



**borrow
cup**

9 month report

DECEMBER 2025

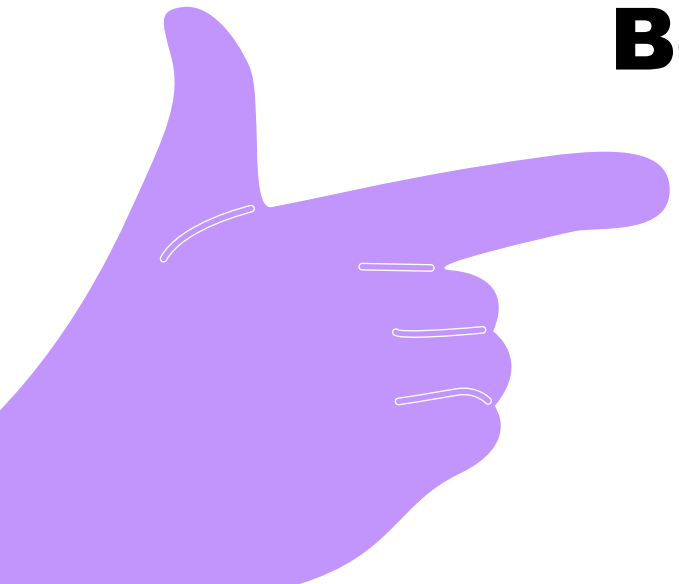
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In 9 months, Borrow Cup achieved a 78% reuse rate and was used 67,282 times. That's someone grabbing a drink in a Borrow Cup every 5 minutes.



In a nutshell

“

Borrow Cup has shown what's possible when we make reuse simple, collaborative and convenient.

Over nine months, we've worked with Reposit, leading brands and local independents in Glasgow to introduce a city-wide returnable cup system used over 67,000 times. We've seen strong reuse and return rates, and standout success in venues with longer dwell times, highly engaged teams and a charge on disposable cups.

We also saw where change is harder. Uptake was limited in high-street settings where customers had less dwell time, staff faced competing priorities, and messaging often didn't reach customers at the crucial decision point to influence behaviour due to in-store limitations.

Despite these challenges, the collaborative model proved both popular and practical. Our learning is clear: make reuse easy, embed it into day-to-day operations, use financial levers, and focus communications right at the point of purchase. Only until these conditions are met can returnable packaging work at scale and deliver meaningful environmental impact."

Gavin Ellis, Director at Hubbub



Key recommendations



Keep it simple

Maintain an easy borrow and return process, closely matched to the single-use experience for customers and staff. A £1 deposit, multiple return locations and clear messaging supports high reuse and return rates, and off-site washing minimises in-store workload.

Prioritise staff engagement and top-down support

Secure strong buy-in from head office and store leadership, embedding reuse into KPIs. Provide simple prompts, in-person engagement, and reduce reliance on frontline promotion by making reuse the norm.

Focus communications on the point of purchase

Emphasise in-store messaging, staff promotion and brand-owned channels such as apps. Broader campaigns build awareness, but communications that engage customers at the key decision point drive uptake.

Adopt a collaborative system

A collaborative, city-wide model maximises simplicity, scale, and operational efficiencies. While the vast majority of customers support the collaborative approach, they tend to return their cup to the same store, likely due to habits and loyalty.

Key recommendations

Target specific venues and regular customers

Semi-closed-loop settings had higher uptake due to longer dwell time and strong staff engagement. Support uptake with loyal customers at high-street cafés by promoting incentives or exploring co-branded cups.

Make reuse the default where possible

Default or mandatory reuse schemes will significantly increase participation and reduce reliance on staff advocacy, but may require system design changes, such as the deposit mechanism.

Use financial levers to boost uptake

A charge on single-use cups will encourage switching to reuse and can fund engagement efforts. Consider adapting upfront deposits if moving toward default or mandatory reuse models to enable wider participation.

Optimise cup design for environmental performance

Transition to lighter-weight cups to reduce the system's footprint and reach environmental break-even after fewer uses. However, consider potential impacts on return rates, durability and operational performance.



