



CASE STUDY: WOLFSON HALL, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Glasgow student residence bans sauce sachets and closes the loop with compostable disposables.

Wolfson Hall is a catered hall of residence at the University of Glasgow. In 2018, Wolfson Hall switched its disposables to Vegware's plant-based compostable packaging. By working with Vegware's Close the Loop collections, the disposables now get composted.

Wolfson Hall

17 CATERING STAFF
260 STUDENTS

Every day...

500 HOT DRINKS
250 COLD DRINKS
400 HOT MEALS

Kelvin Conference Centre

UP TO + **150** EXTRA
COVERS



Catering Manager Paul Chalmers discovered Vegware at a distributor trade show. He was relatively new to his role, keen to implement more sustainability measures. Paul was particularly excited to learn about Vegware's composting collection, Close the Loop. This service takes used compostable packaging from around Scotland to a composting facility. In under 12 weeks, it is turned into high-grade compost for Scottish farmers to nourish soil and future plants.

Wolfson Hall was keen to compost, so Paul was introduced to Vegware's Environmental team, who provided a bespoke consultancy plan. This detailed the steps to implement the composting scheme, and how Vegware would support Paul and his team of 16 catering staff.

The catering team started by trialling the plant-based products to make sure they worked, before making any changes to the waste. As his previous disposables ran out, Paul quickly replaced them with Vegware's compostable hot cups and black lids, clear PLA cold cups, cutlery, takeaway containers and napkins.

We serve most of the students' food on ceramic plates with metal cutlery. Students can bring their own reusable cup, but there are some disposables required, especially for hot drinks.

PAUL CHALMERS

Catering Manager, Wolfson Hall

NO MORE SAUCE SACHETS

Wolfson Hall reviewed all disposables, removing as much plastic as possible. Plastic sachets represent a major recycling challenge: a thin film of aluminium laminated on both sides with plastic, then heavily contaminated with food residues.

“We used to have condiment sachets, but we couldn’t recycle them. Instead, we now use compostable 1oz portion pots with dispenser pumps for the sauce.”

After use, the students simply put the pots in the Close the Loop bin, with no need to remove any food residues.

COMMUNICATING THE NEW SYSTEM

Clear communications are vital to minimising contamination. It is especially important to avoid any plastic in compost. As part of the change-over plan, Vegware provided signage showing photos of the exact products used on-site. In addition, Vegware provided bespoke posters, which Paul had professionally printed.

“I made sure the catering team understood the new system, and then when the students moved in, we explained it all to them. I really like the branding, and the students recognise it. We have the bin signage and can easily spot what goes where. Vegware also made a matching graphic for the digital screen on the front of our coffee machine, which is at eye level as you wait for a drink.”

“The main aim is to stop contamination in the waste stream. It’s simple now – the food and Vegware all goes in one bin together. Students have bought into it massively.”



Vegware provided table talkers and we have plastered their posters all over the dining hall. We even had some boards printed for the tray trolley, so you really can’t miss it.

PAUL CHALMERS
Catering Manager, Wolfson Hall



COMPOSTING – LOCAL RECYCLING

In August 2018, Wolfson Hall started composting. Vegware's Close the Loop service collects one wheelie bin of used disposables every week. At a Scottish commercial facility, it is composted with food and garden waste. The resulting compost meets PAS100 quality standards and is used on local farmers' fields to nourish soil, improve structure and reduce flood risk.

Conventional packaging can be challenging to recycle due to the mix of materials and food contamination. The UK relies heavily on exporting waste. But with the system at Wolfson Hall, catering waste is reprocessed locally, feeding into the circular economy. Industrial composting is officially on a par with mechanical recycling, and this scheme fits with Glasgow's goal to become Scotland's first "circular city".

FEEDBACK AND ROLL-OUT PLAN

"It's a source of pride for myself and the wider team", explains Paul. "I think we should be more responsible with food and packaging waste. It's ridiculous that so much packaging goes to landfill. I was personally motivated to make this change, but the University of Glasgow is totally on board, from the students and my team, right up to senior management."

"Sustainable measures like Close the Loop are such a good thing, and as an education provider we should be leading the way. We hope it will eventually become the norm."

"I believe that this is the future, and the University of Glasgow is in the vanguard. I think it's great that Wolfson Hall and Kelvin Conference Centre have been the first place. Now that we have proven it does work and the products are all great, we can roll it out in other University of Glasgow catering units over the next year."