



Our Edinburgh **#InTheLoop**

Recycling on-the-go campaign

Impact Report



The issue

In our busy modern lives, we are **increasingly eating and drinking on-the-go**.

5.5 billion
plastic bottles



2.3 billion
cans



2.9 billion
coffee cups



go to waste every year in the UK, despite being **easily recyclable**.

Why don't they get recycled?



Less than half of local authorities provide **on-the-go recycling facilities**, partly due to the **high maintenance and infrastructure costs**.



1/3 of us are unsure about what **can and can't be recycled**.

This is due to a **lack of consistency** in **branding, signage** and the **different types of waste** collected across the country.



When recycling bins are in place, they get **contaminated** with **food, liquids** and things that **can't be recycled**.

This can cause **whole truckloads** of recycling to get **rejected** at the recycling plant.

The context in Scotland

Ambitious targets to tackle the climate emergency



Scotland:
net-zero by
2045



Edinburgh:
carbon-neutral by
2030

Towards a litter-free Scotland



The National Litter Strategy (2014) promoting a new approach to litter focusing on **prevention**.



Introduction of a **Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)** in July 2022 for beverage containers.



No on-street recycling infrastructure in Edinburgh before the campaign.

The **campaign supported** Edinburgh and Scotland to **achieve their environmental ambitions** and proposed legislation¹.

By **diverting valuable materials to be recycled** and **encouraging** people to change their **recycling behaviours**, we helped **prepare** them for the introduction of a **nationwide DRS scheme**.



The challenge

How do we get people to start recycling on-the-go in Edinburgh?

Our ambitions

Establish a cost-effective system for recycling on-the-go.



Encourage the correct use of new bins and foster a recycling culture.



Capture a large volume of high-quality materials for recycling.



Build a campaign model that can be replicated in other locations.



Leave a lasting legacy so the system remains in place after the campaign.



A collective success

A problem of this scale requires an **ambitious, industry-wide collaborative solution**. Campaign results are collective and the result of a **true collaboration**.

The campaign relied on local partners – **their local expertise and network**, as well as their **commitment** to the success of the campaign.

Initial partnership



Hubbub

+



The City of Edinburgh Council



Local delivery and measurement and evaluation partner

leading on the activities on-the-ground and monitoring our results and impact.



“ Having successfully worked with Hubbub before on an a litter project, which led to us developing our award winning ‘Our Edinburgh’ campaign, we were excited to have the opportunity to work with them again. This project allowed us to trial on-the-go recycling and to use innovative comms channels and techniques. The campaign has helped to raise awareness about recycling and involve local businesses and partner organisations. We hope it will have a long term impact on residents and visitors who engaged with the campaign. ”

Lesley Macinnes, Transport and Environment Convener,
The City of Edinburgh Council



A unique funding coalition

Funding

Funding came from a coalition of **15 organisations**, including the largest on-the-go retailers and brands in the industry.



This consortium is a best practice example of **competing organisations working together constructively** and partnering to fund a campaign to tackle an issue that related to all of them. It demonstrated the willingness of the food and drinks industry to **proactively take responsibility** for ensuring the products they produce and sell are **recycled at end of life**.

Joining forces to test **new on-street recycling infrastructure, behaviour change techniques** and **promote recycling messages** out to the consumers meant so much more could be achieved in Edinburgh.

The public facing campaign did not feature any partner logos.

Together, we ran a **6-month behaviour change campaign** from October 2019. We aimed to **establish a new on-street recycling system** and encourage **Edinburgh residents to recycle** when **out and about** in the city centre.