About Borrow Cup

Borrow Cup
is a collaborative
returnable cup
scheme, launched
in Glasgow by
environmental
charity Hubbub
and reuse system
provider Reposit,
in partnership with...

COSTA
COFFEE

CAFFÈ
NERO




ENCORE
hospitality services

sprigg

TINDERBOX
ESPRESSO BAR

NHS
Golden Jubilee



and with support from



 ECOSURETY



Biffa

 **Electrolux**
PROFESSIONAL

 **AVERY**
DENNISON

 **Keep Scotland**
Beautiful



 **Scottish Government**
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Why did we introduce Borrow Cup?

To demonstrate how a **collaborative** model can improve the success of a returnable cup scheme, and understand how it can become **environmentally, commercially and operationally viable**.

Previous returnable cup initiatives had struggled to progress due to:

Small scale trials, consisting of single retailers or independents-only, which limits customer awareness, uptake, return rates, convenience, cost efficiencies and environmental benefits.

Cumbersome user experiences, with inconvenient apps and sign-up processes deterring engagement.

A lack of data-led traceability and measurement, which impedes understanding.

Borrow Cup aimed to address this through:

- ✓ **Scale:** A pioneering collaboration with major brands and local cafes, to create a critical mass of participating stores and a high density of return points.
- ✓ **User experience:** A simple user journey with minimal friction (no apps or sign-ups), designed based on behavioural insights, to improve convenience and appeal.
- ✓ **Measurement:** Asset tracking and lifecycle analysis to measure uptake, returns and environmental impact, and determine how Borrow Cup can become environmentally and financially viable.

How does it work?

Borrow Cup launched late January 2025 and has had **over 50 participating locations**:

- **Caffè Nero**: 14 locations
- **Burger King**: 12 locations
- **Costa Coffee**: 11 locations
- **Encore Hospitality**: 5 locations
- **Tinderbox**: 5 locations
- **Sprigg**: 3 locations
- **Plant Blonde**: 2 locations
- **NHS Golden Jubilee**: 1 location

Surveying in Glasgow showed **67%** would pay a £1 deposit, reducing to **27%** for a £2 deposit

Grab your drink in a Borrow Cup for a **£1 deposit**



Enjoy your drink, then return to any participating location to:

Refill a Borrow Cup with your next drink.



Swap a Borrow Cup to get your next drink in a clean cup



Return a Borrow Cup at the till and get **£1 back**



Drop off a Borrow Cup at a return point and receive a **£1 e-voucher**



Used cups are collected by **Reposit**, washed at their facility and sent back to stores.



