



European
Outdoor
Group™

Single Use Plastics Project
Progress made in addressing poly bag usage and
end-of-life treatment in the outdoor industry

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About Us

Who we are

We are an industry group of brands, retailers, technology providers, and national associations. The European Outdoor Group consists of over 100 member organisations.

Our vision

We are the voice of the European outdoor sector. Our vision is to do global, profitable business in a way that gives back more than we take — from nature and from people.

What we do

We undertake a wide range of activities, including market research and insights, corporate social responsibility and sustainability initiatives, outdoor retail collaboration, organising and supporting industry events and trade fairs, and representing our sector and its interests to the European Commission, other formal institutions, NGOs, and other stakeholders.

ESG

We support the outdoor industry to navigate sustainability challenges, accelerate responsible practices, and respond to emerging risks and regulations. Through guidance, collaboration, practical tools, and industry representation, we help members turn ambition into action and deliver measurable progress.

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1.

Introduction

Introduction

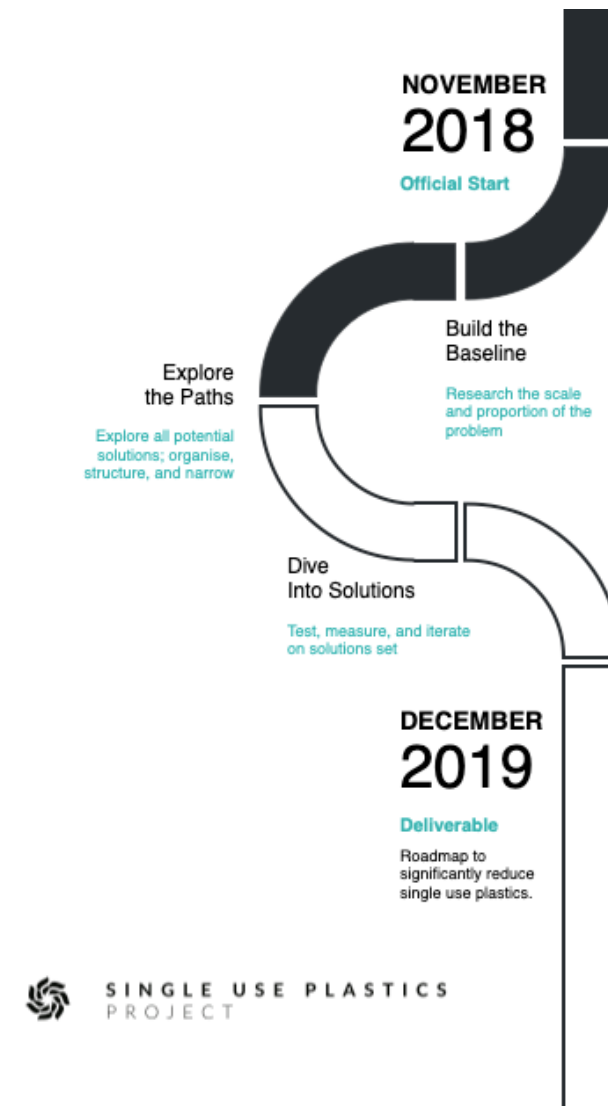
The Single Use Plastics Project, managed by the European Outdoor Group, was set up with the aim to bring project members together to significantly reduce the impacts of their single use plastic packaging. It was officially launched in November 2018 with 31 member organisations, including brands, retailers and outdoor industry national associations.

Background

The initial timeline and roadmap covered a 12-month period and encompassed 3 stages:

- Stage 1: Use survey insights to understand key characteristics of the problem, including the scale.
- Stage 2: Use resource groups to understand basic implications; explore current research & solutions implemented by others.
- Stage 3: Use resource groups to understand full implication of economic & ecological impacts for the most viable pathways.

- The planned deliverable was a roadmap to significantly reduce single use plastics used in the outdoor industry value chain.



Aims

The project aims varied only slightly from project inception to conclusion, focusing as they did on the overall poly bag and packaging concerns expressed by the outdoor industry members:

1. To reduce the quantities of plastics which end up with consumers.
2. To ensure that our materials are retained in the resource stream.
3. To create systems which prevent our poly bags from ending up in landfills, incinerators or the natural environment.

Methodology

The project was designed to decrease member workload through collaboration and to withstand fluctuations in member organisations' resources, availability and changing strategic priorities.

