Waste and recycling

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wetherspoon

Reducing, reusing, recycling and waste management

As a business, Wetherspoon aims to minimise general waste and maximise recycling and reuse. The company looks for opportunities for circularity in its waste-management systems.

The company has set the target for a maximum of 10% of waste to be treated as general waste and for no waste (0%) to be sent to landfill.

Whenever possible, waste is segregated into a minimum of nine 'streams' (food waste, glass, tins/cans, cooking oil, paper/cardboard, plastic, Tetra Paks, waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), general waste) and is managed as follows:

Recycling	Reuse	Anaerobic digestion	Waste-to-energy power plants[1]
Glass Paper/cardboard Plastics Tins/cans Cooking oil WEEE (lightbulbs, batteries and all electronic waste) Tetra Paks	Tote boxes Equipment Mushroom crates Beer barrels	Food waste Coffee grounds	General waste (non-recyclable)

As part of their initial induction (and annually after that), all employees receive training in correct waste disposal and recycling procedures.

The company has developed a comprehensive waste-management guide which sets out the correct disposal for every item delivered to, and/or used in, a pub.

Wetherspoon's national distribution centre, at Daventry, also includes an in-house 24-hour recycling centre, accounting for approximately 20% of the site, with a large, dedicated workforce and specialist equipment. When making deliveries to pubs, lorries collect mixed recycling, used cooking oil and reusable items for return to the recycling centre – so reducing the company's carbon footprint from reduced road miles.

Cooking oil is managed carefully to maximise life, including regular filtering to remove impurities. Waste cooking oil is converted to biodiesel for agricultural use.

Draught beer and ale are supplied to pubs in barrels which are returned to the brewery for cleaning and reuse.

Some draught cider, wine and soft drinks are supplied in a bag-in-a-box. After the contents have been dispensed, the plastic bag and cardboard box can be separated and sent for separate recycling.

In partnership with waste service provider Veolia, 100% of waste was diverted from landfill during the financial year 2024/25.

Waste was managed as follows:

		Weight (tonnes)	% of total waste (by weight)
Recycling	Glass Paper/cardboard Plastics Tins/cans Cooking oil WEEE (lightbulbs, batteries electronic waste)	21,339 5,056 696 498 1987 35	35.94 8.52 1.17 0.84 3.35 0.06
	Total recycling	**29,611**	**49.87**
Anaerobic digestion (food, coffee grounds)		**10,083**	**16.98**
Waste-to-energy power plants (non-recyclable waste)	100% of non-recyclable waste was diverted from landfill	**19,683**	**33.15**
Landfill		**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**59,377**	**100**

The landfill diversion statistics are provided by Veolia and apply to all waste managed directly by Veolia and generated through normal operations by Wetherspoon. This definition excludes third-party-delivered, non-contracted, non-operational and unexpected waste. It also excludes material such as inert waste, soil, aggregates, non-combustible material and waste which requires deep burial by law (eg asbestos), where landfill is the only available or most suitable option.

[1]These plants use general waste as a fuel to generate low-carbon electricity and/or heat, as an alternative to using fossil fuels.

All paper is purchased in partnership with Forest Carbon (www.forestcarbon.co.uk) which invests in new woodland and peatland restoration projects. In partnership with Forest Carbon, over the last four years, more than 3.85 tonnes of additional carbon have been captured from the atmosphere as a result of planting new woodlands and peatland restoration.

Biodiesel conversion

Biodiesel is a renewable fuel created from refining used cooking oil. It is used in transportation and machinery and has lower kg CO_2e than regular diesel. If used cooking oil is not collected, it can harm the environment by polluting rivers, blocking drains and sewers and could lead to flooding. Of the cooking oil purchased during the financial year, approximately 50% was collected by the company's distribution centre and processed at its outsourced recycling plant. This had the potential to generate 370,910kg CO_2e of biodiesel, resulting in 93% less kg CO_2e than regular diesel.

- 31,058 tonnes of cooking oil collected since 2012
- 50% (estimate) of cooking oil purchased sent for conversion to biodiesel in 2025
- 5.2m kg CO_2e potentially saved by using biodiesel, instead of regular diesel, based on 2025 collections

Food waste and anaerobic digestion

Food waste should be only those items which can't be eaten, such as coffee grounds, egg shells and plate-scrapings

Several initiatives have been implemented to reduce food wastage, including preparation waste and plate waste.