“ We are absolutely thrilled to see that the legacy of #LeedsByExample extends far beyond the improvements made to that one city. The #InTheLoop movement that is kicking off in Swansea and Edinburgh is testament to the power of collaboration by major producers and stakeholders. ”

James Piper, CEO at Ecosurety

“ It is great to see so many organisations come together to support on the go recycling with In The Loop. Collaboration is a crucial part of building a sustainable future and Bunzl is proud to be part of this ground breaking project. ”

Justin Turquet, Head of Sustainability at Bunzl Catering and Hospitality

“ At Danone Waters, we’re committed to a circular economy and with our evian and Volvic brands we continue to support on-the-go recycling through Hubbub’s #InTheLoop partnership approach. The Edinburgh trial shows, once again, the power of collective cross-industry action and how businesses coming together for a common purpose can drive strong results and provide an excellent blueprint for wider adoption. We look forward to supporting more phases of this important programme. ”

James Pearson, Managing Director of Danone Waters UK & Ireland

“ Community is at the heart of the Costa Coffee brand and we are pleased to be able to support Hubbub’s initiatives for a third year running, which have a powerful environmental impact on the communities we serve. It is so important that brands give consumers a consistent and clear message to ensure they are able to recycle both on-the-go and in our stores. We look forward to seeing the future impact of this programme. ”

Alice Durrans, Costa Coffee’s Global Sustainability Team

Our greatest achievements

A lasting legacy of easy to use colourful bins



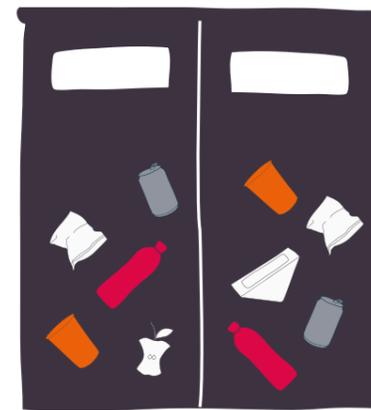
We introduced...

58 new recycling points including **16** coffee cup bins.



We've improved the quality of recycling collected (by volume)

Campaign start



general waste

Campaign end



recycling general waste



coffee cups

76% target materials

8%

We've increased the amount of target materials collected

303,000 plastic bottles



130,000 cans



35,000 coffee cups



=



468,000 items put back #InTheLoop!

We led a diverse and impactful communications campaign



Feed me empty plastic and cans, that's all.

5.2 million opportunities to see/hear

173 businesses on board

650,000+ people reached through online targeted ads

1,900 campaign materials distributed

Our behaviour change model



People became able to recycle

*because we set up a new system,
making it easy for them to do the right thing.*

Introducing colourful new bins

A critical **first step** to **enable** Edinburgh residents to **recycle on-the-go**, was to **set up new recycling facilities** on the streets of the city centre.

We introduced **58 new recycling points**, including:

- **42 yellow** plastic bottles and cans recycling bins.
- **16 orange** coffee cup recycling bins

We made the most of bins already in place in Edinburgh city centre, **repurposing existing general waste bins** into **recycling and general waste bins** and **rebranding** them with **bright colours** and **consistent signage**.

We **observed people interacting** with the bins and **gathered positive feedback** from residents who **confirmed the messaging and signage was clear** and the **bins noticeable**.

“We’ve seen the new bins!”



Recycling waste is **collected everyday** by The City of Edinburgh Council, and sent to a **processing plant in Broxburn**, just outside Edinburgh. From there, the **materials** will get **recycled** and **re-enter the loop**.



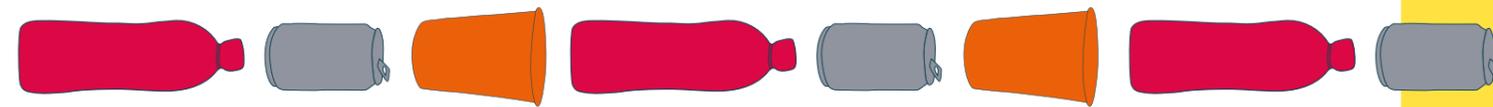
More quantity, better quality

The data collected from the **monthly audits** has been **scaled up**, to give an **indication** of the amount of **recyclable materials collected** within the **6 months** of the campaign.

Since the beginning of the campaign, we estimate having collected:



By **diverting** these items to **recycling** and **away from incineration**, we **supported** Edinburgh and Scotland in **achieving** their **environmental ambitions**.



*Based on estimates from our measurement and evaluation partner Changeworks.



More quantity, better quality

A certain degree of contamination is inevitable when collecting recycling. Especially on-the-go, where **people spend an average of less than two seconds** making a decision on how to dispose of their packaging.