What it looks like



Brand agnostic lilac used across all participating businesses



Store signage and digital comms



Bespoke lids in one size provided by Amcor



Return points in participating locations

RFID tags applied to cup bases for traceability



8oz, 12oz and 16oz polypropylene cups provided by Amcor

Results and challenges

Headline results

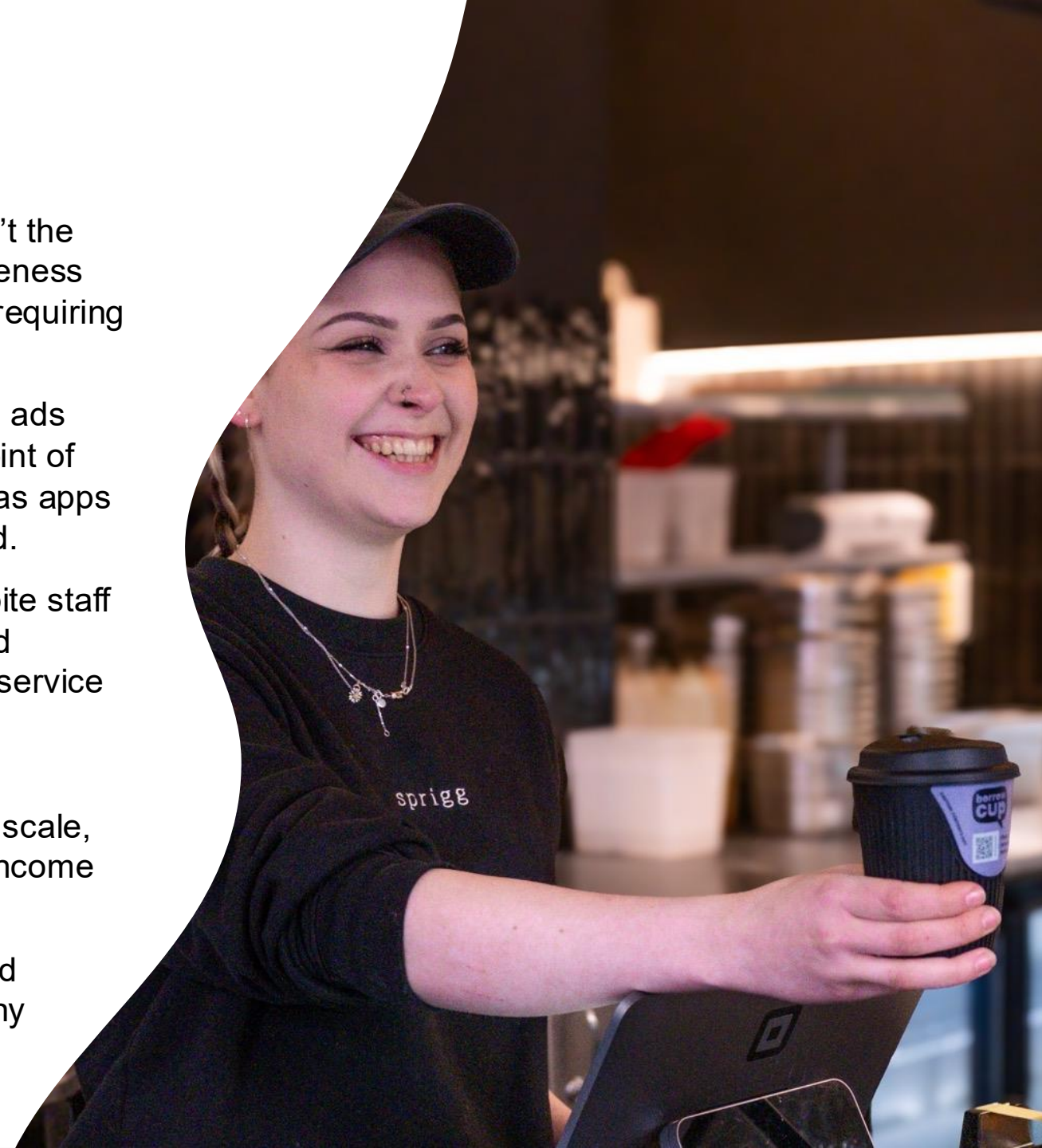
- Borrow Cup was used **67,282** times, preventing as many disposable cups from being used.
- Uptake averaged **3%**, but some locations achieved up to a **69%** weekly uptake rate.
- **78%** of cups were returned to be washed or refilled.
- **73%*** of returns were to the same store as purchase, with **93%** of returns at the till point and **7%** at return points.
- Borrow Cup predicted to reach the environmental break-even point compared to disposable cups after **5-7 uses**.
- **64%** of Glaswegians surveyed had heard of Borrow Cup, with **200** pieces of press coverage and a comms campaign reaching over **1 million** people.
- **93%** of customers thought it's good for businesses to offer Borrow Cup, **90%** liked being able to borrow and return a cup at different locations across Glasgow, and **88%** agreed it's easy to use.
- Majority of employees agreed that Borrow Cup is beneficial for businesses to offer and are confident in how it works.