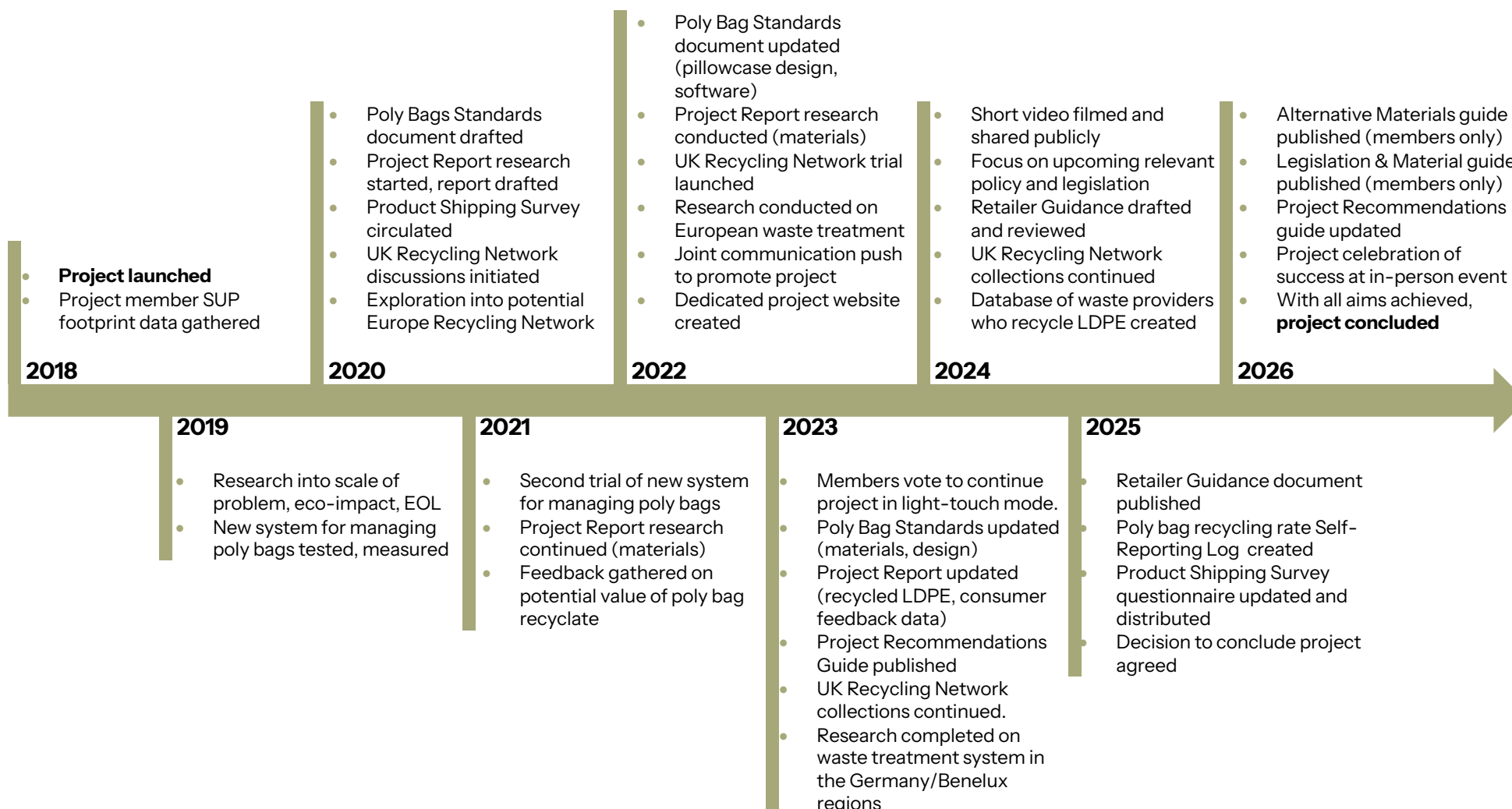
Key benefits

Industry-sized problems demand an industry-sized response.

Through this project we designed solutions that worked across the value chain rather than solely within isolated organisations.

1. Collaborative working to find a collective solution to a collective problem.
2. Access to the network of contributing organisations.
3. Access to the group's knowledge base, network and research, including the LCA's and articles to guide thinking.
4. Ability to ensure member's interests are represented in the systems development.
5. Direct association with the successful outcomes of the project.

Timeline



Project learnings

1. There are no perfect solutions, and most alternatives are still problematic.

The proposed project system was not intended to be the solution to the plastic problem, but rather *a collective step in the right direction*.

LCAs and impact comparisons agree that plastic is a superior packaging material in terms of ecological impact along almost every single segment of its lifecycle, and alternative materials tend to shift rather than mitigate or even lessen environmental impacts, often presenting new and increasingly problematic negative issues.

We view this as a systemic issue and not a materials issue, therefore, solutions should be systems-based and not materials-based.

2. Current research is inconclusive on alternative materials.

Initially, we sought a completely plastic-free material to protect outdoor garments and equipment en route from Asia to Europe. We were, however, surprised to find that our initial position was misaligned with the predominant findings within the research community. A critical review of LCAs, research papers and reports (see [Single Use Plastics Project Report](#) p16-40) indicated that, whilst biodegradable materials (such as cotton, paper and certain bio-based plastics) decompose and contribute less to the impacts of littering compared to conventional plastics at their end-of-life, during their production phase they are often more significant contributors to climate impacts (such as acidification, eutrophication and toxic emissions). In addition, the recyclability of bioplastics is limited and often incompatible with current municipal recycling streams.

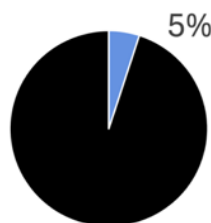
As such, we concluded that, whilst plastic substitutes should be explored, our recommended material was recycled LDPE.

3. Current municipal waste management systems are not yet optimised to deal with poly bag recycling.

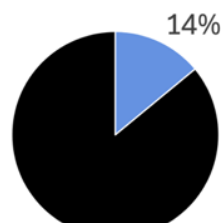
The issue we saw was that plastic is problematic at its end of life for a variety of reasons. Primarily, the bags end up either at retail stores or with consumers (e-commerce) and, in both situations, the only option is to dispose of the plastic using municipal systems, which can be problematic. Although the technology and infrastructure to mechanically recycle the plastic film used in our poly bags is widespread, relatively inexpensive, and highly efficient, the costs of sorting and cleaning film from a municipal waste stream is prohibitive, meaning that recycling facilities often treat film as waste.