However, **waste audits**, performed on a **monthly basis** on a selection of recycling bins, indicate a **positive trend** in the **quality of the materials** collected for recycling. This demonstrates that the public used the recycling bins better and better as time went on.

Overall, we observed from launch to campaign end:



A **46% increase** in collection rates of **plastic bottles and cans** in recycling bins.

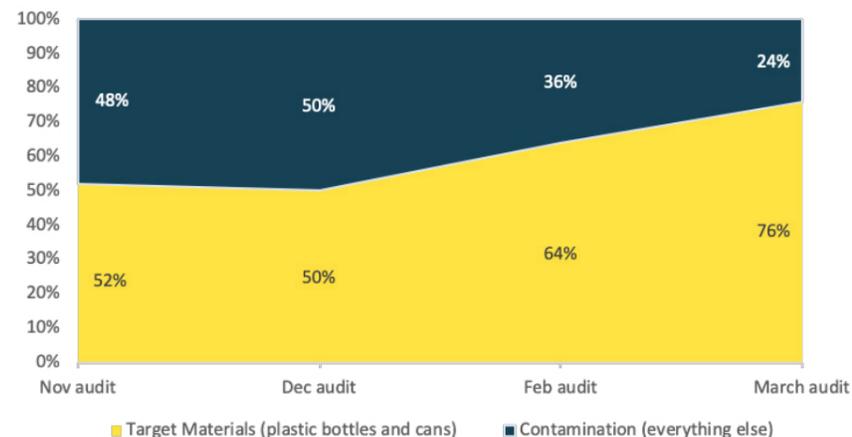
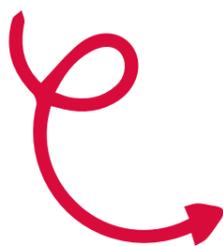


Contamination has **halved** in **recycling bins**. The amount of **recyclable materials** in general waste bins is down to **8%**.

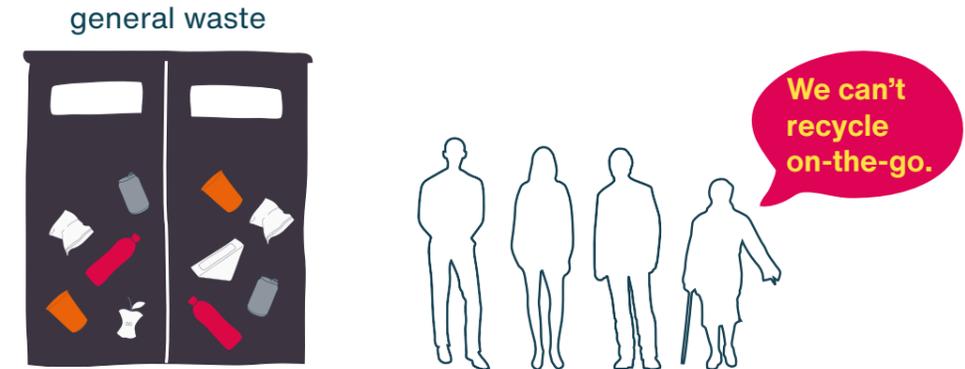


A **26% reduction** in the amount of **coffee cups** in **general waste bins** after the introduction of new coffee cup recycling bins.

Evolution of the quality of target materials collected in recycling bins (in volume)



Before the campaign:



When the campaign launched:



After the campaign:



Coffee cup recycling

An estimated 35,000 coffee cups have been collected during the trial in Edinburgh. This success hides some operational challenges that are detailed here in full transparency, in an attempt to inform future projects.

On-street cups collection

Despite an increased awareness of the public on the small proportion of coffee cups currently being recycled, many parts of the UK are still not serviced by waste management companies able to facilitate the collection of coffee cup for recycling.

This was the case in Edinburgh, where we struggled to find a waste collector able to collect cups from the new on-street cup recycling points. Fortunately, the council stepped up to provide this service during the 6-month duration of the trial.

