

voice

Annual Report 2021

Registered in Ireland company no. 275127. Charity No. CHY13196, CRA 20040437

Introduction

Established in 1997, VOICE is a registered charity supported by public membership, provision of services, donations and bequests.

Patrons

Darina Allen
Pauline Bewick
Christy Moore
John Feehan
Sr. Mary Minehan

Directors

Dr. Ruth McGrath (Chair)
Gay Brabazon
Gary Clare
Ken Kilbride
Brendan Keane

Vision:

Promoting the wise use of natural resources for a sustainable future.

Mission Statement:

VOICE promotes a respectful relationship with the Earth by encouraging a way of life in harmony with nature rather than in conflict with it.

Objectives:

VOICE strives to achieve this mission by:

- Informing the public on environmental policy/issues
- Empowering individuals and local communities to become environmentally active to protect Ireland's resources.
- Advocating on behalf of our members to influence policy and practice with government and other stakeholders.

An Overview of 2020

VOICE, despite the challenges presented by the continuation of the pandemic, was extremely busy both with community engagement, projects and policy. We did most of our engagement with our community partners through zoom and teams, through breakout rooms and common documents. We have become very proficient in getting the best out of our virtual sessions.

Our work in schools continued both with the acceleration of Picker Pals, which has reached nearly 1,300 primary school classrooms, recycling workshops and engaging secondary school girls on the possibility of using reusable and more environmentally friendly menstrual items.

Corporate outreach and engagement, which declined dramatically in 2020, picked up as well with more businesses looking for lunch and learn opportunities and office waste audits.

We launched our Return for Change Deposit Refund Scheme (DRS) campaign to advocate for ambitious DRS regulations as well to educate politicians, businesses and the public on the benefits of a DRS system and how it will work in practice. We began our work with SECAD in Cork to facilitate work plans for 8 sustainable communities, helped two zero waste communities and continued our engagement with apartment buildings to adopt better waste collection practices.

There was a lot of action in policy development as we made submissions and actively engaged with politicians and civil servants on developing regulations for the DRS system, drafting the Circular Economy Bill and influencing the drafting of Ireland's Waste Management Plan.

Our communications efforts went into high gear which have been very effective in its reach.

Our work in the water arena has been mostly limited to the Coordinator as vice-chair of SWAN and VOICE's membership of SWAN. However, water continues to be a hot topic, both in the development of the River Basin Management Plans and identifying Significant Water Management Issues.

Staffing:

Mindy O'Brien, Chief Executive, VOICE

Christine Ryan, Accounts Manager

Sorcha Kavanagh, Project Manager, Conscious Cup Campaign

Tad Kirakowski, Project Manager (responsible for REPAK apartment pilot and SECAD Communities

Abi O'Callaghan-Platt, Project Manager, SECAD and No Plastic. Period.

Colin O’Byrne, Project Manager, Return for Change

Angela Kenny, Programme Manager, Picker Pals

Lyndsey Ni Chonáill, Project Manager, Sick of Plastic and Communications Director

Susan Lee, Project Administrator, Picker Pals

Angela Ruttledge, Policy Officer and Project Manager, Brown Bin Roadshow

Our volunteers for the year include:

Angela Ruttledge: who came on board to research and write a report on PFAS chemicals in food contact materials.

Sean McLoughlin: helped write our supermarket plastic report and conducted some policy analysis

Caoimhe Nolan: is in her second year of City Planning & Environmental Policy in UCD and helps us with Picker Pals comms

Gabriel Ware: a historian who writes fun articles for the Picker Pals website

Dearbhla Molloy: has helped with the communications and social media for Return for Change campaign

We have had so many more people help us this year, that we are unable to list them all.

Governance:

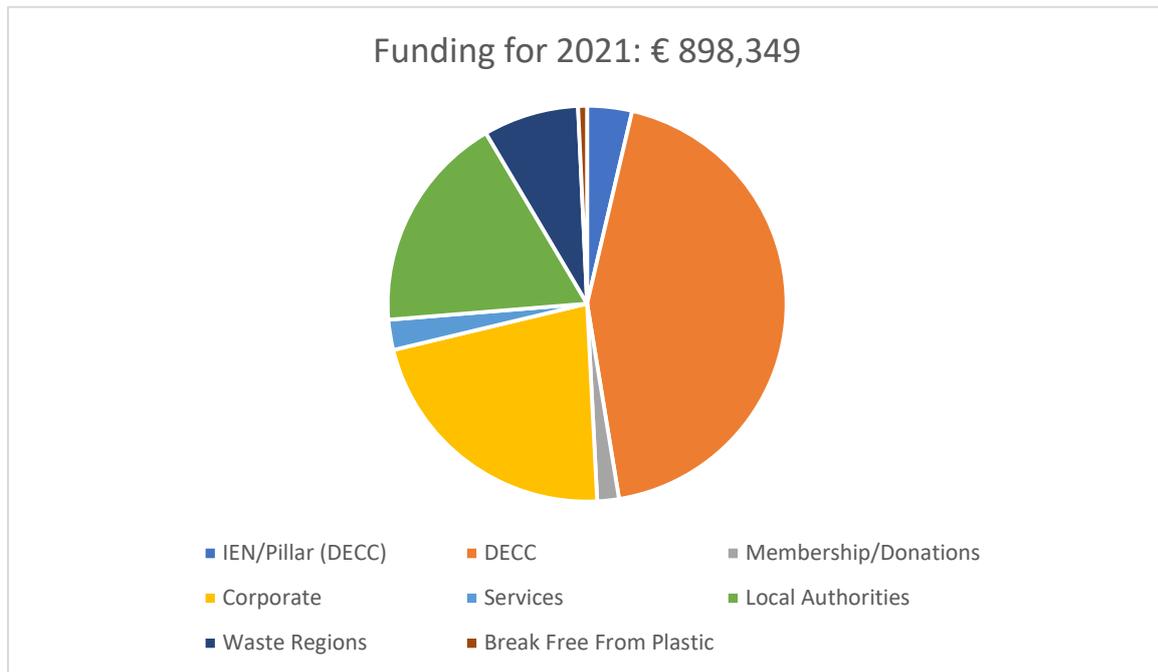
The board adopted many new policies, according to the new government code demanded by the Charities Regulator, VOICE is registered as lobbyists and is a registered charity both with Revenue and the Charities Regulator. All our filings are up to date.