2x

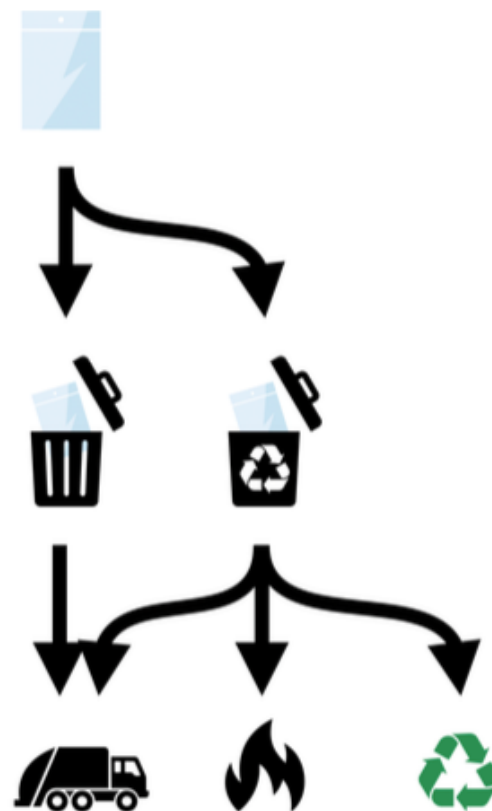
For plastics that are recycled, most are only recycled once or twice before final disposal



Due to costs of sorting and reprocessing, the material value retained for use as further materials is around 5%



The estimated plastic packaging globally collected for recycling is only 14%



1

Most frequently, our plastic bags are not recycled by consumers or retailers. They are discarded.

2

Even when properly disposed, many municipalities do not recycle plastic bags. They are frequently sent to landfills or burned because of technological and/or cost barriers.

3

Bottom Line: Even in the best of circumstances, only a fraction of recycled plastic bags are actually recycled.

4. Consumers understand and welcome the removal of poly bags where appropriate.

Alongside implementing an industry-wide recycling system, we continued to prioritise the reduction of unnecessary poly bag waste. This included identifying product categories across the industry that can make global journeys without need for a protective film, as well as retailers/brands that can send or receive products without plastic. Consumer feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with the overall consensus being that they were happy to receive products un-bagged, that the packaging wasn't missed, and that they were pleased to see cooperative initiatives such as this being undertaken by the industry.

76

Net Promoter Score (customer satisfaction) of consumers who received orders without poly bag protectors.

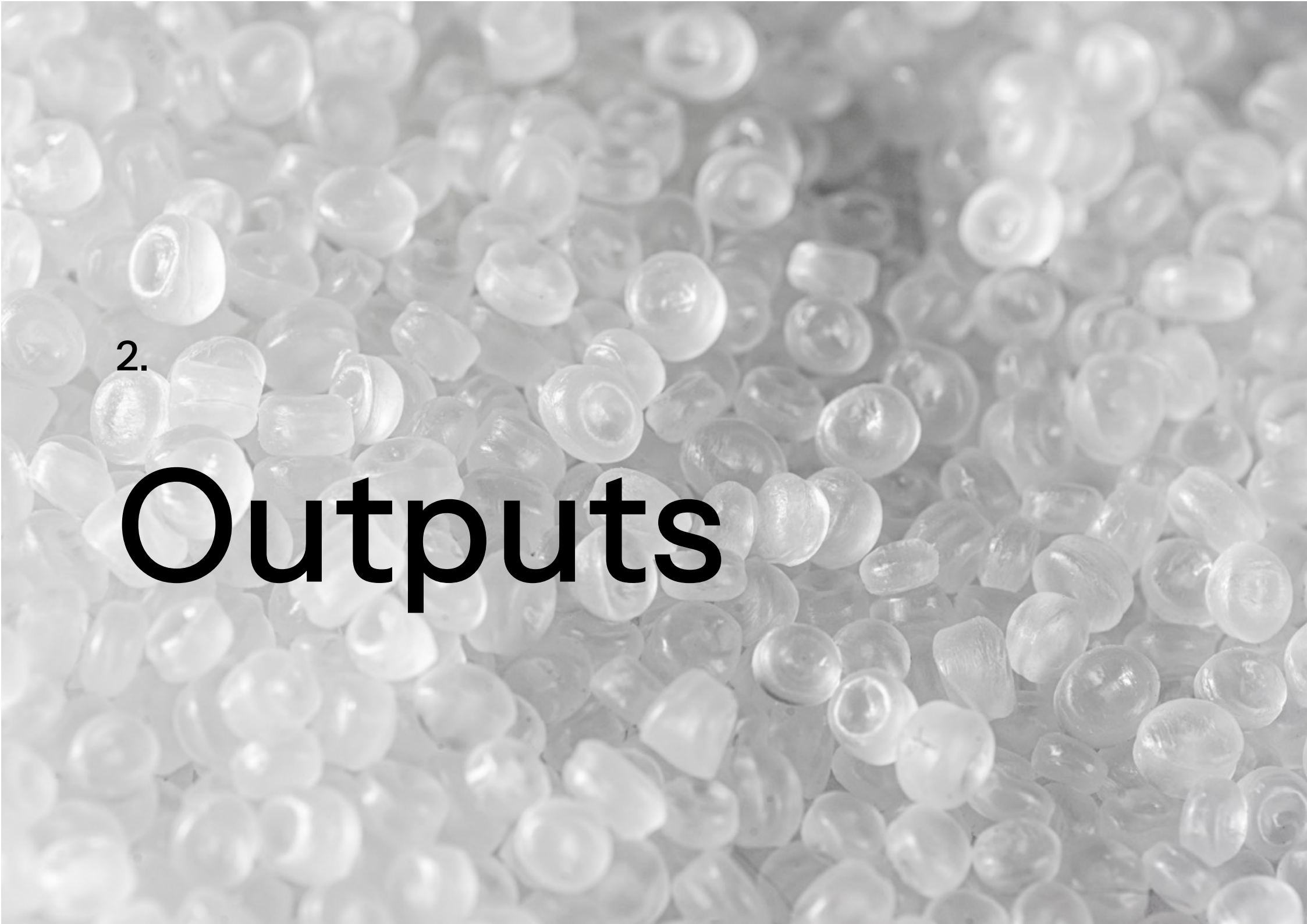
0%

Increase in return rates for orders sent out without poly bag protectors across all organisations.