Someone grabbed
a drink in a Borrow
Cup **every 5**
minutes in
Glasgow



Key challenges

- **Opt-in model limited uptake:** Because Borrow Cup wasn't the default, either customers had to request it - requiring awareness and motivation to break habits - or staff had to promote it, requiring time, effort and confidence.
- **Lack of messaging at key decision point:** TV and digital ads raised awareness, but likely weren't front-of-mind at the point of purchase. Use of brands' own channels was limited, such as apps and in-store signage, and rewards weren't widely promoted.
- **Limited staff capacity to drive behaviour change:** Despite staff engagement via leaderboards, prizes, training and targeted comms to boost uptake, competing priorities like speed of service and sales targets prevailed.
- **Lower uptake hindered efficiencies:** Lower uptake than predicted meant the system didn't maximise economies of scale, limiting efficiencies in logistics and washing and reducing income from lease fees to cover running costs.
- **Restricted budget for ongoing comms:** Engagement and promotional activity weren't built into operating costs, so any activity required additional budget.



The detail

Uptake

- Uptake averaged **3.3%** but varied widely, with some locations achieving up to **69%** weekly uptake rate.
- Of the **67,282** Borrow Cups used, **76%** were drinks in fresh cups, with **20%** refills and **4%** swaps, indicating strong customer loyalty and satisfaction from repeat users.
- There were variations in uptake rate throughout, but no clear link to specific activities such as the TV ad campaign or staff promotion incentives.
- Uptake was consistently higher for hot drinks, suggesting a customer preference or perception of using reusable cups for hot drinks over cold.
- Uptake was highest at Encore, with an average of **33%**, compared to an average of **0.7%** for high-street brands. This was likely because its museum, library and leisure-centre locations offer longer dwell time, staff were highly engaged, and a disposable cup charge was introduced.