We have standardised all our contracts and our employee handbook in accordance with the Companies Act.

Funding:

VOICE receives funding from many sources, either to support our core functions or to support particular campaigns. The below pie charts indicate funding levels per funding source.

Total Funding Received in 2021:

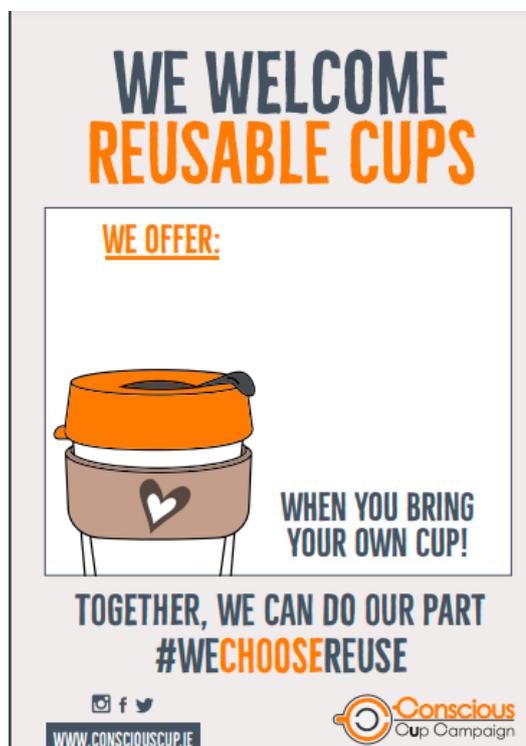


VOICE campaigns

Conscious Cup Campaign:

The start of the year remained challenging for reuse in the food to go sector with a high number of independent cafes and chains not accepting reusable cups. In March the campaign held a focus group with the Specialty Coffee Association and a number of key industry representatives including head of coffee for an international service station, corporate caterers, coffee roasters, hotels and independent café owners.

The objective of this collaboration was to identify barriers to reuse and subsequently develop solutions to support the industry which included the creation of a range of downloadable posters in the Spring that could be printed off from the CCC website by cafes and communities to increase awareness. Initially the take up of the posters was slow but as re-opening began to resume in the Autumn more businesses engaged with the promotional material.



A number of webinars were delivered to Tidy Towns, community groups and businesses who have done incredible work in resuscitating the map of cafes accepting reusables, as always VOICE campaigns are community driven. The map is now back to what it was prior to COVID and with most major chains and independent cafes back on board with reuse.

The hospitality industry and its staff faced many challenges this year and was hugely impacted by COVID. It has been a pleasure to collaborate with all of the major chains and independent cafes across the country.

Levy on single use cups

With the forthcoming levy we are delighted to see some of the businesses that we have worked with making real strides to eliminate single use, such as [Cloud Picker](#) coffee roasters. From 2020 to October 2021 they were responsible for producing 676,000 single use cups and 426,000 lids but have notified over 100 of their wholesale customers that they have made the commitment not to purchase or supply single use cups going forward. It is commitments like this from businesses that will support the transition to reuse that our planet needs.

Upgrading Shared bin Experience (USE): REPAK and VOICE apartment recycling pilot



The USE project is up and running again, working with 8 sites across Ireland, 4 in Cork, 3 in Dublin and 1 in Galway. We had so many applications from all over the country through August, showing the appetite out there for this sort of programme to help residents to manage the shared bin resource.

Apartment waste has been a long standing issue – with half of the contents of general waste bins at apartment sites potentially being recyclable there are real gains to be made here in helping Ireland to achieve

its recycling targets. The importance of this has been recognised of late, as can be seen by the inclusion of apartment waste management as a priority area within the government’s Waste Action Plan 2020. Our work in 2019-2020 in this area showed the importance of active engagement with residents and addressing the barriers to effective recycling in Multi unit developments (MUDS).

MUDs across the country are now also required to segregate food waste, to date however there has been a low uptake of this at MUD sites. We saw through our survey carried out over the summer that 75% of residents responding did not have an organics bin on site. As with recycling, food waste separation at apartment sites presents unique challenges, but also opportunities

To help to address this, VOICE have included a food waste segregation component to the USE project this year. Again taking an active engagement approach of working with residents to improve waste segregation and addressing the unique barriers to food waste segregation in MUDs.

SECAD Sustainable Communities

This year we began the Sustainable Communities Training Programme for West Cork. The programme is LEADER funded and delivered with the **SECAD Partnership** (secad.ie).



Six West Cork communities are taking part in the programme; Baltimore, Skibbereen, Ballinspittle, Kinsale, Tracton and Carrigaline.

The aim of the programme is to support West Cork towns and villages to develop a sustainability roadmap for the future of their community. A

key part of this is building the capacity to develop and complete sustainability projects within the participating towns and villages. A community development team within each town or village will participate in training in sustainability issues and community project management. This training will support them in understanding key sustainability challenges and potential community level initiatives to tackle these issues and provide them with project management training to allow them to implement and complete selected initiatives.

The programme kicked off with six weeks of inspirational sustainability workshops led by experts in the field. They covered green enterprise, biodiversity, the circular economy, sustainable town planning, sustainable energy and transport, and sustainable agriculture.

We have now finished this first phase of the programme and communities have learned of inspirational case studies and funding opportunities.

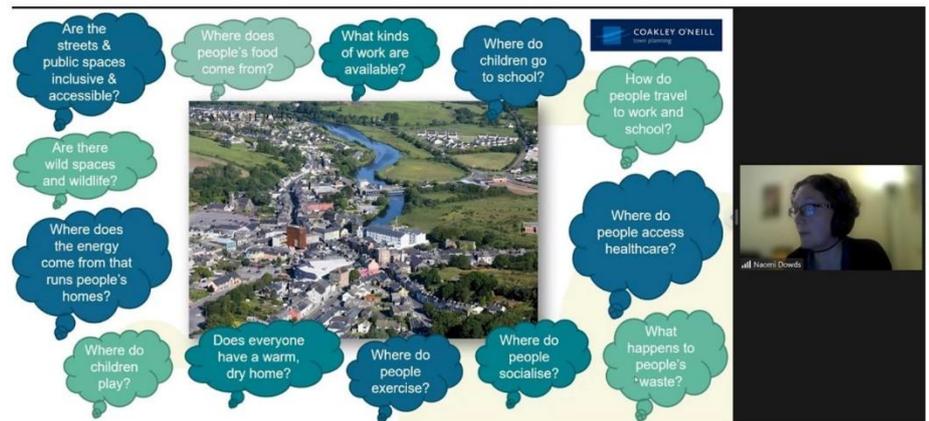
Part two of the programme, Roadmap Development, is now underway! During this phase we are working in small group sessions with each of the participating towns and villages. Through this process we are mapping existing sustainability initiatives within their communities, and the groups involved in them. The groups are imagining the future of their community and developing a vision statement for a more sustainable community. Through this we are identifying both short- and long-term initiatives that will support the community in reaching this vision and reaching out to the wider community for feedback on these ideas.