5. There is scope for further improvements.

Within this project we addressed the materials and designs used to create poly bags, assessed waste management systems, and shared best practices across organisations. But there is always more that can be done, both by individual organisations and external stakeholders, to reduce the use of virgin plastic for poly bags and to maximise their recyclability potential, thereby reducing waste:

- Removal of poly bags from even more outdoor apparel and hardware product categories.
- Quantification (through LCAs) of the environmental performance of materials alternative to LDPE to inform sourcing decisions.
- Improvement of municipal waste management systems to guarantee recycling of all thin film plastics.
- Implementation of revised EU legislation to clarify requirements for producers, brands and retailers in dealing with their plastic waste.

The background of the slide is a dense, out-of-focus field of small, translucent, rounded objects, possibly seeds or beads, in various shades of light gray and white. They have a glossy, reflective surface.

2.

Outputs

Outputs

In this section, the following outputs are explored in greater detail:

- The creation of industry standards for poly bags, made from 100% recycled plastics, and designed in collaboration with recyclers for optimum material value retention during reprocessing.
- The removal of poly bags at strategic bottlenecks within the value chain before they are sent to municipal waste streams.
- The creation of an industry-sized recycling stream of relatively clean, homogenous, and pre-sorted film that could be reintroduced into the resource stream with maximum value retention and minimal down-cycling.

Note: All public and internal project resources will remain available to access after the project has been concluded to support organisations with their packaging strategy and in discussions with

relevant stakeholders, such as poly bag manufacturers, warehouse operational teams, brands and retailers.



Poly Bag Standards

The best possible poly bag is no poly bag. It is, however, acknowledged that for certain products protective poly bags are still necessary. As such, a poly bag standards document was created with input from the entire value chain including materials experts, poly bag manufacturers and SUPP members. One of the project's objectives was to return poly bags to the resource stream so, by designing for end-of-life, we prioritised specific attributes which have the largest net impact on the bags' value after use.

The document includes a materials design specification which minimises contaminants to ensure the maximum value of the material is retained. It also presents physical poly bag design guidelines for increased reusability, recyclability, and minimal/no virgin material requirements. Additionally, it provides an example of software which allows users to assess their packaging against country-specific regulations and guidelines.

Poly Bag Standards			
Adapted from RecyClass™ specifically for outdoor industry poly bags			
	YES – FULL COMPATIBILITY	CONDITIONAL – LIMITED COMPATIBILITY	NO – LOW COMPATIBILITY
	A-B*	B-C*	D-E-F*
	Materials that passed the testing protocols with no negative impact OR materials that have not been tested (yet), but are known to be acceptable in PE recycling	Materials that passed the testing protocols if certain conditions are met OR materials that have not been tested (yet), but pose a low risk of interfering with PE recycling	Materials that failed the testing protocols OR materials that have not been tested (yet), but pose a high risk of interfering with PE recycling
Film	100% recycled PE-LD, PE-LLD, PE-HD *	PE-LD, PE-LLD, PE-HD, single materials	Any other polymer (ex. PET, PVC etc.)
Colours	Unpigmented; transparent	Light colours; translucent colours	Dark colours; black; carbon black
Barrier	None	Barrier in the polymer matrix, SiOx and AlOx without additional coatings	> 5% EVOH (in polyolefin combination film); barrier layer PVC, PVDC, PA; any other barrier layer; foaming agents used as expandant chemical agents; aluminium
Additives	None	None	Bio-/oxo-/photodegradable additives; additives concentration > 0,97 g/cm3
Closure Systems	PE-LD, PE-LLD, PE-HD / Same material as bag	PP, PET, PETG, PS, PLA	Metal, aluminium, PVC, non-PO or foams with density < 1 g/cm3
Liners, Seals and Valves	None	PE-LD, PE-LLD, PE-HD	Metal, aluminium, PVC, foiled paper, non-PO or foams with density < 1 g/cm3
Labels (stickers)	None	PE-based labels	Mixed materials, or paper labels
Adhesives for labels	None	Water soluble or water-releasable at less than 60°C. Certified Non-VOC emitting.	Adhesives non-soluble in water or non-releasable in water at less than 60°C, VOC emitting
Inks	No inks. Remove unnecessary branding or marketing content which significantly degrades recyclability and value.	Non-toxic (according to EUPIA guidelines). Washable inks. Natural oil-based (soy/vegetable) inks.	Inks that bleed; Toxic or hazardous inks. Metallic ink. Petroleum-based ink.
Direct Printing	Remove all possible printing*. Target unnecessary branding or marketing content which significantly degrades recyclability and value.	Laser marked print; Printed production or expiry date.	Printing covering > 50% **
Other Attachments	None	PE-LD, PE-LLD, PE-HD	Metal, aluminium, PVC, paper, foams with density < 1 g/cm3
Size	Fold all product lines as efficiently as possible to ensure minimal plastic is used.	Some product lines (e.g., 3L shells) can be damaged if folded too many times. Identify which products can be folded and progressively add to the list. Measure reductions.	
Thickness or gauge	As thin as possible†		