Average weekly uptake rate

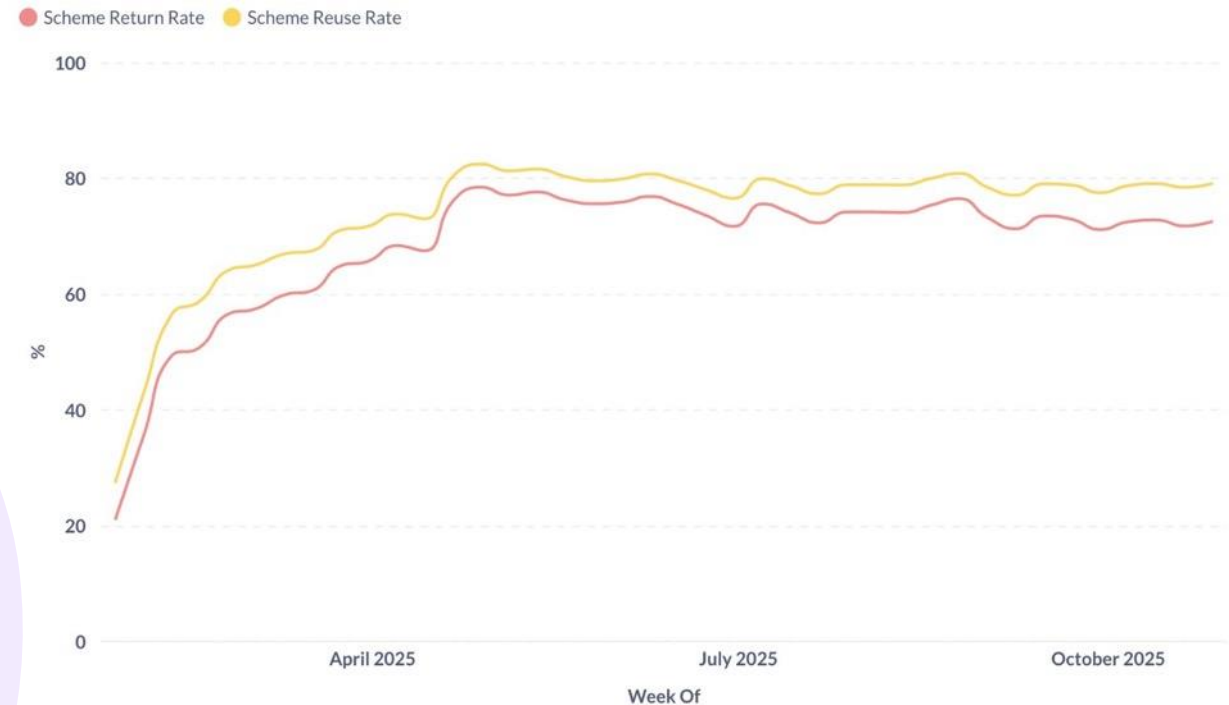
Scheme overall uptake by week



Reuse and returns

- Average **78%** reuse rate (cups returned to store + refills) and **72%** return rate (cups returned to store only), which continued to increase over time.
- There was no specific campaign activity to increase returns, this was achieved naturally through the £1 deposit and number of participating locations.
- **93%** of returns were over the counter and **7%** were at a return point, located in participating stores. While return points removed the need to queue at the till to return a cup, they used a digital platform which added steps to the user journey and gave customers a voucher to redeem their deposit on their next purchase. Customers highlighted a preference for a direct refund, and Reposit are exploring cash-back to card to improve the return point process.
- Excluding Encore locations, where almost all cups are returned on-site, **73%** of cups returned were returned to the same store, indicating customers are brand loyal and stick to regular habits when returning a cup.

Average weekly reuse and return rates



Customer feedback

- **64%** of survey respondents had heard of Borrow Cup, mainly from social media or seeing the cups or signage in-store. For those who'd used the scheme, the environmental benefit was the most popular motivator (**39%**) compared to forgetting their own reusable (**18%**) or the novelty factor (**14%**).
- **88%** agreed it's easy to use, **90%** liked being able to borrow and return a cup at different locations across Glasgow, and **83%** said they'd use Borrow Cup again.
- **37%** of respondents who'd used Borrow Cup suggested adding more locations to improve the scheme, and **76%** would support a small charge on disposable cups.
- The top reasons why people hadn't used Borrow Cup were 'I haven't heard about it before' (**26%**), 'I haven't been asked if I'd like a Borrow Cup' (**20%**) and 'I don't know how it works' (**16%**), highlighting the importance of ongoing promotion and awareness-raising activities.
- Of the respondents who'd used Borrow Cup, less than **10%** said they'd kept the cup and not reused it.

"Amazing initiative,
extremely positive
and made being
sustainable much
easier"

**Borrow Cup
customer**



Employee feedback

- **An employee survey showed most respondents were confident in how Borrow Cup works**, thought it works well and agreed it's easy to talk to customers about the initiative.
- **Over half of respondents said they regularly talked about Borrow Cup when serving customers**, but most agreed they could sell more drinks in a Borrow Cup.
- **Suggestions to improve the scheme** included more signage and advertising, improving the return point process, and having more promotion of rewards or incentives for customers.
- **Most respondents thought Borrow Cup was a good thing for businesses to offer**, quoting *"Love doing this project, helps us interact with customers more"* - Burger King, and *"All good feedback from the customers who use them"* – Caffè Nero.
- **Employees reported contamination in return points as a common issue** due to the nature of the open crates.

"Easy till process, good customer benefit and great for reducing single-use cups"

Costa Coffee store manager



Comms

- A two-week [ad campaign on STV](#) was seen **105,102 times** by **36%** of the STV West audience.
- An ad campaign with three local influencers on Instagram and TikTok was seen over **750,000 times**, promoting a '£1 off' incentive with **over 800** vouchers issued.
- **200** pieces of local, national and trade press were secured, including on [BBC's The One Show](#), with opportunities to see of over **427m**.
- Physical comms included in-store POS display signage, posters, window stickers, leaflets, table talkers, return points, flyers, staff pin badges and till prompt signage with talk lines for employees.
- Borrow Cup was also the returnable cup provider at Glasgow Coffee Festival in April 2025, with **over 900** uses.