Zero Waste Communities Programmes

Zero Waste Community Rush

Throughout 2021 we have been working with the coastal town Rush, in North County Dublin.

In Rush we have:



- Run an information session for the community on establishing Rush as a zero waste town
- Delivered a Waste Reduction and Recycling workshop for the community
- Established a steering committee for Zero Waste Rush
 - The steering committee and VOICE meet monthly to discuss actions
 - The committee has a whatsapp group to keep in regular contact



The steering committee are fantastic, very motivated and active! They have developed a logo and established a Facebook page **Zero Waste Community Rush**. They have mapped the waste reduction actions currently taking place within the town and also established openness towards taking on new actions. They did this by surveying all schools, organisations and businesses within the community. They decided to focus on highlighting actions already taking place within the community. To do this they created a series of posters letting customers know that this cafe accepted reusable cups, containers etc. to encourage customers to make use of the environmental measures already in place.

Rush Tidy Towns, which Zero Waste Rush is part of, was recently awarded an EPA Circular Economy Award. The award recognises *Rush Tidy Towns* initiatives in the area of the circular economy. Projects such as Rush Free Stuff, Zero Waste Rush and their composting efforts all contributed to this win.

Zero Waste Dunshaughlin (Eco Villagers)

Dunshaughlin is a town in Co. Meath which, over the last 20 years, has effectively become a commuter-belt town to Dublin. However, it is still relatively small in terms of population with roughly 5.000 people residing there.

For our work on Dunshaughlin Zero Waste, VOICE:

- Met regularly with Dunshaughlin Zero Waste to introduce the Zero Waste Programme and to identify targets for the year. The group decided to focus on local businesses, community groups and the secondary school in terms of their immediate actions.
- These meetings have been with a group called Eco Friendly Villagers. They are a new group which is comprised of local young people of college-going age as well as some members of the local Tidy Towns group.
- Communicated with Meath County Council to discuss waste reduction aims of the group as well as instigating a waste collection baseline data for the area.

Highlights:

- Following meetings, cafés in the town have signed on with the Conscious Cup Campaign <https://www.consciouscup.ie> This campaign aims to reduce and eventually eliminate single-use cups in Ireland. This is the first concrete outcome with further talks expected to look at sachets and other single-use items along with communication campaign to inform customers of ZW-related change.
- Meath County Council have agreed to support the group by providing funding for the local secondary school to install smart water metres in order to reduce the use of plastic water bottles. It is envisaged that this will in turn lead to student-led projects to investigate solutions to reducing single-use items outside of the school environment.
- VOICE is to deliver a 'training for trainers' workshop so that the group might facilitate waste management workshops in the community, in person or remotely.

Plastic Work:

Break Free From Plastic:

VOICE is an active member of Break Free From Plastic, an international network of environmental groups lobbying for the reduction of plastic. Mindy has participated in over 35 zoom calls discussing strategy, campaigns and policy. She is now the co-convenor of the Reuse Policy Task Force and is an active member of the Reuse Action Task Force and Plastic and Health Task Force.

We received a grant of €5,000 from Break Free From Plastic, to continue our work on plastic policy and another grant of €3,000 to pay for Mindy's Convenor work.

Sick of Plastic:

The Sick of Plastic campaign is unique as it is co-run by VOICE and Friends of the Earth. We have been going for nearly four years now and my how far we have come. Despite the obvious challenges 2021 has been a busy year... take a look!

Our remit is simple; we educate and empower our supporters to take on the plastic industry. We work with stakeholders to find plastic free solutions and we campaign for policies that will end our over reliance on this polluting material.

In the last three years, we have achieved a number of our original goals, such as:

- A deposit and return scheme for plastic bottles and cans (due to come in 2022 but no glass unfortunately)



- A tax on take-away cups & containers, to encourage reusable options (due to come in 2022)
- A ban on single-use plastic items like straws and cutlery (transposed to Irish law in July 21).



Supermarket Report In early 2021, we sat down with Tesco, Lidl, Aldi, Supervalu and Dunnes Stores and asked them why they produce so much plastic. Aware of a lack of transparency when it comes to real figures; we have teamed up with plastic focussed NGO's, campaigns and grassroots organisations all around Europe. Together we designed a questionnaire for retailers that ask exactly how much plastic they are producing. It is our hope that we can compile these findings in an attempt to show the inconsistencies that exist, when the same retailer produces different amounts of plastic in countries across the EU.

We are grateful to Lidl and ALDI Ireland, who have responded with their answers. Unfortunately Dunnes Stores, Musgraves did not. TESCO sent their apologies. Our report will be

published early 2022.

Bringing Irish Retail on Board We understand that a lack of knowledge and guidance around the area of refill and reuse exists. That is why we brought refill expert Catherine Conway from 'BeUnpackaged' to Ireland to speak to the Food Drink Ireland – IBEC members. The webinar was attended by over eighty members who were eager to learn how Catherine had embraced refill in her business, whilst growing substantially. Coca Cola, Nestle, Glanbia, Cadbury and Kerry Gold were represented on the day.

77% of attendees said they would try refill in the future

National Geographic 'Planet or Plastic?' Exhibition



As part of our educational remit we are very proud to bring the National Geographic's 'Planet or Plastic?' exhibition to Ireland. With the help of our principal partners SSE Airtricity we were able to bring this iconic exhibition to Belfast, Dublin South and Fingal in 2021.



This visually striking exhibition tells the story of plastic, from its invention just over a century ago to its mass consumption today.

With over 77 images, visitors are taken on a photographic journey around the world to see the damaging effects that plastic can have on our planet. It is our hope Visitors leave this exhibition with a sense of just how bad the plastic crisis is and a desire to do something about it.