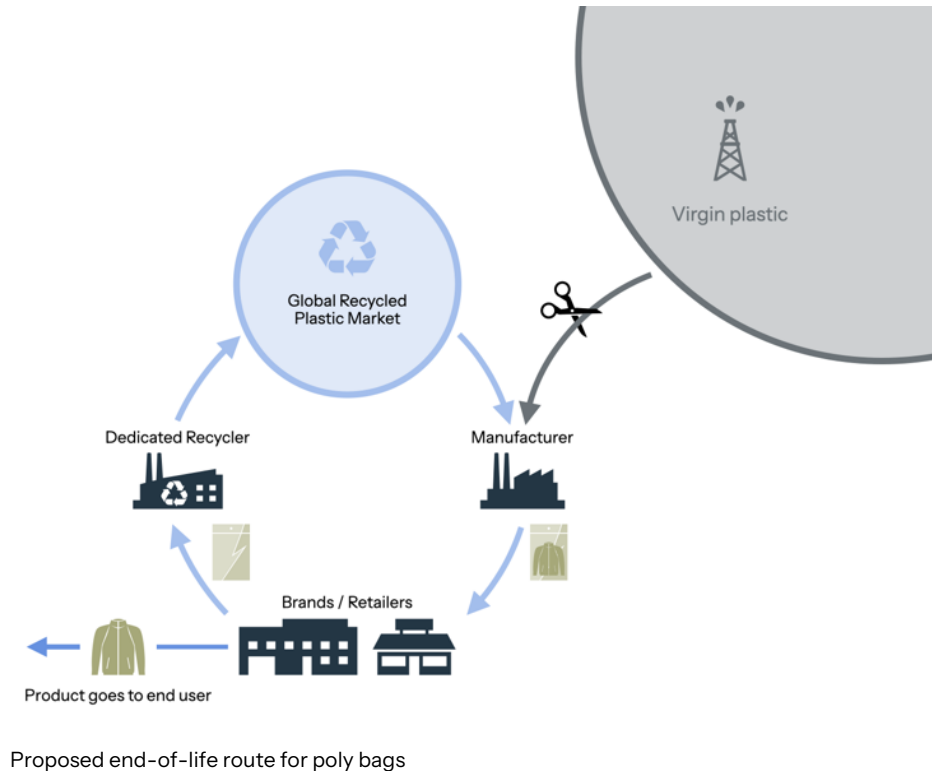
Last update – May 2021

Industry Report

The Single Use Plastics Project Report, first published in 2022, is a comprehensive overview of the accumulated science and research on poly bags and proposed alternative materials; systems constraints of recycling and end-of-life for poly bags; and an overview of project testing and recommendations.

The report is the culmination of desk research, consultation of materials experts and waste management providers, survey feedback from product end-consumers, and insights provided from the project members.

The report recommends a system for removing and properly caring for protective plastic (poly) bags before they end up either in incinerators, landfills or are sent for export. It also contains findings from multiple Life Cycle Analyses and provides feedback from end-user trials of poly bag free product shipping. The report was updated in 2023 to reflect updated consumer feedback from the ongoing survey.



UK Recycling trial

Research undertaken for the project report highlighted that poly bags sent for recycling in the UK are sometimes not reprocessed here, and sometimes not recycled at all, as very thin film plastics are incompatible with traditional recycling machinery causing this material to be considered a contaminant. As such, the group sought to implement an industry-level recycling stream of relatively clean, homogenous, and pre-sorted film that could be reintroduced into the resource stream with maximum value retention and minimal down-cycling. From the outset, recyclers indicated that our poly bags could be recycled into 95/5 grade PCR or higher and sold to the commodities market when recycled together. This means the poly bags have substantial value, but only when properly managed and recycled collectively at their end-of-life. Six brands and retailers participated over 4-years; baling and storing their poly bags and clear film for regular collection and recycling, contributing only to the transport costs if they superseded the recycled plastic rebate.



Project Recommendations

The Project Recommendations guide was first published in autumn 2023 and updated in 2026. It is an excellent starting point for those who know they want to do something about their packaging, but don't know where to start. This document signposts users towards the relevant project resources for specific poly bag topics.

The guide also contains a product shipping matrix, which was created to identify which product lines can be *shipped and/or received* without a poly bag by organisations across their respective segments of the value chain. This information identified low-hanging fruit and created a network of organisations which supported each other in transitioning away from poly bags across certain stable product lines. These organisations acted as exemplars or advisors to other outdoor organisations as they sought to eliminate poly bags in their own product lines.



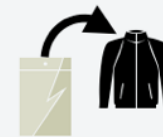
Reduce and, where possible, fully eliminate poly bags across identified product lines.

See pages 4-6 of this Project Recommendations guide for the outcomes of our shipping survey and recommendations & considerations for those starting this process.



Produce and design all poly bags in alignment with the EOG Poly Bag Standards document.

See the EOG Poly Bag Standards for detailed guidance on the optimum material choice and poly bag design.



Ship pre-selected e-commerce orders to end users without a poly bag.

Of the 1578 consumers who responded to our survey, 97.98% said the condition of e-comm products delivered without a poly bag was the same or better. No impact to returns reported by brands.



Collate bags from retail and e-comm, and ensure they are mechanically recycled.

From 2019 to 2025, over 33 metric tonnes of plastic were collected from our UK recycling network, saved from landfill or incineration, and recycled into high grade (98/2, 99/1) valuable material.