Over **1.77M** people were shown a Borrow Cup ad via campaigns on social media and TV



Operations

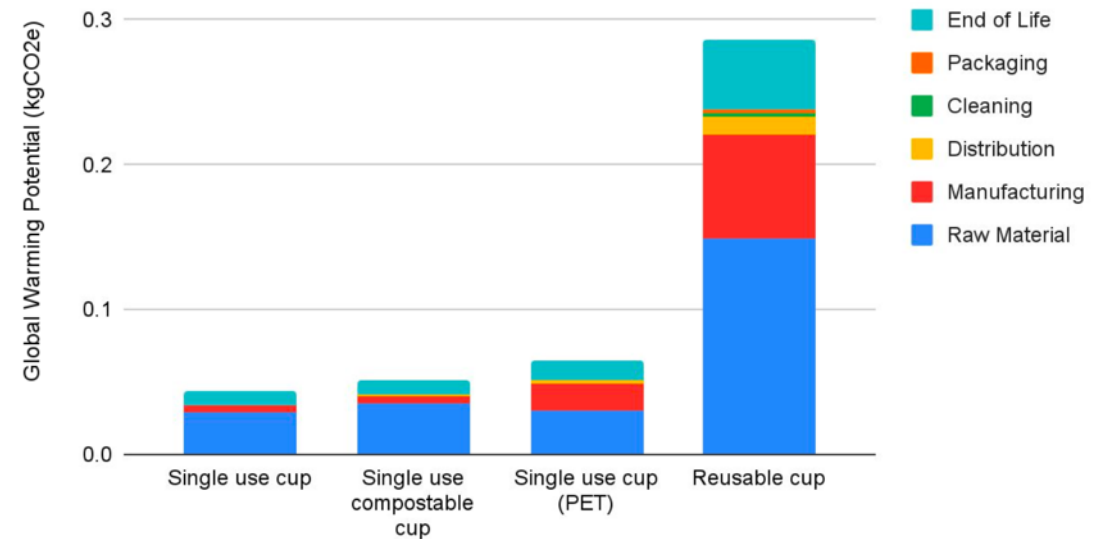
- **34,598** unique Borrow Cups were used **67,282** times, meaning a cup was used **at least twice** on average, with some cups washed by Reposit up to **9 times**. The number of average cup uses is likely higher due to unaccounted refills.
- Some stores had an overstock of cups due to low uptake. If **overstock** was reduced and the **through-put** of cups was increased, the number of times a cup was used would increase significantly.
- An electric van was used for the delivery and collection of cups, and washing took place at Reposit's facility in Wishaw, 30 minutes outside of Glasgow. With higher uptake, the **efficiency** of the van's journeys could be improved.
- Within nine months, only **1.6%** of cups and **2.2%** of lids had to be removed from the system due to damage. These damaged cups and lids will be sent to Amcor's UK recycling facility.
- All cups and lids tested for bacteria and allergens received a **100%** pass rate, showing that the washing process is **effective, safe and hygienic**.