No Plastic Period

No Plastic. Period. is our campaign to raise awareness of, and normalise use of, reusable menstrual items! With funding from local authorities and the Community Foundation of Ireland this campaign is really growing! We are running school workshops in Cork, Wexford and Fingal, and will be launching No Plastic. Period across University College Cork in the coming months!

The workshops introduce people to the reusable menstrual item options available to them, and lets them know their cost, where to buy them and how to use them. Follow No Plastic Period on Instagram to see what we're doing!



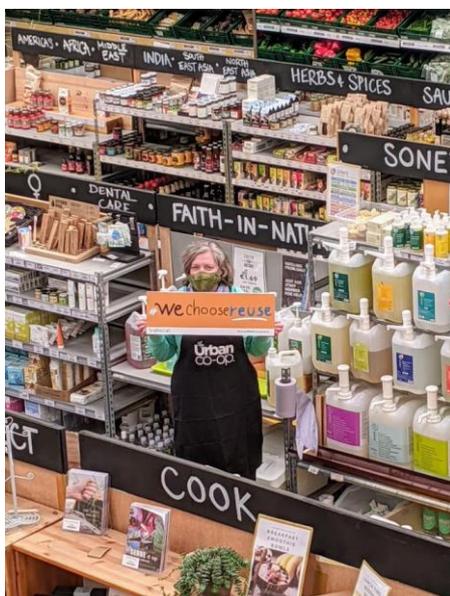
The campaign has three core aims:

Aim 1 - To raise awareness of plastic free and reusable menstrual items through workshops and a media campaign

Aim 2 - To increase the availability of plastic free and reusable menstrual products in Irish retail outlets

Aim 3 - To advocate for government support of reusable menstrual products

We Choose Reuse



This year and together with our international partners *Break Free From Plastic* we launched our **#WeChooseReuse** Campaign.

We are urging individuals, businesses and elected officials to... **SIGN THE REUSE PLEDGE!**
We want to push for ambitious and robust reuse solutions and we feel this is the true solution to our plastic pollution crisis.

We have over **77 Irish businesses** and countless individuals and policy makers who have signed the

reuse pledge here in Ireland. All of the participating reuse businesses offer reuse to customers and lead with a conscious ethic that we can all be proud of. Look out for the #WeChooseReuse sticker in store!

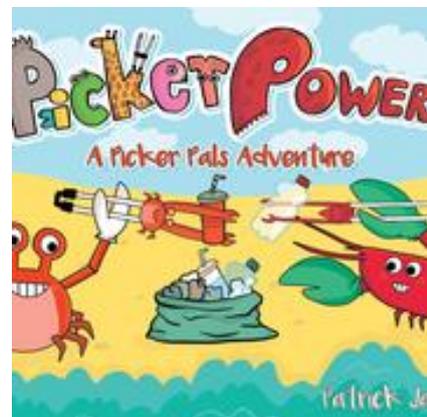
Picker Pals

What a year it has been for Picker Pals!

The programme is now in its third year, and what a story it has been so far. Starting with one classroom in 2019, there are now almost **1,300** primary school classrooms taking part this year and we hope that number will continue to grow.

So what is Picker Pals?

Picker Pals is a totally different kind of litter-picking programme for primary school children, getting the family involved and working at a community level. Each class gets an exciting delivery of a big colourful box adorned with the Picker Pals characters. This box contains the Picker Pack; made from upcycled sail cloth, with everything needed for safe litter-picking. Each child gets a turn to bring the Picker Pack home at the weekends and leads their family on a litter-picking adventure in their local area.



Jane Harding, 1st & 2nd Class teacher in St Lassara's National School, Sligo said "We have started our litter-picking! There's great excitement to bring home the kit and never mind Santa checking his list, 1st and 2nd class are checking the Picker Pals list to see when it's their turn."



based goats!

Along with the litter-picking tools, each child in the class gets a storybook, "Picker Power!" and the Picker Pals Funbook full of environmental activities. There is also a comprehensive Teacher's Guide supporting the programme. These are all available in both English and Irish and we have had very good uptake from Gaelscoil all over the country. The programme also includes 6 episodes of Picker Pals TV, released across the school year. These fun and educational productions explore a wide range of environmental themes and topics and there will be some really fun interviews and chats happening along the way – starting with some Dublin

The combination of all of these activities brings the children on a journey to become young environmentalists, understanding why litter is so bad for the environment and what they can do about it.

A Silver Lining

It's been a turbulent time in schools - as in all other walks of life. As many of you will remember, all schools were closed from January to March this year. However, that wasn't all bad news for Picker Pals. During this time outdoor activities and in particular litter-picking grew in popularity as people spent more and more time in their local areas.



This year, thanks to funding from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, **Picker Pals in now running in every county in Ireland.** We have had so much fun travelling around the country, visiting schools and launching the programme, often with the support of Mayors from some of the 18 county councils also supporting the programme. That's more than half the local authorities in the country! We have also received generous support for Picker Pals this year from eShopWorld, AIB Ireland and Sky Cares.

The feedback and response we are getting from teachers and principals has been incredible.

Philip O'Brien, 1st Class teacher in Scoil an Athar Tadhg in Cork said "I think that over time this initiative will have a significant impact on attitudes in our local area. It has been one of the most meaningful messages I have helped to communicate in my teaching career".

The real joy of this programme is that, because the children go litter-picking with their family, the programme is having a real influence in people's homes and builds a bridge between the classroom and the wider world.

Sheelagh Massey, the mother of a 1st Class pupil from Sutton went on a litter-picking adventure with her daughter and told us "The Picker Pals project has had a huge impact on her. She's just turned seven and her awareness of litter and rubbish has just increased massively. Another thing she's done is that she's put a stop to us buying plastic sandwich bags. Since doing the Picker Pals project we have reduced our waste in the family quite dramatically. I would love to see Picker Pals in every classroom in her school, nationally and beyond that. In particular, the older members of society were thrilled to witness young people being passionate litter pickers".

So, where does Picker Pals go to from here?

Our mission is to have a Picker Pack in every classroom in the country so that over the next few years we get to a point where littering is unthinkable for these children or their families.

Minister of State with responsibility for Communications and Circular Economy Ossian Smyth, said it perfectly when launching the Department's support for the Programme. *"I hope that this can be an inspirational starting-point for a generation of Irish school children".*

One thing that is for sure. This year, with almost 75,000 people due to get involved, we estimate approximately 150 TONNES of waste will be removed from the environment by all of our Picker Pals.

