



Annual Report 2022

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 (retired)
Gary Clare
Ken Kilbride
Brendan Keane
Catriona Kennedy

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 2022

VOICE celebrated its 25th anniversary this November and spent it with our team, board, friends, colleagues and supporters. We have come a long way since our launch in November 1996 with our skeletal staff but full agenda. This year, we had a team of 8 dedicated staff as well as numerous



volunteers and interns. We continued our top down, bottom up philosophy, succeeding in the passage of the Circular Economy Act and the adoption of the DRS establishment regulations. We also continued our work in communities through our SECAD sustainable communities programme, Picker Pals and our Return for Change DRS trailer which graced many community events and festivals.

Our work in schools continued both with the acceleration of Picker Pals, which has reached over 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 continues through our waste audit offerings and lunch and learns. We anticipate that with the new government commercial waste regulations that more and more businesses will look to better sort their waste and reduce their waste arisings.

Our Return for Change (RFC) Deposit Refund Scheme (DRS) campaign continued this year to increase public awareness in how a DRS will work in Ireland and how a reverse vending machine would work. The RFC trailer hosts 3 reverse vending machines which allows individuals to try out the technology that will be used next year for bottles and cans. We concluded our SECAD Sustainable Communities programme in West Cork where we worked with seven communities to identify actions they could take in their localities to become more sustainable. We conducted a Food Waste collection outreach pilot with the three waste regions throughout the country; developed and delivered four recycling videos, both in English and Irish, for schools, working with four of the Dublin authorities; and conducted a survey about waste and bin usage in Donegal.

We continued to engage individuals through our social media outlets, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, increasing our followers and increasing traffic to our website. We appeared 92 times in TV, newspapers and radio on a variety of issues from how to recycle, the latte levy and the DRS.

Our work in the water arena has been mostly limited to the Chief Executive 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/Leonard Dowling, Financial 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/Gary Jones, Project Administrator, Picker Pals

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

Our volunteers for the year include:

Virginie Gerard, who worked on our social media, graphic and conducted the Donegal Waste Survey pilot.

Aude Lognard, who helped with social media

Caoimhe Nolan: helps us with Picker Pals comms

Maya Millner helped with comms

Rashmi Karkada helped with RFC and Sick of Plastic

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

Governance:

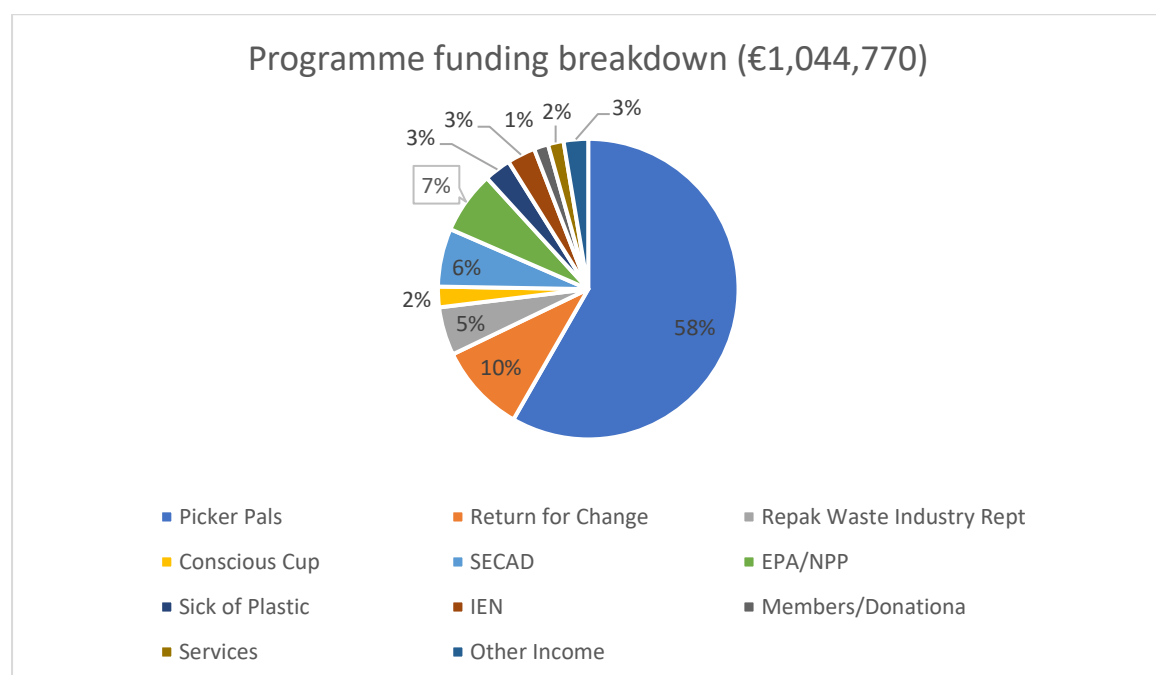
The board has reviewed some of its governance policies on a staggered basis to ensure that we are up to date on new regulations or are managing risks as they appear. VOICE is