Video

The function of this short video, filmed in 2024, was to raise awareness of the Single Use Plastics Project and, as a secondary function, to inform consumers of the project and highlight some of the misinformation around the topic of plastic packaging. Primarily, the project was designed as a B2B initiative which actively avoided publicly communicating its presence. However, over the course of the project, consumers had questions. So, we agreed on an accessible format to educate viewers on what was being done, what they could do to get involved and how to support the project. The intended audience was consumers of outdoor products and organisations across the outdoor industry such as brands and retailers.

The video provides an easy visual understanding of one of the most tangible outcomes of the project – the concept of removing poly bags from the waste stream through collection and recycling,

ensuring that the material enters the recycled market and realises its value as a material rather than being discarded as waste.

Filming took place at a variety of project member warehouses and distribution centres, and included additional filmed footage from other project members. We take this opportunity to thank those project members who took part and also those who offered their services.



Poly Bag Collection and Recycling Guidance for

Retailers

Minimising the impact of single use plastic is a key issue for brands, retailers and material/packaging organisations. With packaging regulations tightening across the globe, adherence to legislation is becoming unavoidable. There is, for example, the potential that in removing polybags, any Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) fees applicable to products sent in poly bags could be minimized or avoided altogether. Thus in 2024 guidance was developed specifically for retailers on how to integrate poly bag removal into their operations.

The guidance document covers all aspects which need to be considered and offers advice on how to approach discussions with operations teams and waste service providers. It also contains an FAQ section addressing critical topics such as cost implications, the effect on operational efficiency, managing collections and a printable visual guide for collecting plastic.

Collection Reference Sheet



Collect transparent PE film:

- Individual product poly bags
- Master bags or larger bags
- Transparent waste bin liners
- Transparent shrink wrap/stretch wrap



Remove where practical:

- Gel silica packets
- Marketing inserts/Hang tags
- Barcode stickers
- Tape/Sellotape
- Adhesive labelling
- Pallet strapping not holding the baled plastic together



Do not include:

- Coloured plastics
- Other non-PE plastics (e.g. bubble wrap, Styrofoam)
- Paper/cardboard, general waste, other contaminants



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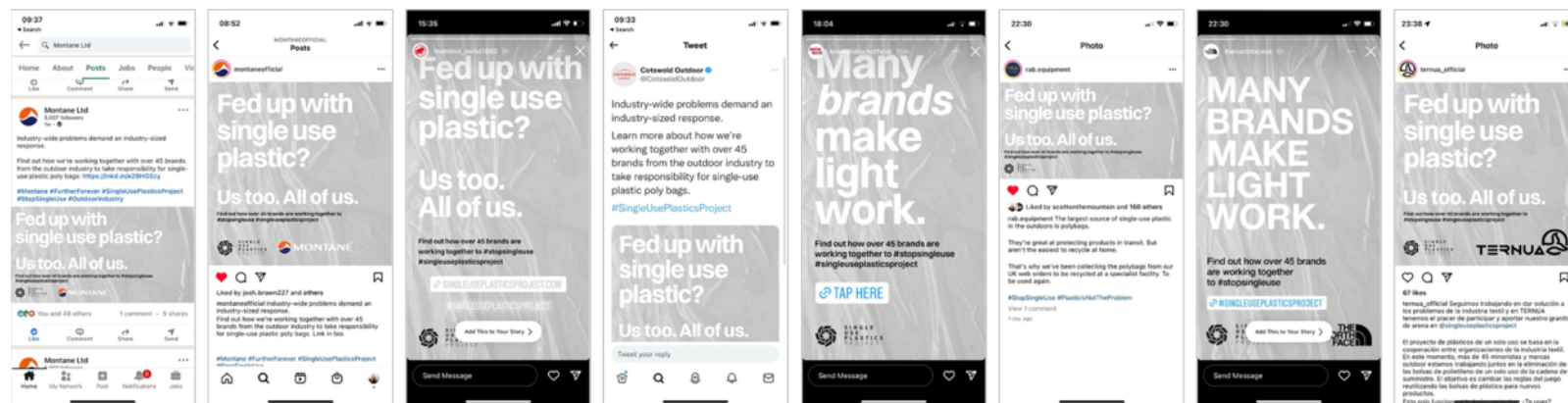
Communications

In 2022, after 4 years of pilot projects, research and testing, plus having recently published the project report, the project took advantage of the broad network of social media channels, influencers, athletes, activists and blogs that the group wielded to present a collaborative message across the outdoor industry. The aim was to present a unified single message across all member comms channels during the campaign window; bring project awareness to the widest possible reach of outdoor customers; and drive more organisations in the outdoor industry towards project participation.

The messaging of the campaign was:

1. This is not a solution – but a collective step in the right direction.
2. Plastic does some things really well and some not so well.
3. Working together and collaboration is vital – an industry sized problem demands industry sized response.
4. Plastic is not trash so why do we treat it that way?

The campaign ran across LinkedIn, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram, and we were delighted with a) how many member organisations participated, b) the engagement rate (24,619 impressions across all sites) and c) the reach and the positive feedback this elicited.



Additionally, since the project inception, many project members kindly included details of their project membership on their websites and/or in their annual reports.

The project was also represented in outdoor industry trade publications and at relevant in-person events such as OutDoor, ISPO, European Outdoor Summit, Slide & OTS.



Member-only resources

As a fee-paying project certain resources have been developed, and are only available for, project members.

Alternative materials database

- We were regularly approached by organisations who had developed poly bags using innovative materials (e.g., transparent paper, bio based, water soluble, waste and/or ocean-bound plastic etc.)
- A database lists these new materials and provides information on their sustainability credentials and availability.
- The database also includes information on digital tools and platforms which support waste management.