Return for Change



It's true to say that we have a problem with waste; that we are somewhat flippant when it comes to our use of finite resources. It is maddening/frustrating/mind-boggling that we know well the issues and know well the solutions and yet, cannot seem to effectively bridge that phantom chasm.

VOICE had been actively pushing for the introduction of a *Deposit Return Scheme* (DRS) for over a decade before it was finally committed to by the current Government last year. As a result, VOICE developed a new campaign called **Return for Change**. This was created for the express purpose of raising awareness about the DRS: why it was being introduced, how to use it and the benefits of a DRS to communities and to the environment.

What is a DRS? Ireland's DRS is to cover, initially at least, PET plastic bottles and aluminium beverage cans. The DRS is a very simple and straightforward concept: place a deposit on top of the sale price of the container covered by the scheme and when the person returns the empty container to a shop, they can reclaim their deposit. In real terms, it works out like this: A 350ml bottle of water costs, say, €1.50 in a local shop. The DRS, once implemented, will see a deposit of .20c (deposit rate TBC) on top of the €1.50. This means I will hand over €1.70 to the shop. Once I have finished with the bottle, I can bring it back to any shop or retailer which sells PET plastic bottles and cans whereupon they will take the bottle and redeem my deposit.

The inclusion of that .20c deposit on the container acts as a powerful incentive for the containers to be brought back to the shop (for collection for recycling) rather than ending up as a litter on our roads and in our rivers. The Return for Change campaign has run a

number of community events to raise awareness about the DRS and probably the main thing that has come up in conversations with people is i) how much sense the DRS makes and ii) why don't we have one already. Basically, the appetite is there. Ireland wants a solution to our waste problems and introducing a DRS will see a huge reduction in the littering of plastic bottles and cans, two of the main offenders in that regard.

Brown Bin Roadshow

VOICE rolled out a pilot Food Waste Separation Roadshow (Brown Bin Roadshow) for My Waste, and with our amazing recycling ambassadors, handed out over 4,100 kitchen food caddies and fully compostable liners at football fields, in shopping centres and civic buildings around the country. The aim is to raise awareness about the importance of food waste recycling and improve food separation and recycling rates. On the road all around Ireland we've loved the November / December countryside: beautiful autumn colours, low sun and soft rain!



Policy Work:

We continue to work with our European colleagues in *Break Free From Plastic* and *Zero Waste Europe* and share experiences, both good and bad, so that we can move towards a more sustainable future. Mindy is the co-convenor of the 'Reuse Policy Task Force', which helps develop policy that can be adopted in the EU Member States. We also work closely with our national colleagues in the *Irish Environmental Network (IEN)*, including *The Rediscovery Centre*, *Community Reuse Network Ireland* and *Friends of the Earth*

We believe in bottom up and top down approaches, that is why we actively work with policy makers to embrace and support legislation to reduce plastic use and to switch to reusables. We have been very successful over the past few years with the passage of the Single Use Plastic Directive (SUPD), which became Irish law in July. Under this law, many single use plastic items, such as cutlery, plates, cotton buds and straws have been banned. Also, under the SUPD, each country has to collect 90% of its plastic drinks bottles. As a result, and after years of campaigning on our end, the Minister has signed the Deposit Refund Scheme into law and it should be up and running by late 2022 to collect plastic bottles and aluminium cans.

Deposit Refund Scheme (DRS) Government Submission

Earlier this year, VOICE made a submission to the Department of the Environment on what type of DRS we want in Ireland to collect plastic and aluminium drinking containers. Originally, we hoped to include glass bottles in the scheme, but given Ireland's record of glass recycling, circa 88%, and our existing collection infrastructure, we pulled away from this. However, we are still pushing for the development of collection and washing

infrastructure for reusable bottles, as reuse is a better use of resources than one-way recycling. This will be a fight over the next few years. We sought a deposit of €0.20 per container to encourage the return of the container without creating the temptation for fraud. We have been advocating for a DRS in Ireland for nearly 20 years and have been part of the Government's working group to get this up and running, so we are very pleased that it will become a reality by the end of 2022 or early 2023.

New National Waste Management Plan

Each 6 years, the Department develops its new waste management plan to ensure we meet EU waste and recycling targets. We made our submission this year to push for more ambition. We are looking for sectoral packaging reuse and refill targets, such as for take-away and food delivery, grocery and e-commerce. We also call for better waste management practices in apartment buildings so that residents have access to a 3-bin system. We also demand that producers do more to pay for the packaging they place on the market and be required to finance the development of new reuse/refill infrastructure, including cleaning facilities and logistics assistance to ensure that containers are cleaned after each use so they can be used again. Lastly, we want to tackle 'green washing' to ensure that claims on products and packaging are true. For instance, many containers are labelled as 'biodegradable' or 'degradable', fooling businesses and customers that these containers will decompose easily. The term of art is 'compostable', which means that the item will break down in 12 weeks in an industrial composting facility. There is no standard in Ireland for 'biodegradable' or 'degradable' and these items will just be disposed into landfill, incinerated or lost in the environment.

Circular Economy Bill

We have been active in the development of the Circular Economy bill which sets up the framework to develop a new circular economy plan. We are seeking sectoral roadmaps (such as for textiles, retail, food waste, plastic and packaging) to design out waste and use our natural resource more sustainably. We are also seeking reuse and refill targets for packaging and bans or levies on certain products such as disposable cups, food containers, hotel toiletries and single use condiment sachets and a ban on the use of PFAS in food packaging. The Committee will submit its report with recommendations to the Dail later this year and work will continue in 2022. Mindy O'Brien presented before the Dail's Joint Environmental Committee on our views of the bill as well as proposing strengthening measures.

Other policy submissions included seeking data from waste companies under the Access to Information review as well as outlining our asks in the development of the Environmental Protection Agency's Circular Economy Programme, which mirrors much of what we have sought in other legislation.

Review of the Access to Information on the Environment (AIE)

In April VOICE made a submission as part of the public consultation on the Review of the Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) Regulations 2007-2018. AIE allow the public to access information on the environment held by public authorities encouraging transparency in environmental decision making. VOICE have used AIE in the past in our

report on littering, and in examining compliance with food waste provisions in a forthcoming report. Our submission concentrated on ensuring that the AIE regs are widely accessible, that information is provided quickly, that the definition of public authority be defined broadly, and that the public are informed of their rights under the regs.