registered as lobbyists and is a registered charity both with Revenue and the Charities Regulator. All our filings are up to date.

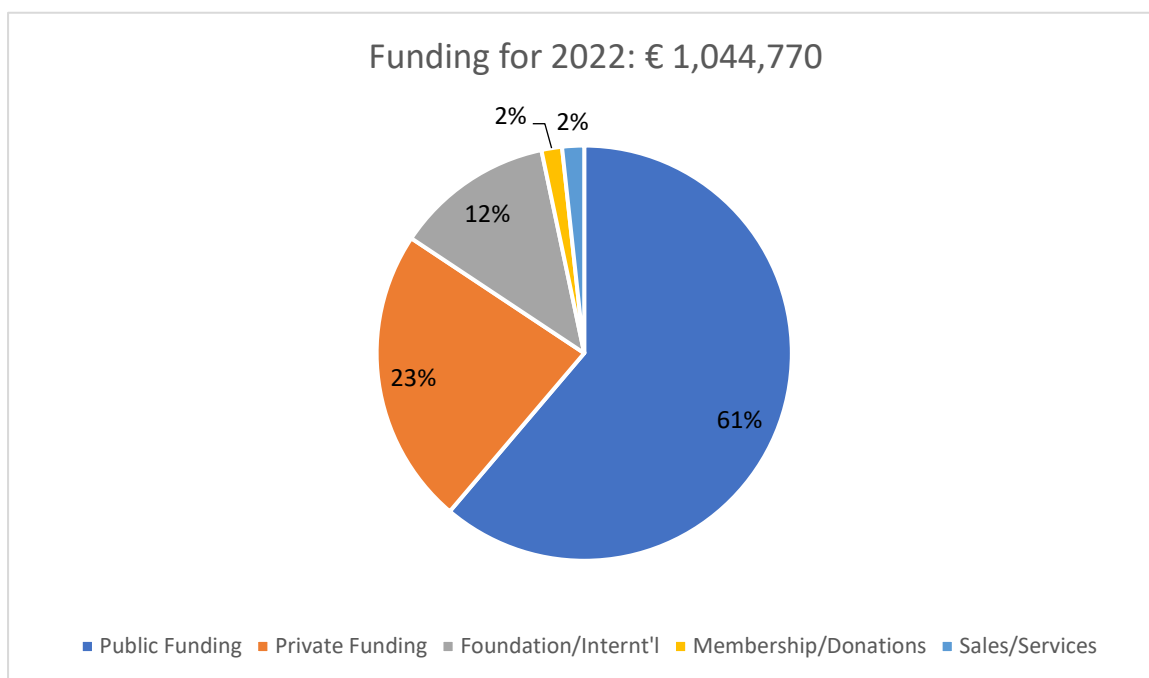
We have standardised all our contracts and our employee handbook in accordance with the Companies Act.