European recycling database

- In 2022 a research report was compiled into waste treatment systems in the Germany/Benelux regions.
- Following this, a comprehensive database of waste providers who verifiably recycle LDPE (used for poly bags etc.) was created to support decision-making.
- Project members supplied details of waste service providers across Europe and the UK who guarantee recycling.

Policy updates

- In recent years there have been ongoing amendments to, and tightening of, regulations from the EU on packaging such as the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), Waste Framework Directive and the Extended Producer Responsibility schemes.
- Relevant updates have been summarised and disseminated.
- Project members have been signposted to relevant EOG policy webinars.

3.

Current status

Current Status

Alternative Materials

In the SUPP industry report, we concluded that “Alternative materials tend to shift rather than mitigate or even lessen environmental impacts...”

Since then, however, advances have been made in material technology and waste handling systems, leading to overall improvements in environmental performance, and many SUPP members are trialling poly bags made from paper, bioplastics and water-soluble materials. We encourage the outdoor industry to continue exploring alternative materials, but we continue to support the agreed project recommendations – 1) remove unnecessary poly bags, 2) use recycled materials, 3) reuse bags where possible, and 4) ensure all bags are easily recyclable through municipal systems.



Policy Landscape

Guidance has been developed for project members, supporting their need to understand, and act upon, rapidly changing packaging-relevant EU regulations and directives. Outdoor industry brands and packaging providers are constantly assessing developments in material sources and environmental performance, but they must balance this against changing requirements set out in ever-changing EU policy and legislation.

In January 2026 we developed a member-only guidance document which covers the policy most relevant to the packaging used in the outdoor industry - a ready reckoner of which materials and how they are affected by:

- Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)
- EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)
- Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)
- Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)



Project Impact

In the final months of the project, a short survey was circulated amongst the membership, past and present, to understand what impact the project had had on their single use plastic use and strategy. From the respondent data we can see that, since the project began, almost all project members have implemented at least one of the project's recommendations. In particular, 75% of members have started using recycled LDPE, 63% have used project resources to guide their packaging discussions and/or strategy, and 38% have now arranged for their poly bags to be collected and guaranteed recycled.

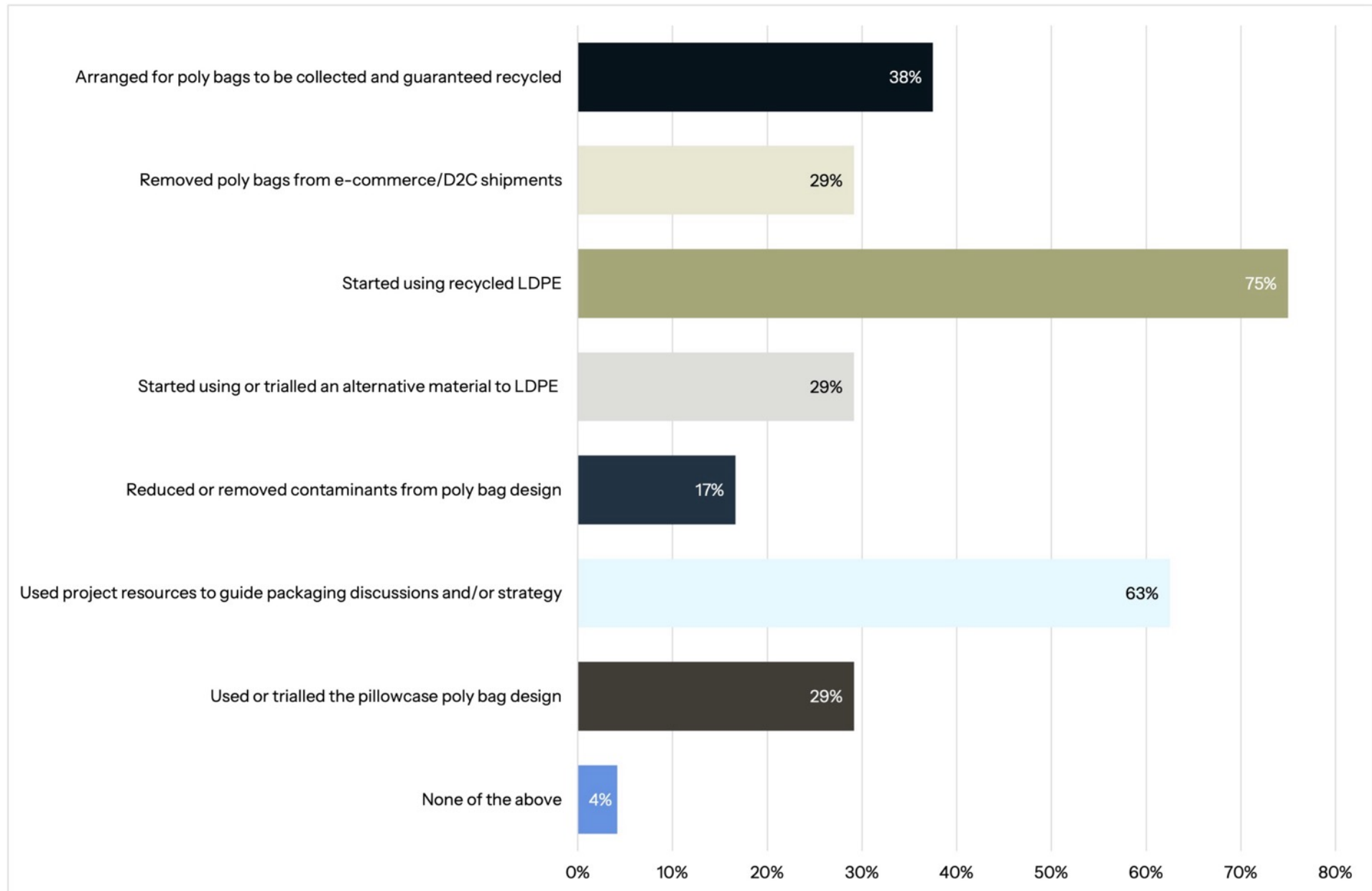
This data is a testament to the impact of the project:

- Less virgin plastic has been used for poly bags.
- More products have been delivered to customers without poly bags.
- A greater proportion of poly bag LDPE has been recycled.