Viability of a small-scale scheme

However, given the small number of cup collection points currently available in the city centre, this was not an economically viable model for the council in the long term, as the on-street cup collection requires efforts and costs that outweigh the value of materials sent to recycling.

Fortunately, the unused coffee cup bins from Edinburgh will be donated to the Swansea city council, as the Welsh city launched a similar scheme and is looking to expand their cups collection service to additional locations in the city centre.

A successful trial in a managed space

Thanks to the dedication of the Waverley Mall team and its commitment to the success of the campaign, the trial of in-doors coffee cup recycling inside the Mall was a success, with customers engaged positively with the campaign messaging, contamination dropping month by month, and the cleaning team supporting with the logistics of the collection.

Building on those encouraging results, the plan was to expand the number of cups collection points in other managed spaces (cinemas, airports, etc.)

across the city. Engagement was interrupted by the COVID-19 crisis, but will resume as soon as the context allows it.

Addressing the wider issue

The challenges associated with introducing cup recycling on a small scale is not a new issue and is being addressed by Hubbub, with the support of Starbucks, through the Cup Fund initiative - the UK's largest grant fund to support ambitious projects that boost paper cup recycling in the UK. Its ambition is to help reduce the associated barriers and increase cup collection more widely across the country. Ultimately, our aim is to promote the use of reusables, and encourage people to only consider recycling their cups when they've forgotten their reusable coffee cup at home.



Building a network of local partners

Involving **local partners** and **influencers** was crucial to the **success and legacy** of the campaign. It helped to ensure **recycling infrastructure** was available in **key locations**, and **consistent messages** were **promoting recycling** across the city centre.

- **Iconic central locations** introduced **new recycling systems** for the first time in Edinburgh, **saving valuable materials** from going to waste.
- **173 local organisations** **promoted** and **amplified** the **campaign's messages** in their **stores** and **online**. They amplified our reach and participated in **creating a culture of recycling** in Edinburgh.



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

W A V E R L E Y
mall

ESSENTIAL
EDINBURGH

Visit
Scotland™

Edinburgh
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Inspiring Connections

EDINBURGH
CASTLE



Spotlight on Waverley Mall

Waverley Mall, home to a food court, a supermarket and a shopping centre, became one of the **key focal points** of the campaign, for two main reasons:

- Its **central location** and **direct access** to Edinburgh's **main train station**. This makes it an essential stop for many of the **70,000 passengers** passing by Waverley station every day.
- The **enthusiasm** and **commitment** of the Mall's management to **collaborate** and **support the campaign**.

We delivered a **range of activities** to make the most of the space and **engage commuters** and **travellers** with our **recycling messages**. Those included:

- **Improving current recycling bins** – with new vinyls, simplified waste streams and messages, and campaign branding.
- **Introducing coffee cup recycling** – for the first time in Edinburgh, partnering with the team on-site to coordinate waste collections.
- **Designing an 11m long mural** – on the departures board within the food court area, to raise awareness of the issue around waste.
- **Engaging businesses with campaign assets** – and building on the Mall's network of popular high-street brands and retailers, most of whom were funding partners.
- **Hosting campaign stalls and engagement workshops** – making the most of the high pedestrian footfall, we found that the public positively engaging with the campaign messaging and new infrastructure.



“When the recycling bins were introduced to Waverley Mall we had a lot of contamination with the cups, on average about 60% to 70%. In the coming weeks the contamination of the bins reduced dramatically and this was due to the hard work that was put into making the public aware of what we are trying to do, the PR behind the project and the passion of the team on site.”

Mark Stanley, Services Manager at Waverley Mall

“We are delighted to be involved in Hubbub's recycling project as it's an initiative that we feel very strongly about. We were chosen to become an ambassador here at Waverley Mall last year to help launch the campaign within Edinburgh and look forward to continuing working closely with Hubbub to do as much as we can to encourage social responsibility.”

Jacquelyn Stewart, General Manager at Waverley Mall



**People became
willing to recycle**

*because we engaged the public through a creative
and far-reaching communications campaign.*

A high-profile communications campaign

Press and media coverage

The campaign received **41 items of media coverage** to date, **all positive**.