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 2022:

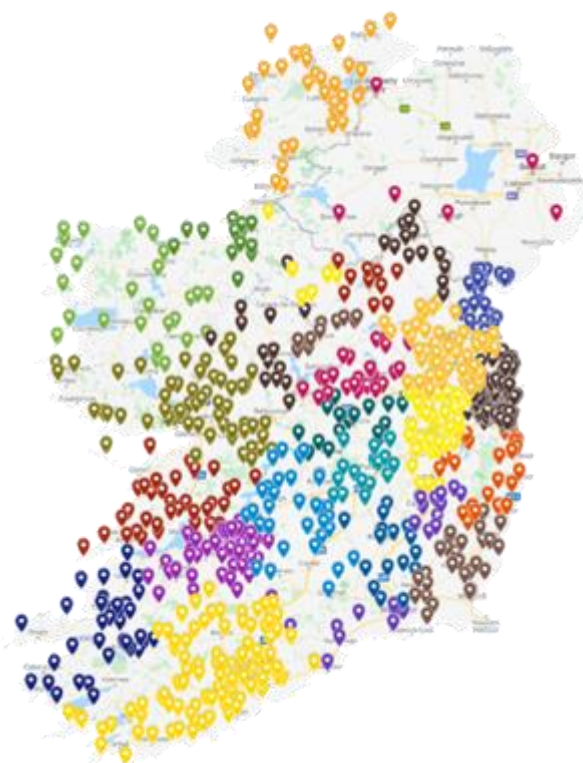


VOICE campaigns

Picker Pals:

2022 has been another Great Year for Picker Pals with a whole new set of classrooms have joined the Picker Pals Programme.

Picker Pals has now reached over half of the primary schools in Ireland and over 60,000 children across the island of Ireland have taken part in the programme during 2022. And what fun these children are having while learning about the important social issue of littering and what they can do to address it!



Schools taking part in the programme receive a big box of Picker Pals resources delivered directly to their classroom. The box contains classroom resources and books, but most importantly it includes the 'Picker Pack'. Every child in the class gets a turn to take the 'Picker Pack' home and lead a litter-picking adventure in their local area.

We have received so many pictures of smiling, happy children spending time with their families out and about and most importantly, caring for their local area.

While litter-picking is the main activity in the Picker Pals programme, there are lots of other things taking place across the year to entertain and motivate the children to keep up their good work. On Picker Pals TV, short video episodes delivered to participating classrooms,

the children learn about different litter themed topics and get to see their own picture on TV!



Funding from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and many Local Authorities around the country has made it possible for us to introduce the programme to many more schools around the country. We have also received generous support from ESW, AIB, Oxford University Press and Sky Cares.

Thanks to support from BMW Ireland and BMW regional dealerships, 2022 saw the launch of the all-electric BMW '**PickerMobile**'. We have had so much fun getting out and about visiting schools and having great chats with so many of our Picker Pals about their litter-picking adventures.



Inspired by teachers like Ms. Mc Grath in Largy NS "*Picker Pals is one of the best incentives I have seen coming into the school,*" and Ms Long in Lucan East ETNS "*I really feel that this is something that will shape their view on taking care of the environment for a long time to come,*" we are fully committed to our goal of having a Picker Pack in every classroom in the county. With another year of fun activities planned, one thing is for sure; we will see another cohort of young environmentalists starting their journey to make the world better. The future is looking bright for everyone, except litter!

Examining Recycling in the Commercial Sector

Commercial waste in Ireland is increasing while segregation levels do not appear to have changed over the last 5 years. Recycling targets (for plastics specifically) are increasing dramatically over the coming 10 years with recycling targets for plastic packaging going from 35% in 2022, to 55% by 2030.

The Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy and the Circular Economy Act 2022 envision changes in how society as a whole manages its material. So how can we increase recycling in the commercial sector?



Since we all use our recycling bins in the home, and more and more have food waste bins, why is this knowledge not being 'brought to work with us'? The research points towards a number of conclusions, the bins have to be there in the first instance of course, but also there must be perceived leadership support for pro environmental behaviours to take root, and there must be the creation of the social norm within the workplace.

But on a more basic level, the waste produced from the commercial sector is fundamentally different from household recycling. This opens up opportunities for increased source segregation (ie bailed cardboard or plastics), but also increased confusion if not properly implemented. There are opportunities here for waste operators to engage with their commercial clients to better understand and facilitate their needs, but also for businesses to evaluate their purchasing and procurement, to reduce and simplify the packaging they bring on site in the first instance.