Real world actions. Real world results.

96%

of SUPP members have used project resources





4.

Thank You

Thank you

None of this could have been achieved without the participation, enthusiasm and dedication of the SUPP members who initiated the project, contributed their insights, gave feedback, conducted trials, completed surveys, collected plastic, provided data and promoted the message. The project has also been supported by outdoor industry national associations (BSI and OSV) who shared progress with their members and gave key input on country-specific topics. Thank you.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the organisations who provided technical expertise and/or services for specific outputs, most notably: Agecko, YS Reclamation, Interseroh, The Sustainable Packaging Coalition, Mainetti, Papier-Mettler, Recoup, RecyClass, Recyda, GreenBlue, Circuvate, Retail Industry Leaders Association and Plastics Europe.



Project members, past and present

“Rab was a founding member of SUP back in 2019. Through the group we have worked hard to reduce the amount of single use plastic ending up in consumer hands. The project has allowed us to learn, collaborate, innovate, share best practice and pool resources to ultimately reduce the amount of unnecessary plastic waste used in the first place, and establish processes along our supply chain to remove, reduce and finally improve the recycling/recycled quality of polybags.”

Rab

“This project has been very important for our internal communications and decision-making process + our confidence when replying to customers regarding the decisions we made early on, and our stand on not offering biodegradable alternatives that could pollute the plastic recycling stream. Great project!”

Helly Hansen

Joining the SUP project really helped us bring our packaging processes to the next level. We joined forces with industry peers and collectively found solutions to reduce our impact, sharing experiences and knowledge thanks to the fantastic support and guidance of the EOG!”

The North Face

“Through the EOG Single-Use Plastics Project, we gained valuable benchmarks and shared learnings that strengthened our packaging strategy and improved cross-industry alignment.”

Mammut

“From a Nilörn perspective, participating in the EOG SUPP project has been invaluable in strengthening our position as specialists in branding and packaging. Staying close to our brand partners and maintaining a forward-looking view are central to how we operate—key reasons we chose to join this initiative. The project deepened our holistic understanding of the evolving packaging landscape and confirmed the value of our core practices, such as design for recycling, integrating recycled materials, and alternative material mapping. It reinforced the importance of staying curious and adaptable as we continue to support brands with future-ready branding and packaging solutions.”

Nilörn Group

“I just love when competitors come together and work on common sustainability challenges. We can reach much further together than we can on our own.”

Bergans Fritid AS

“Participating in the Single Use Plastics Project has helped us move from discussion to concrete action. We transitioned to recycled LDPE polybags and removed contaminants such as unnecessary inks, adhesives, and stickers, improving their recyclability. The project resources from the Poly Bag Standard to the Retailer Guidance provided practical direction and structure for our internal packaging discussions and long-term strategy. We arranged for our polybags and plastic wrap to be collected — not only at our headquarters, but also in stores and in collaboration with retail partners — and ensured that the material is effectively recycled. At the same time, our team reduced plastic use in outbound logistics by replacing plastic document sleeves with paper alternatives and optimising pallet wrapping. By switching to a lighter stretch film, plastic use per pallet decreased by 69%, costs dropped by 75%, and Italy’s packaging tax was reduced by 77%, while nearly doubling the number of pallets wrapped per roll. The result: less plastic, lower costs, and more efficient logistics. Looking ahead, the mid-term goal is to phase out stretch film entirely, while improving communication on recyclability in the meantime to support proper disposal at the receiver’s side. Smart protection, smarter collection.”

Oberalp

“The SUPP has been such a welcoming, informative, and collaborative experience that really helped to guide us through the steps to take, the questions to ask and the outcomes to target. We’re so proud of the collective progress that has been made by everyone involved!”

Montane

“Participating in this project has allowed us to develop a clear packaging guideline for our suppliers, defining the criteria for our packaging standards. It has strengthened our approach to sustainable and consistent packaging practices.”

O’NEAL EUROPE GmbH & Co. KG

“This project is a perfect example of the benefit in joining forces to address challenges together. #SDG17”

Vaude

“It helped with getting a wider perspective on the problem...our focus was to reduce or eliminate where possible. Then move to recycled materials. Recover cost from any waste if possible. I think we had a clear policy before which this was in line with the objectives of the SUP project.”

Alpkit

“The Single Use Plastic Project proved to be an interesting and valuable initiative, with a tangible impact on reducing single-use plastics. Our contribution focused on the near-total elimination of polybags in distribution, while maintaining some exceptions for specific players with particular operational needs. Overall, an effective project representing a concrete step toward greater sustainability.”

E9

“Having a joint position to bring to brands has been incredibly effective.”

Yonderland

“The project highlighted actions necessary for Norrøna to take. We have moved to recycled LDPE and are reviewing the possibility of other replacements that can still be recycled. We actively work to recycle at our stores. The next challenge is how to find a solution to plastic free handling at automated warehouses.”

Norrøna

“[The project] provided excellent guidance to further improve our packaging and waste management.”

Bradshaw Taylor





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