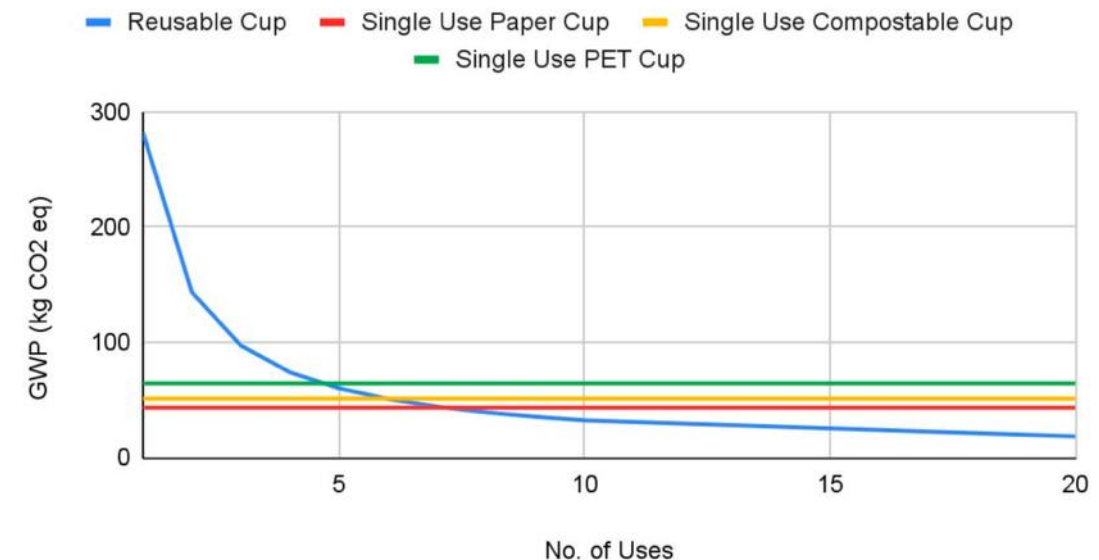
Lifecycle analysis

- Borrow Cup is predicted to reach the break-even point in global warming potential after approximately **5 uses** compared to a single-use PET cup, and after approximately **7 uses** compared to a compostable paper or plastic-lined paper cup.
- Borrow Cup reaches the break-even point for water use after **2-5 uses**, and for human health impacts after **4-5 uses**, when compared to single-use cups.
- The lifecycle analysis compared two logistics models – an electric van being used **at capacity** is the preferred model, but if volumes are lower, **shared logistics**, even with a diesel lorry, would have slightly less environmental impact.
- As the majority of Borrow Cup's environmental impact comes from the **raw material** and **manufacturing** stage, modelling indicated that using a more **lightweight** cup could reduce the break-even point to approximately **2 uses** compared to single-use cups, but this could impact return rates and operational performance.

GWP impact by lifecycle stage



GWP impact over time



Case studies

Encore

- Encore is Glasgow Council's hospitality and catering provider, operating cafes at council offices, museums, leisure centres and libraries.
- At the end of May, Encore introduced a 20p charge on disposable cups across their five sites participating in Borrow Cup. At Kelvingrove Museum, where crockery isn't available, this decreased disposable cup use by **21%** and increased Borrow Cup uptake. At venues where crockery is available, the charge led to an increase in crockery use but had little impact on Borrow Cup uptake, likely due to being sit-in environments.
- Since introducing Borrow Cup, Encore have reduced their purchasing of disposable cups by **33%**, with average cup use across the five sites being **40%** crockery, **23%** Borrow Cup and **37%** single-use.
- Wider business adoption of a charge on disposable cups would improve customer awareness and reaction.

Purchasing of
disposable cup
stock has
reduced by
33%



Burger King

- Most Burger King orders were via **kiosk screens**, where customers were consistently given the choice of a Borrow Cup for any eligible drink, **taking the need for staff promotion out of the equation**. However, this meant less opportunity to explain or upsell the scheme to customers.
- Burger King's uptake was significantly higher for hot drinks over cold drinks, indicating a **customer preference or perception of using reusable cups for hot drinks**. To encourage cold-drink use, the kiosk image was updated to emphasise that Borrow Cup works for both hot and cold drinks. This small tweak produced a modest lift in cold-drink uptake, showing the **effectiveness that simple nudges** can have.
- Uptake at Burger King was also higher for **eat-in orders**, where customers can easily return the cup. This demonstrates potential for mandatory reusable cups for dine-in customers, but the upfront £1 deposit was a barrier to implementing this with Borrow Cup.



What's next?

What's next?

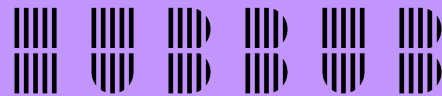
- Borrow Cup is continuing in Glasgow and Reposit are looking to onboard more locations, focusing on where uptake is likely to be highest such as **closed-loop** spaces, **events** and businesses with **highly engaged teams**.
- Reposit are exploring how to improve the return point process with **cash-back to card** and **rewards, washing providers** to increase efficiencies, and **cup branding** options to engage partners and loyal customers.
- After extending from 12 weeks to 9 months, some businesses aren't continuing in Glasgow because uptake in high-street settings stayed low, meaning the model didn't reach the scale needed to be viable for them. The project gave them **clear insight into what drives reuse**, which will help **inform future packaging strategies** that fit their store environments, customer behaviours and operational priorities.
- Both Hubbub and Reposit are exploring new partners and locations to build on our learnings from Borrow Cup and **scale-up returnable packaging systems**, particularly in closed-loop and place-based environments.



Want to find out more? Let's chat.

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