Through a series of surveys and interviews with relevant stakeholders VOICE is compiling a report for REPAK to understand the barriers, opportunities and levers to greater waste segregation in the commercial waste sector. The report will be submitted to REPAK in January 2023.

SECAD Sustainable Communities

Over the last 12 Months Tad Kirakowski and Abi O'Callaghan-Platt have been working with communities across West Cork to develop sustainability action plans and initiatives in those communities. The programme aimed not only to inspire



Members of the Baltimore Market Group

community action, but to support continued action long after the programme itself has ended.

Through our work with seven communities in West Cork it has been amazing to see the variety of actions and projects that have come out of our unique programme - from farmers' markets, two energy communities being developed, a local food initiative, rural active travel plans, supporting the development of a community centre as well as biodiversity audits and walks.

Over the past year, we have worked closely with participating communities in west Cork. We did this by having six weeks of inspirational sustainability workshops led by experts in the field. We covered green enterprise, biodiversity, the circular economy, sustainable town planning, sustainable energy and transport and sustainable agriculture.

Each participating town and village has gone on to develop a community-level roadmap outlining their goals and aims for what a more sustainable town will look like, to them. As they developed these roadmaps we introduced Suzie Cahn, who delivered a tailored module on project management, which helped to build the capacity of the communities to deliver on longer-term projects. Finally, over the summer each community was paired with a subject expert in their area of interest, who helped to develop their plans, whether through architectural design, graphic design and branding, or travel and transport analysis.

During the project, we started off with an entirely online experience. We tried hard to keep things interesting and engaging, but nothing can beat the buzz of meeting and sharing ideas in person. In April we had our first in-person meet-up delivering a workshop day in Camus farm, Clonakilty. We brought all of the course participants together for the first time. We continued over the summer meeting the communities across west Cork to help to progress their plans and projects.

It's been an exciting year! We have worked hard to deliver a programme that was not just interesting but could fit the needs of each community. But the communities themselves and the individuals within each have taken that structure and run with it, designing amazing projects, actions and developing collaborations that I can't wait to see develop over the coming months and years, after the programme has finished.

Zero Waste Communities Programmes

In June of this year, we sent Colin O'Byrne to represent VOICE at the Zero Waste Cities training in Brussels. Participants from all over Europe came together to meet up and learn, swapping stories of success and failure and mapping out plans to succeed (again!) in the future.



Zero Waste Europe had three days of training in Brussels, delivered by some of the foremost thinkers and practitioners in the field. It goes without saying that, although many of the waste-related problems we face in different countries are very similar, often times the systems in which they take place are quite different. The training in Brussels afforded us the opportunity to hone in on common issues so that we might get a better understanding of what might work and where.

Furthermore, we increased our understanding of the most sustainable and waste-reducing disposal methods in use at present and how to effectively advocate for such practices to be adopted in our home countries, ultimately taking the various components and making them as relevant as possible to our respective cities. Finally, we learned about the Zero Waste Cities Certification, the pursuit of which may prove to be game-changing across Europe.

Colin also travelled to Slovenia to learn about the zero waste business certification (MiZA) process in practice and acted as an auditor to ensure that the participating business seeking a zero waste certification had met all their milestones. With this training we believe that we will be able to set up a MiZA business zero waste certification process in Ireland in 2023.

And of course, the big news – VOICE Chief Executive, Mindy O’Brien, was announced as the newest member of Zero Waste Europe Board!

[Return for Change:](#)

Firstly, DRSI (Deposit Return Scheme Ireland) was incorporated in July. and is charged with delivering and operating the deposit return scheme. In October, the Minister for the Circular Economy, Ossian Smyth, launched the Scheme, showcasing how the system will work and announcing that the DRS will be up and running by February 2024. Now we need to do the work to get producers, retailers and community groups signed up to the scheme.



Mindy O’Brien, Minister Smyth, Colin O’Byrne and Peter Whelan at the launch of Ireland’s DRS in November

What is a DRS?

Ireland’s DRS is to cover, initially at least, PET plastic bottles and aluminium beverage cans up to 3 litres in size. 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.