EPA Circular Economy Programme

In March the EPA Circular Economy Programme 2021-2027 overview was published for public consultation. VOICE broadly welcomed the programme, particularly the emphasis on waste prevention within the programme. VOICE highlighted the need for a whole of society approach to the circular economy, and that behaviour change projects need ongoing or longer term supports to be effective. Ireland currently ranks low on a number of measures of circularity, so we called for the plan to be data driven and include some measure of circularity and included a number of examples from across Europe. Finally VOICE noted that the circular economy goes beyond carbon accounting to include the protection of natural resources, and the programme ought to reflect this also. The programme gives a 5-year plan to develop a more circular economy. As a state our delayed action on climate means that we will be looking towards a relatively rapid transition and we hope that this programme can help to catalyse that change.

Research

PFAS in food contact materials

Following the publication of [our report in September on PFAS](#) (per- and poly-fluorinated chemicals) in food contact materials on the Irish market, which confirmed the presence of these forever chemicals in packaging on the Irish market, **we're advocating for the government to ban PFAS from food contact materials.**



ban

We had 12 samples chemically analysed for the presence of fluorine, an accepted test for the presence of PFAS. 10 of those samples had levels of fluorine that would indicate intentional treatment with these 'forever chemicals', and the 'compostable' moulded plant fibre containers had 6.5-12 times the level of fluorine permitted on the Danish market (where PFAS are banned from food contact materials). One sample of greaseproof paper (made by If You Care) passed the test, along with a Mr Tayto microwave popcorn bag, so well done to both of those producers.

School Research Project

We worked with **Dr Sarah Browne**, a dietician in UCD and the transition year students at **Belvedere** on a waste audit and analysis of the links between food packaging and nutrition. All of the students in Belvedere, from first year to sixth, were eager to play their

part. We're looking forward to the focus group with the students where we talk about our findings, and to help them make a video about their experience. Video can be found [here](#).

Presentations/Workshops:

We have continued to run recycling and waste prevention workshops for communities and had funding both from County Cork and from HSBC, which sponsored 50 community workshops. While many of these have gone on-line during COVID, there has been a huge drop off. We hope to continue our outreach once the country reopens permanently.

Corporate Work:

In addition to the lunch and learns we have run with corporate and government offices, we also organised a series of lunchtime sessions (x5) with Fidelity on various issues and with several guest speakers. This was very well received. We have also continued our corporate waste audits, conducting visual surveys both in Cork and Dublin. We see this as a potential funding stream that should be developed further.

Representation on Committees:

Waste Prevention Advisory Committee:

Mindy O'Brien is the environmental representative on this committee. Thus far this committee receives information from the government on the successful measures and actions taken on waste prevention. We suggested that more be done to tap into the expertise of the committee in terms of policy proposals. It met only once in 2021.

National Waste Action Group:

Mindy and Sorcha were both members of this government stakeholder's group, which met only twice in 2021. It is the government's intention that this group be morphed into the Circular Economy Implementation Group to ensure that the over 200 actions contained in the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy actually happen.

DRS Working Group:

The government set up a DRS working group to contribute to the details of the future DRS system. Representatives from the government, drinks industry, retailers, producers and the environmental made up this group. Mindy represented the environmental sector. This group met around 4 times.

Sustainable Water Network (SWAN):

Mindy is the Vice Chair of SWAN and sits on the Board.

Environmental Pillar:

Mindy is on the Pillar Steering committee.

Irish Environmental Network:

Our Coordinator is active in the Plenary meetings.

Food Safety Authority of Ireland:

Sorcha Kavanagh sits on the advisory group and is advising on the safety of reusable packaging.

REPAK Plastic Challenge Working Group:

Mindy sits on this industry working group, representing the environmental community, to discuss challenges associated with plastic packaging and she is pushing the adoption of more waste prevention and reuse alternatives to plastic packaging.

Break Free From Plastic Transition to Reuse Task Force:

Mindy and Sorcha are members of this pan European task force to investigate innovative reusable packaging solutions and to drive new campaigns.

Break Free From Plastic Reuse Policy Task Force:

Mindy is the co-convenor of this task force, which is identifying progressive legislation supporting reuse and supporting all national member organisations to lobby for progressive legislation. We will be working extensively in 2022 on the review of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive, the Sustainable Product Directive and the Green Claims Directive. Sorcha is also a member of this task force

Social Media, Newsletters, Website and Messaging:

We have launched our new VOICE website. We wrote 28 blog posts, launched 2 new campaigns (Return for Change and #WeChooseReuse), Sent out four seasonal online newsletters and published one End of Year Summary Newsletter.

We are growing our audience constantly on socials; the following stats are combined numbers for all of our campaigns on each platform):