On occasion, the portion size of a meal or ingredient may be reduced, following feedback and to reduce plate waste. Several meals are available in a smaller portion size, suiting customers seeking a lighter meal.

All pubs and head office segregate food waste, which is then segregated, collected and sent for anaerobic digestion.

The food waste is sealed in closed tanks, called digesters, where microorganisms digest the organic fraction of the waste and convert it into biogas – a source of renewable energy.

What remains after this process is a high-quality, nutrient-rich fertiliser which can replace environmentally harmful synthetic fertilisers in farming – to grow new crops. Using this by-product is better for the soil's health and also reduces the use of the energy-intensive synthetic fertiliser production process.

In 2018, the Sustainable Restaurant Association awarded the company the 'Waste No Food' award, in recognition of the various initiatives which the company had introduced in this area.

Waste-to-energy power plants

Non-recyclable waste is incinerated at an energy-recovery facility for the purposes of energy capture.

The incineration process superheats a boiler, which produces steam which then drives a turbine, producing electricity for power and hot water for local district heating networks. These facilities can supply whole communities with heating and energy, contributing to a reduction in reliance on fossil fuels.

Take-away packaging

The company does not routinely advertise food to take away, although some customers may request to do so, either as a whole meal or as a 'doggy bag'.

Plastics

The company has set the following targets by 2025:

- 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable or recyclable
- 70% of plastic packaging to be effectively recycled
- 30% average recycled content across plastic packaging
- Action, through redesign, innovation or alternative (reuse) delivery models, to eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use plastic items

Single-use plastics

Plastics can have a place. They can protect products from damage and contamination, increase food shelf life and, since they are usually lightweight, create lower transport emissions than would heavier materials. The company's approach focuses on two areas:

- Removing unnecessary single-use plastics which can be avoided
- Waste management of plastics – aim for 100% recyclable or reusable

To date, the following steps have been taken to reduce single-use plastics' use:

- Plastic straws – removed in December 2017 and replaced with 100% biodegradable and 100% recyclable paper straws and wrappers. Customers can request a straw, if required, rather than automatically being given one each time.
- Single-use portion pots have been replaced by reusable versions.
- Cling film is no longer used.
- Plastic water bottles – complimentary water fountains are available in all pubs. Alternatives to the current single-use plastic bottles are being reviewed. They are no longer used at head office.

- Plastic packaging – Wetherspoon is working with major suppliers and with the support of the **Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP)** and the **Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA)** to reduce and, where possible, remove the use of plastic packaging for food.
- Plastic milk cartons – these are segregated and recycled separately. Coloured lids have been replaced with clear recyclable lids.
- Disposable coffee cups – the majority of hot drinks sold in pubs is consumed on the premises, including unlimited complimentary refills, all served in a china mug!

Glass

Over the last year, over 21,000 tonnes of glass was recycled. It is segregated, collected and recycled into new glass products, such as bottles and even fibreglass insulation to keep homes warm.

Glass is widely used for drinks packaging; however, it has hidden costs: it can break easily, it is heavy (as so more expensive) to transport and takes a lot of energy to recycle. The company is investigating different ways to reduce the use of glass, including `bag-in-a-box' and switching to bottles which can be reused many times.

Other waste

Toxic emissions and waste

The company does not knowingly create any toxic emissions or waste.

Electronic waste

Electronic waste items are disposed of safely using specialised contractors.

Where possible, computer equipment is sent to suppliers to refurbish and reuse.

Any disposal is compliant with the EU Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive.

Building development and refurbishment

On construction sites, there is a site waste management plan, managed by the main contractor and covering all site waste disposal.

All suppliers are required to make every effort practicable to:

- use raw materials obtained from sustainable sources.
- maximise reuse and recycling; minimise any waste sent to landfill.
- dispose of waste and pollutants in an efficient, safe and environmentally responsible manner.
- minimise energy usage.
- abide by international, national and sector codes of practice regarding the use of chemical products, including pesticides.

The company is working with architects, main contractors and waste contractors to develop an overall construction and refit waste-management guide.