Return for Change Roadshow

The furious paddling for the Return for Change campaign largely consisted of our roadshow. We took our reverse vending machine trailer on the road around Ireland to raise awareness about the deposit return scheme. It was a great opportunity to get out and canvass opinion on the ground. The good news is that the groundswell of public support and enthusiasm for the deposit return scheme in Ireland remains undimmed.

The Return for Change campaign had the great fortune to spend a good deal of the Summer visiting different parts of the country with our trusty trailer in tow.

From March to October, our traipsing about the place brought us into contact with the great and the good of Irish society as we sought to raise awareness about Ireland's impending deposit return scheme.

Although most people we spoke to were familiar with the concept of a deposit return scheme to a greater or lesser extent, next to none of them had ever put that awareness to the test, physically speaking. And this is where our lovely trailer came into its own.

Although not much different in size from your average food trailer, the Return for Change version houses four reverse vending machines, making it quite literally the only one of its kind in Ireland. No matter where we brought it, people always got a kick out of using it. Allied to the fact that they felt like they were getting an exclusive peak into the waste infrastructure of the near-future – which they were! – the trailer was a hit

wherever it rocked up. Trying to choose a highlight from the various events is difficult but a couple stand out at the time of writing. One of those was our visit to the Scarecrow Festival in Durrow in August. It was hands down one of the most enjoyable community events we've ever been to.



RfC was invited to address the annual get together of Laois's Tidy Town groups by Laois EAO, Suzanne Dempsey)



(Jeca the Clown getting to grips with things in Durrow)



Colin explaining all to TY students from CBS Kilkenny

Another highlight was visiting the Electric Picnic. With nearly 80,000 people on site, it's fair to say that we weren't stuck for attention. Nor were we stuck for bottles and cans, collecting well over 2,000 in just under two days. Once the deposit return scheme kicks in properly, it will make an incredible difference to the camp sites there and at other festivals as suddenly, all those empty cans lying about the place will have a bounty on them, and generally-speaking, people don't tend to throw money on the ground!

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. Many of the team have participated in many of the task forces, including DRS, reuse policy, transition to reuse, reusable menstrual items and others. Mindy is the co-convenor of the policy task force and Abi is the co-convenor of the reusable menstrual items task force.

We received a significant grant to help offset the cost of our policy work, which is hard to fund as well as receiving grants for our co-convenor work.

Sick of Plastic:

Our Sick of Plastic Campaign, which is a joint venture between VOICE and Friends of the Earth, took part in the first-ever analysis of the role European supermarkets play in addressing plastic pollution. Since the onset of COVID our Sick of Plastic Campaign has sat down with the heads of Ireland's top five supermarket retailers and demanding they:

1. Remove unnecessary plastic from fruits and vegetables
2. Move to refill for cleaning products, dry goods and where possible.
3. Price loose F&V more competitively.
4. Use their clout to make suppliers to move to reuse

Under Wraps Report:

We have continued to keep the pressure on, and in October of 2021 we sent a survey to Aldi, Lidl, Tesco, Dunnes Stores and Supervalu. We fed the results of this survey back to our