Instagram 11,748

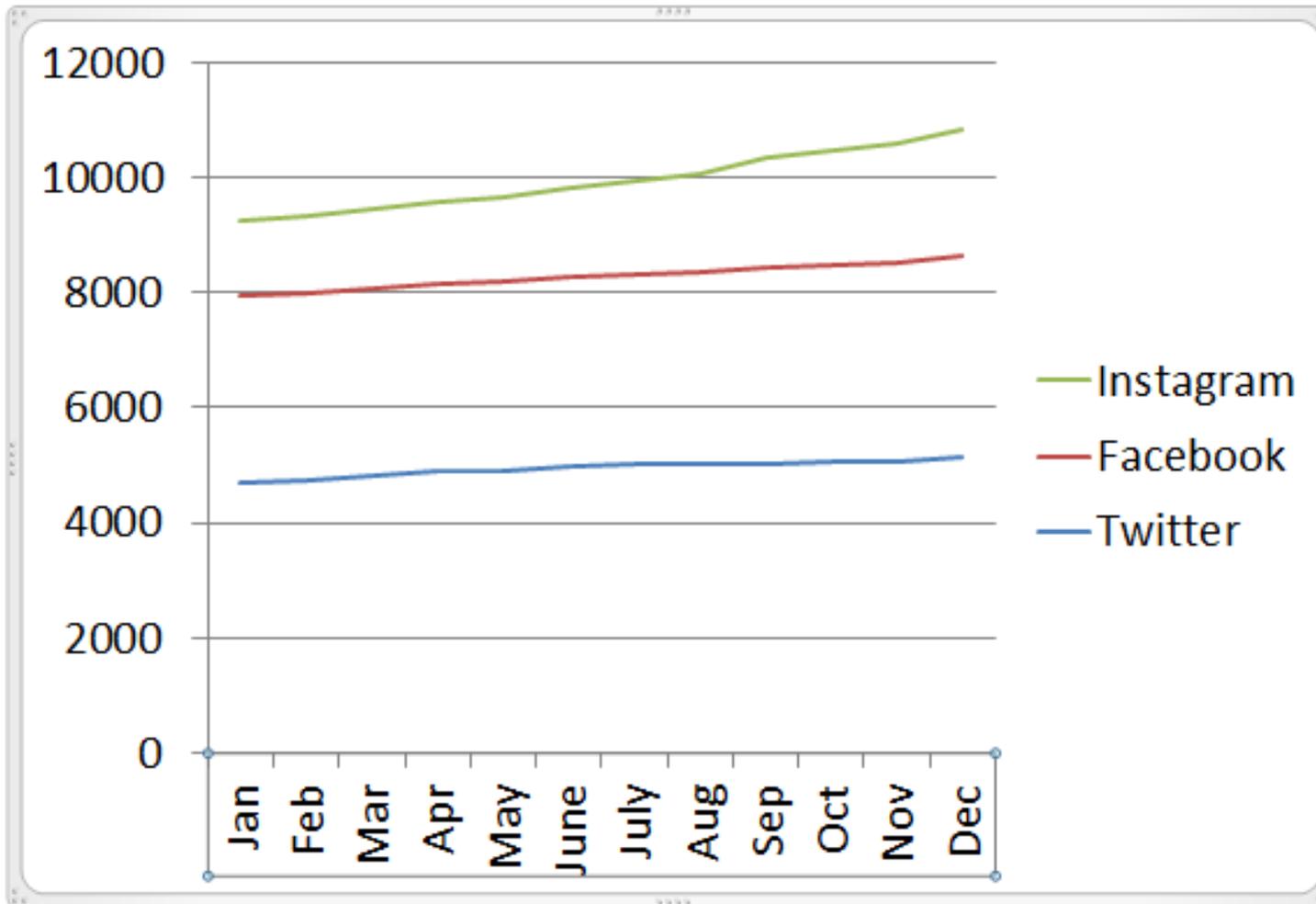
Facebook 8,790

Twitter 9,368

Highlights of the year;

1. Mindy was invited onto Ireland (AM TV3) as a guest speaker
2. Our Pfas Report had a full-page article in the Sunday Times (by Valerie Flynn)
3. Our Picker Pals Campaign launched Picker Pals TV which will shoot, edit and deliver a number of episodes for participating schools to download and watch. Each episode features a different problem 'litter item' and gives children and their families a way to take action in the fight against litter.
4. Two of our Team Members (Lyndsey and Abi) travelled to Glasgow for COP26. They documented their trip via social media posts.
5. For the Month of October (for Reuse Month) our whole team made a reuse pledge. We made videos to show our reuse journey during the month.
6. Our National Geographic Exhibition (with our Sick of Plastic Campaign) was covered nationally. This exhibition totalled 10 national earned media pieces with potentially a combined media outreach of 3.2 million people.
7. We worked with the Green Party Press Office for the launch of our Return for Change Campaign. This was a successful launch with Minister Eamon Ryan, Cllr Clare Byrne and Fingal's Mayor Cllr. David Healy coming to launch on the day.
8. Our Picker Pals Campaign featured on RTE's News today show (02.06.21)
9. We had a successful social media campaign for Refill Day 2021
10. Over 77 Irish businesses signed the Reuse Pledge (a joint campaign with BFFP). All of these businesses offer refill to customers (our aim was to show how many there are in Ireland).

Some of our analytics are below:



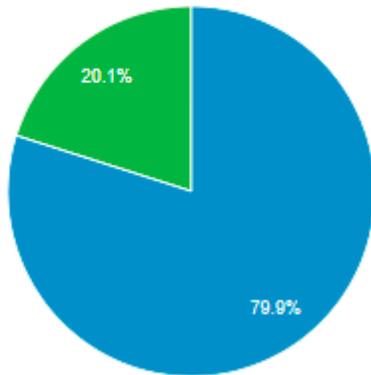
Social Media statistics for VOICE accounts (does not include separate accounts including Sick of Plastic, Conscious Cup, Return for Change or Picker Pals)

Website Statistics 2020 vs. 2021

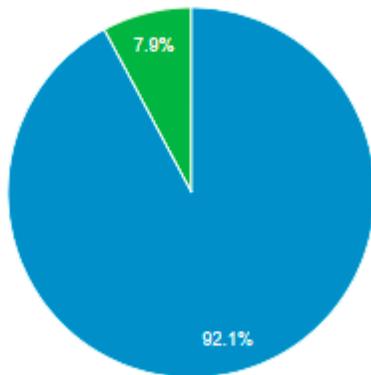
2021

■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor

01-Jan-2021 - 31-Dec-2021



01-Jan-2020 - 31-Dec-2020



Users

12,687



New Users

12,583



Sessions

19,926



Page Views

35,441



Pages/Session

1.78



Avg. Session Duration

00:01:02



2020

Users

19,092



New Users

19,157



Sessions

22,551



Number of Sessions per User

1.18



Page Views

45,577



Pages/Session

2.02



Avg. Session Duration

00:01:06



Bounce Rate

48.88%



Press and Media:

We issued numerous press releases and our Coordinator and several of the VOICE team interviewed with the following media outlets over the year with approximately 80 interviews on such topics as waste, DRS, compostable cups, recycling, plastic, litter, picker pals and incineration. Between the whole VOICE team, we had around 43 radio interviews, 21 newspaper articles and 8 web articles.