- Broadcast coverage included news bulletins on launch day on **BBC Radio Scotland**, as well as soundbites from Hubbub's spokesperson, Alex Robinson, on **two national radio stations**.
- The campaign also had print coverage in **Edinburgh Evening News** (twice), **The Scottish Daily Mail** and **The Scotsman**, as well as local online coverage in **Edinburgh Evening News**, **The Edinburgh Reporter** and **Edinburgh Live**.
- Trade coverage included **Edie.net** and **The Scottish Grocer**.
- **Media announcements** were released on each **campaign milestone** – the launch, the introduction of coffee cups, the extension of the campaign area and the publication of results.
- Waverley Mall released a separate piece to **raise awareness of cup recycling** inside the Mall.

Opportunity to see/hear
5.2 million!

Read our comprehensive media report [here](#).

Social media campaign

The social media campaign was driven by the **combined efforts** of **The City of Edinburgh Council**, **Changeworks** and **Hubbub**.

The campaign was **well received** by the **public** and **residents of Edinburgh**.

To ensure the consistency of our branding and messaging, all visual assets and communication guidelines were stored on a shared Dropbox account for all local amplifiers to access and use.

650,000 people reached via **125+ posts** by the 3 partners alone.

A further **173 local organisations** helped amplify the campaign messages online, resharing our messages on their own social media channels and newsletters.

Twitter and **Facebook** were the main channels **utilising both free and paid targeted ads**. **7 influencers** promoted the campaign on their channels.



In person engagement

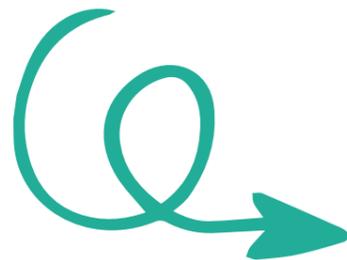
On-street engagement

As well as the campaign having a strong media and online presence, **events and workshops** also proved to be very **effective engagement tools**.

Our Edinburgh #InTheLoop benefitted from **over 50 hours of volunteer support** from **our local delivery partner** over the course of the campaign, which allowed us to deliver the below activities on a **frequent basis**.

- **Stalls and workshops** – weekly to engage a wide audience and increase the general awareness of the campaign and its key messages. 350 people were directly engaged throughout the campaign.
- **Q&A sessions** – monthly, to get some feedback from the public on the campaign interventions, messaging and signage, and adapt those accordingly.
- **Pre and post campaign surveys** – targeted at the public before and after the campaign, we asked in-depth to track the amount of people reached and engaged, the levels of awareness of the campaign, and the impact of the project in shifting recycling awareness, values and behaviour.

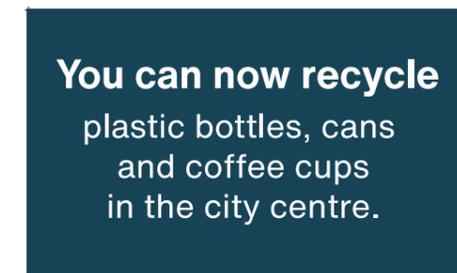
Public engagement activities were carried out in a variety of locations including within the premises of partner organisations, on-street near the art installation or a branded bin.



Local advertising

Partnering with the **The City of Edinburgh Council** allowed us to **benefit** from **in-kind support** throughout the campaign. This included the **access to 6 large billboards** and **advertising panels** located in the **centre of the campaign area** to display our campaign messages.

This proved to be a **cost-effective opportunity** to **widen our reach** and **increase the number of times locals were nudged to recycle on-the-go**.

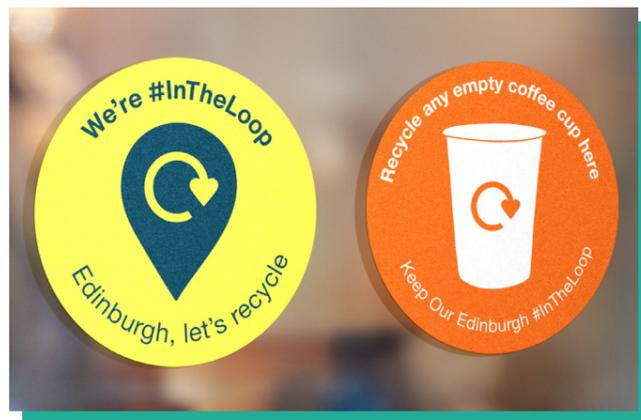


In store engagement

Local stores and shops

A total of **65 local businesses**, food and drinks retailers, cafes, universities and major employers in **Edinburgh city centre** were **engaged** and **equipped** with **1,900 campaign materials**.