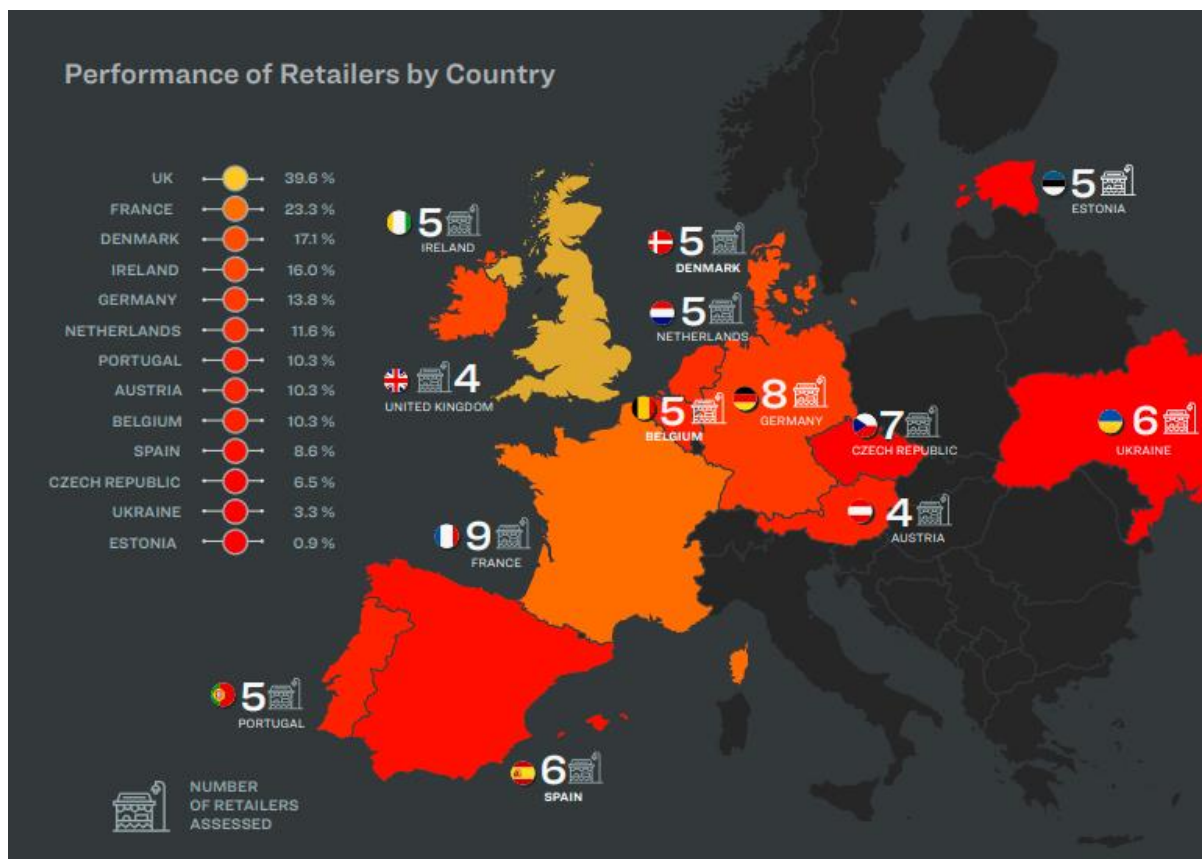


European partners who compiled this information with that of other countries within the EU, thus creating the 'Under Wraps? Report'. What the Supermarket's aren't telling us'.



The specially designed ranking developed by The Changing Markets Foundation revealed a near-complete lack of ambition across three categories: Transparency and performance, Commitments, and Support for government policy.

The overall average score achieved by retailers was only 13.1 out of 100. Ireland's average score was 16%.



Only 3/5's of Irish Supermarkets surveyed responded. Because of this both Dunnes Stores and Musgraves came last alongside twelve other European retailers getting a disappointing 0/100. Tesco received 3/100, LIDL 16/100 and ALDI scored an impressive 61/100, making them second overall.



Supermarkets positioned at both top and bottom of the scale highlights the inconsistent approach our major food retailers are taking to fight the plastic crisis.



Grocery Sector Report:

At the beginning of 2022 the Sick of Plastic campaign released our Grocery Sector Report calling out supermarkets for the amount of plastic they place on the market and demanding an ambitious Circular Economy bill to adopt ambitious measures to reduce plastic packaging.

In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, and to protect our health and natural environment, in order to achieve the EU plastic packaging recycling rate target of 50% by 2025 and 55% by 2030, Ireland needs to **implement reuse and refill on a mandatory basis** and to **offer support for systems change and reuse infrastructure** now.

13 Recommendations:

Our Sick of Plastic report on **Refill and Reuse in the Grocery Sector** contains thirteen key recommendations:

- At least 25% of consumer packaging should be reusable by 2025, increasing to 50% by 2030.
- At least 75% of transit packaging should be reusable by 2025, increasing to 90% by 2030.
- 20% of the floor surface of shops larger than 400 sq. meters should be fitted with refill systems by 2030.
- Beverage container refill target of 35% by 2025, increasing to 70% by 2030.
- Financial support for the installation of reuse infrastructure.
- Fiscal incentives to effect behaviour change and encourage the move to reuse.



