for sustainable alternatives. Here are some of the findings of

CABLE TIES

Cable ties are ubiquitous in events, due to their versatility and ease of use, to secure and tidy electrical cabling, rigging, AV equipment, signage and other materials. During build and breakdown, they can be found lying around the event floor, having been cut loose and discarded.

These items are so small that they become entangled with other categories of waste. Whilst every effort is made to extract these at our waste recycling plant, it is a challenge and many end up as 'energy from waste'.

Alternatives:

Examples are re-usable twist ties, velcro ties, and releasable cable ties.

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PALLET WRAP & STRAPPING

Pallet wrap, used to secure items on a pallet during transport, is brought on site by contractors during build. There is a wide variety of different types being used and not all types can be processed post-use in the same way. For example, black plastic has limitations for recycling because it contaminates colourless varieties.

The three main wraps used in shrink packaging material are polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polyethylene (PE), and polyolefin (POF). Some wraps are made from 100% recycled material.

Alternatives:

Examples of more sustainable options include biodegradable films, canvas, hessian, tarpaulin and paper.

Polyester strapping can be replaced by re-usable pallet containment systems, including rope netting, pallet socks, elastic pallet bands, straps, re-useable pallet bags, hook and loop fasteners such as Velcro or tough ‘strap & buckle’ types.

PLASTIC FURNITURE WRAPPING

This should be taken away, once furniture has been unwrapped, and reused. Alternatives, such as used banner material, floor coverings and ceiling materials can also be used to protect furniture.

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CARPET

Much of the carpet used at events is 100% plastic-based and there are doubts as to whether it is all re-used or recycled properly. When carpet for space only stands is brought onto site, this could be from any supplier and could be non-recyclable.

Alternative floor coverings include those made from cork, bamboo, seagrass and recycled drinks bottles.

CARPET BACKING/COVERING & PLASTIC SHEETING

Rolls of carpet are often covered in a thick polythene bag and rolled up together with one or two layers of protective plastic sheeting, which is used to protect the carpet during the build process and is removed before the event opens.

Alternatives:

If it is felt necessary to use covering at all, paper is more easily recycled and can be sustainably sourced.

SIGNAGE

Banners and other signage can be reused if not dated. Where single-use signage is unavoidable, there are many sustainable alternatives to plastic, including 100% recyclable roller banners composed entirely of cardboard and paper. Signage companies will be able to advise.

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PLASTIC BAGS

Exhibitors bring numerous items into the venue inside plastic bags. Plastic goody bags are still being handed out to visitors at some events and many are left at the end.

Alternatives:

Reusable bags made from recycled materials:

STRING (POLYESTER/POLYPROPYLENE)

Plastic-based cord and string:

Alternatives:

Jute, natural twine, paper tape:

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