Several **hotels** are using our **physical assets** and **digital toolkit** and have been showcasing their **enthusiasm for the campaign**, letting us **engage** both with their **employees** and **customer base**.



“Addressing the issue of waste in and out of our stores is a global priority, and we are tackling this from a number of angles within the organisation – whether it’s reducing the amount of single-use materials we introduce to begin with, encouraging customers to adopt reusables or investing in an alternative cup solution that could transform the industry. Starbucks is proud to be working with Hubbub and #InTheLoop Edinburgh, increasing the ease and availability of recycling in the capital.”

Mikey Bamford, Digital Content and Communications Manager, Starbucks

To infinitinny...

... and beyond!

Infinitinny is a **solar-powered art installation** used as a focal point for the Edinburgh campaign. It was **unveiled** in October 2019 in **St Andrew Square**, a green space in the heart of the city, and **displayed there for three months**.

Designed and built by **Scottish-based artists Sam Cornwell and Cody Anderson**, the **innovative geometric art structure** showcased plastic bottles, drinks cans and coffee cups to demonstrate the **value of these materials**. Using solar panels to **light up the installation at night**, further **captivated** the public, helping to continue to **raise awareness** of the **importance of recycling**.

Over a weekend in January 2020, the installation was unfortunately targeted by vandals, causing irreparable damage and forcing the artists to dismantle their work. **Materials were recycled and sent back #InTheLoop**.



Due to Infinitinny being solar powered, it was able to make an impact both during the day and at night.

Our legacy

Our main conclusions

Our Edinburgh #InTheLoop campaign confirms and strengthens the learnings and main conclusion from its predecessor, the #LeedsByExample campaign.



Collaboration is key to raising awareness when introducing recycling.



Make recycling simple, visual and fun. The public responds well to playfulness, bold messaging and interventions that visualise the issue.



Clear, simple and consistent communications are crucial to make people less confused about recycling.



Quality of recycling varies and is influenced by bin positioning, weather and season.



Cup collections are important but need scale and clear messaging to be effective.



Thorough, regular and consistent monitoring is important.



Build a legacy and ensure the system remains in place in the long term.



What happens next?

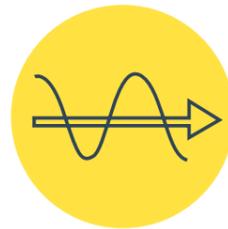
One of the key objectives of this trial was to ensure its **long-term viability**. This was **achieved** by building a **productive relationship** with the The City of Edinburgh Council, to whom we **demonstrated the scheme's worth**. The project team identified a need to **extend the duration of the trial** to gather **more data** in order to make an **informed decision** about the future of the recycling on-the-go scheme.

Legacy plans include:



Bin infrastructure

All the recycling bins and infrastructure remain in place at the end of the campaign and are now the property of the The City of Edinburgh Council. Bin vinyls will need to be replaced in a couple of years. The introduction of the DRS in Scotland may have an influence on the waste streams being collected.



Monitoring

The City of Edinburgh Council will continue to monitor the bins performance with regular waste audits.



Extension

The council will explore the idea of scaling up the campaign area to additional streets over the next few years.



Waste collection

The City of Edinburgh Council have confirmed that they will take on the waste collection costs associated with extending the trial.



Coffee cups

The plan is to expand the number of collection points in managed spaces across the city, and continue to promote messaging around coffee cups recycling, in a way that also promotes the use of reusables.



Communications

The City of Edinburgh Council will continue to put key messages on social media on a regular basis, keeping messaging simple and sharing photos of the bins.