Aude Lognard poses for a photoshoot which demonstrates how the ubiquitous presence of plastic makes human exposure inevitable.

You can read/download our reports on the VOICE website www.voiceireland.org

No Plastic. Period.



Have you ever thought of trying reusable menstrual items? The No Plastic. Period. programme is asking this question to teens and young adults in Cork with the aim of encouraging people to make the switch from disposables to reusables!

The **No Plastic. Period.** programme has been working in Kinsale Secondary School, Cork Educate Together Secondary School and Munster Technical University to let people know that reusable menstrual items are convenient, cost saving, and a great climate action!

As part of this programme we have put information posters on



each reusable menstrual item option in bathroom cubicles, shared short animations on their use, run workshops and teacher trainings, and had a weekly stand in each of the secondary schools with menstrual cups, period pants and cloth pads on display for the students to look at and ask questions about.

In both secondary schools we have also provided free reusable menstrual items to any student that requests them! The majority of students currently use disposable pads with wings (83%) and overall 95% use disposable menstrual items exclusively. We hope to shift the norm within these schools by giving away reusables so that people can give them a try! In the new year students that have tried the reusables will take part in surveys and interviews to see what their experiences were and whether or not they will continue using them!

For 2023 we hope to further grow the No Plastic. Period. programme and bring it to schools nationwide!

This project is funded under the EPA Research Programme 2021-2030. The EPA Research Programme is a Government of Ireland initiative funded by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Cloth Nappy Scheme

Disposable nappies are a huge source of plastic waste, with the average daily plastic consumption of single-use nappies being equivalent to throwing away seven supermarket plastic bags per day. A baby uses between 4,000 and 4,500 nappies before potty training at roughly 2.5 years, and the average age for potty training is on the rise. The UNEP reported in 2021 that disposable nappies are one of the biggest contributors to plastic waste globally. While an alternative to disposable nappies is available to parents in the form of reusable nappies, they are not widely used. One barrier to wider use of reusable nappies is the upfront cost of purchasing cloth nappies. In the UK most local authorities offer a financial incentive scheme to remove this cost barrier for interested families.

VOICE has now developed and piloted such a scheme here in Ireland. The pilot Cloth Nappy Incentive Scheme ran through October 2022 and provided a voucher for participating families to purchase a cloth nappy starter kit from our two partner suppliers. Families could choose from a selection of bundles, but most starter kit bundles included ten birth to potty nappies, nappy inserts, a pack of reusable wipes and a wet bag. It was a big success with all available vouchers gone in two weeks. Participants in the scheme will take part in follow up interviews in February 2023 to find out how they got on with the nappies.

This project is funded under the EPA Research Programme 2021-2030. The EPA Research Programme is a Government of Ireland initiative funded by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. Funding was also provided by Fingal County Council, Dublin City Council and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. Some of us may remember cloth nappies from our own childhood, and think of terry cloth, safety pins and rubber knickers. But reusable nappies have moved on!

VOICE and Transition Kerry receive Pobal funding to examine food waste interventions for Communities

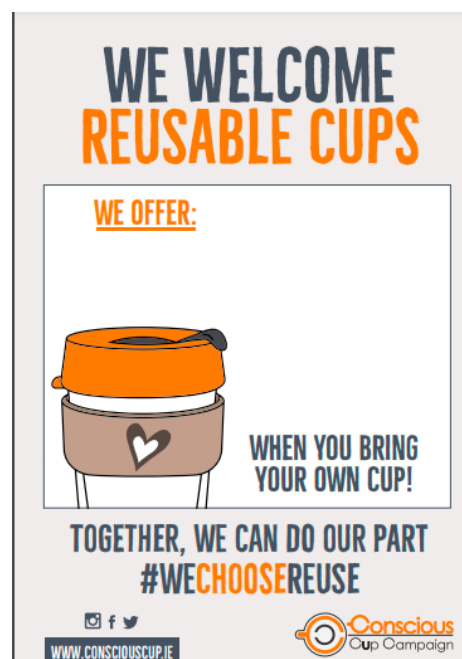
VOICE was delighted to be awarded a multi-annual funding under the Community Climate Action Programme from Pobal. Participating projects had to address the key issue of climate action, each application also had to demonstrate and develop a collaborative element, joining organisations together to deliver on their projects. VOICE has worked with Transition Kerry to develop this programme which aims to help communities tackle food waste. The programme will work with our partners in Kerry first to identify food waste avoidance initiatives and interventions from farm to fork to disposal.