Here is the breakdown of appearances:

19/01/2021	Patrick	pickerpals	Radio Appearance	q102	PJ talking on Breakfast with Aidan and Venetia on Q102 about PP	
19/01/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio Appearance	Newstalk	DCC banning the use of plastic rubbish bags for waste collection in city centre	
20/01/2021	Patrick	Pickerpals	TV	RTE News Video	Media Appearance _	
07/02/2021	Sorcha K.	Conscious Cup	Newspaper	Irish Times	Starbucks	
08/02/2021	Sorcha K.	Conscious Cup	Radio	Newstalk	Contactless coffee is safe for baristas	
19/2/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	RTE Radio One	Recycling, questions answered live	Claire Byrne Show Live
05/03/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	Waste in general, Lunch time news.	
11/03/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	waste in general	Cara Augustenburg
24/04/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Midlands 103 Radio	Earth Day	
22/04/2021	Lyndsey	WCR	Newspaper	Irish Examiner	WCR Launch	
22/04/2021	Lyndsey	WCR	Radio	East Coast fm	WCR Launch	
26/04/2021	Lyndsey	WCR	Radio	Dublin City Radio	WCR Launch	
22/04/2021	Lyndsey	WCR	Newspaper	Limerick Post	WCR Launch	
27/04/2021	Lyndsey	VOICE	Newspaper	Irish Examiner	Gorse Fires	
15/04/2021	Patrick	Picker Pals	Radio	Newstalk	Litter discussion	
23/04/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Midlands Radio	Earth Day	
24/05/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Newspaper	Sunday Times	Plastic/supermarkets/refill	
28/05/2021	Tad	VOICE	Newspaper	Cork Echo	Litter	
05/06/2021	Mindy	RfC	Radio	Newstalk	Deposit Return Scheme	
08/06/2021	RfC	RfC	Newspaper	Irish Times	Cover of the launch	
08/06/2021	Colin	RfC	Newspaper	The Sun	Deposit Return Scheme	
09/06/2021	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	98fm	Litter, CCC, RfC campaigns	
10/06/2021	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	Dublin	Litter, submissions, VOICE, CCC, PP's	
11/06/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio Appearance	Near FM	The rise of litter in Ireland	
11/06/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Online	Extra.ie	Litter, Plastic Pollution	

15/06/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Near FM	Return for Change	Noel McGuinness
22/06/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Newspaper	Irish Times	Circular economy	
14/06/2021	Sorcha K.	CCC	Radio	Cork Today Show C103	Patricia Messenger on the	
23/06/2021	Sorcha K.	CCC	Newspaper	Kilkenny People	Kilkenny kickstarting reusables	
30/06/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Radio	Sustainable Radio	Plastic Free July	
02/06/2021	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	East Coast FM	SUP Directive	
02/06/2021	Lyndsey	VOICE	Insta Live Interveiw	STAND	Plastic Free July	
02/06/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Dublin City fm	SUP Directive	
03/07/2021	Lyndsey	VOICE	Newspaper	Examiner	SUP Directive	
03/07/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	SUP Directive	
09/06/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Radio	Newstalk	Litter, SUP's	
03/07/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Today FM	SUP Directive	
28/07/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	Water Quality and usage	
04/08/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	East Coast Radio	Latte Levy	
04/08/2021	Ange	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	Latte LEVY with Pat Kenny	
16/08/2021	Sorcha	CCC	Radio	Q102	Latte Levy	
01/09/2021	Colin	RfC	Newspaper	An Phoblacht	Return for Change Campaign discussion	
01/09/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Radio	U105	Belfast radio - Planet or Plastic Exhibition	
02/09/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Radio	Newstalk	Clare McKenna - SoP General & Exhibition	
04/09/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Newspaper	Belfast Telegraph	National Geographic Exhibition	
05/09/2021	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	Alive and Kicking	
06/09/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	Breakfast Show - Soft Plastics	
06/09/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	Claire Byrne - Soft Plastics	
06/09/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	East Coast Radio	Soft Plastics	
07/09/2021	Mindy	VOICE	TV	Ireland AM	Soft Plastics / Unnesesary plastics	

09/09/2021	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	Radio Kerry	Soft Plastics	
10/09/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Brian Dobbs	EPA Report	
10/09/2021	Sorcha	CCC	Press	Carlow Nationalist	Webinar for Tidy Towns	
09/09/2021	Sorcha	CCC	Press	Kilkenny People	Webinar for Tidy Towns	
13/09/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Radio	BBC Radio Ulster	National Geographic Exhibition	
12/09/2021	Sorcha	CCC	Press	The Sunday Times	Campaign in general	
14/09/2021	Ange	VOICE	Press	Independent.ie	PFAS in Food Contact Materials	
17/09/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Online edition	Journal.ie	Soft Plastics	
26/09/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Podcast	Independent.ie	Recycling	Podcast
03/10/2021	Ange	VOICE	Newspaper	The Sunday Times	PFAS in Food Contact Materials	
03/10/2021	Ange	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	PFAS in Food Contact Materials	
03/10/2021	Ange	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	PFAS in Food Contact Materials	
10/10/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Radio	Classic Hits	Nat Geo Exhibition	
08/10/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	TV	The Late Late Show	National Geographic Exhibition	
08/10/2021	Lyndsey	VOICE	Newspaper	Irish Examiner	Plastic in Period Products	
15/10/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Online edition	Independent.ie	SoP Exhibition	
15/10/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Online edition	RTE.ie	SoP Exhibition	
22/10/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Online edition	Journal.ie	Plastic as a material	
29/11/2021	Ange	Small biz owner / VOICE	Conference	HSE	Environment, Health and Well Being Conference	
10/10/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Newspaper	Sunday Business Post	National Geographic Exhibition	
15/10/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Online	RTE.ie	National Geigraphic Exhibition	
09/11/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	RTE 1 Claire Byrne Show	Wipes Disposables	
10/11/2021	Angela R	Food Roadshow	Online edition	Limerick Insider	Food waste Roadshow with MyWaste	
16/11/2021	Angela R	Food Roadshow	Radio	I- Radio	Food waste Roadshow with MyWaste	
17/11/2021	Anglea R	Food Roadshow	Newspaper	Anglo Celt	Food waste Roadshow with MyWaste	

18/11/2021	Angela R	Food Roadshow	Newspaper	Tipperary Star	Food waste Roadshow with MyWaste
17/10/2021	Lyndsey	SoP	Newspaper	Sunday Business Post	National Geographic Exhibition
23/11/2021	Sorcha	Conscious Cup Campaign	Newspaper	Kilkenny People	Kilkenny's Conscious Cup Campaign tackles Climate Change one sip at a time
17/12/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	banning SUP such as hotel toiletries and wipes
23/12/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	Christmas recycling
27/12/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	Christmas recycling
30/12/2021	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	RTE1 Philip Boucher Hayes	Recycling quiz