“We’ll continue to use elements of the communications approach, strategy and learnings from this project to inform and develop future campaigns which focus on recycling and the benefits it brings.”

Lesley Macinnes, Transport and Environment Convener,
The City of Edinburgh Council



Financial and carbon analysis

The campaign has demonstrated the positive impact of recycling on-the-go in terms of amount of materials diverted from incineration, residents’ satisfaction, attractiveness and reputation of the city. However, there is still a need for additional evidence of the scheme’s worth in terms of return on investment and carbon impact implications of rolling-out recycling on-the-go. The City of Edinburgh Council will perform these analysis in the upcoming months.

The impact of Covid-19

While the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic in spring 2020 didn't affect the campaign itself, as it ended in March, it has had implications for the short-term legacy of the campaign.

▪ Waste collection

The City of Edinburgh Council temporarily suspended the on-street collection of recyclable materials in the short term, due to resources constraints and logistical and hygienic challenges associated with waste. However, the quantities of on-the-go waste should be minimal during the period due to the social distancing measures in place.

▪ Cup recycling

Hubbub was working on securing more collection points in managed spaces across the city to recycle coffee cups. However most of the potential locations have temporarily closed which has made this impossible at the moment. This work will be resumed whenever possible.

▪ Monitoring

Finally, the pandemic posed a challenge when collecting responses for the final survey, as The City of Edinburgh Council communication channels could not be used as much as they were for the initial baseline survey. Furthermore, on-street surveying of the public were limited due to social distancing measures, so fewer responses were collected than initially hoped for.

Our methodology

We measured impact through independent monitoring by Changeworks to ensure the credibility of our results. These included:

▪ Pre and post campaign public surveys

Gauging public awareness, perception and behaviour related to recycling before the campaign, asking the same questions afterwards and monitoring the change. Tracking the amount of people reached and engaged, the levels of awareness of the campaign, as well as the impact of the project in shifting recycling awareness, values and behaviour.

▪ Monthly waste audits

Providing robust and comparable data based on a monitoring of a representative sample of bin bags. Collating both weight and volume data and focusing on the assessment of the quality (contamination rate vs target materials) and quantity of the waste collected. The methodology used will be used as a template for future cities #InTheLoop.

▪ Monthly Q&A sessions

Gathering feedback from the public on the campaign interventions, messaging and signage, and adapting those accordingly.

▪ Weekly observations

Focused on behaviours, particularly how people were using the recycling bins. For example, did they look at the branding/signage? Did they put recyclable items in the general waste? Did they put contamination in the recycling bins? Whilst the information gathered is anecdotal it provided a useful snapshot for our team to find out how much interaction there was with the bins.

▪ Weekly walk arounds

Checking infrastructure and signage for damage, as well as monitoring fill levels and visible contamination. The checks for damage were valuable as there were issues with apertures being vandalised, bins in the wrong locations and poor quality vinyls. The checks of fill level and contamination were not robust or particularly helpful to the project.

Our ambitions for recycling on-the-go

After **Leeds** and **Swansea**, **Edinburgh** is the **third city** #InTheLoop in the UK, and more locations are in the pipeline. But this is only the beginning...

The **combined learnings** of testing how to implement an **effective** on-the-go recycling campaign in **different settings**, are helping to **build a model** that can be **replicated almost anywhere**.

Our ambition is to **integrate** #InTheLoop in **DEFRA's Waste and Resources strategy**, **outreach to the Scottish government** and **link the scheme to the policy agenda**. Our aim is to help to **transform the national approach** to recycling on-the-go.

Ultimately, **recycling** is only **one part** of the jigsaw in **fixing the waste problem**. Moving towards a **more circular economy**, #InTheLoop aims to **encourage both recycling and reuse**.



Further resources

About the Our Edinburgh #InTheLoop campaign

[Website](#)

[Results infographic](#)

About other #InTheLoop campaigns across the UK

[#LeedsByExample impact report](#) and [executive summary](#)
[Swansea #InTheLoop impact report](#)

About recycling on-the-go

[Key principles for success](#)

Get in touch

[Hubbub project team](#)



U B B U B