For VOICE the project builds on our work in both community engagement (our work on sustainable communities in particular) and food waste. While Transition Kerry have brilliant programmes examining food waste and sustainability more broadly in Kerry. The programme itself will develop a toolkit for communities to tackle food waste, with case studies on projects stretching from farm to fork to disposal, empowering communities to identify projects that are of interest to themselves, take action and review progress. Starting in April 2023 and continuing for two years, we are excited to be delivering this programme with Transition Kerry.

Conscious Cup Campaign:

This campaign came to a close this year given the government's decision to adopt the Circular Economy Act and the decision to adopt a disposable cup levy to encourage customers to bring their own cup or for shops to offer more reuse opportunities. This levy is due to come into effect in 2023.

Additionally, Sorchá Kavanagh, the project manager of this campaign has left. We hope that any communications around the disposable cup levy, the so called latte levy, might be shared via the CCC website in 2023.



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 'Single Use Plastic and 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 recently conducted a strategic review of VOICE's work and priorities and developed our 5-year plan, working closely with our team and board members. We concluded that our work on policy, both on a national and EU level, remains one of the pillars of our organisation. While we maintain that all our work on a community and individual basis is key to achieve behaviour change and acceptance of more sustainable consumption, ambitious policy development is essential to set forth meaningful targets and mandated actions to ensure a systematic change.

We had some good successes this year with the passage of the Circular Economy Act which in brief:

- Looks to impose levies on single-use packaging, including disposable cups and food containers
- Requires the Minister to set reduction, repair and reuse targets for many business sectors such as packaging, textiles, construction, agriculture and electrical equipment and
- Requires the development of a Food Loss Prevention Roadmap to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030

Work on the Circular Economy is far from done, but this law establishes the framework for future initiatives, such as the levy on single-use disposable cups (latte levy), to change how we consume. Such economic incentives will encourage the investment in reusable packaging systems whereby retailers will offer their products in standardised packaging which, after it is used by the customer, is collected, washed and redistributed to food businesses to be used again and again. This way, instead of a café or restaurant buying disposable packaging, they buy into a reusable packaging service.

On the discussion of packaging, Abi and Mindy travelled to Brussels in October to meet with our colleagues from Zero Waste Europe and Break Free From Plastic to meet with our MEPs about legislation moving through the EU Parliament. They met with numerous Irish MEPs, including Barry Andrews, Frances Fitzgerald, Colm Markey, Billy Kelleher and Sean Kelly about the revisions of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD). The PPWD dictates what materials can be used for packaging as well as setting recycling targets for each material, such as plastic, metal and paper. The EU Commission is releasing its revision proposal for the PPWD at the end of November to move producers towards more reusable options and we are seeking strong reuse targets on an EU-wide basis.

We are already seeing dramatic pushback from industry who don't want to change their practices, but rather want to focus more on recycling targets. However, we cannot continue to rely on just recycling as we must turn the tap off on disposable items. For the 4th year in a row, Ireland is generating over 1 million tonnes in packaging which no slow-down in sight. Retailers and manufacturers must improve their practices to make it easier for the individual to consume more sustainably. This will be intensive work in 2023 and we will look to you to ensure that our politicians support ambitious policy.

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 in 2021 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. We expect the plan to be published in Q2 2023.

Corporate Work:

We continue to conduct lunch and learns with companies and reached over 20 this year. In addition, VOICE has been approached by many companies to come in to conduct waste audits to analyze waste generation and to make recommendations. Companies who sign up (recent clients include KPMG, MasterCard and Davy's) are provided with clear instructions to gather all their waste over a number of days (recyclable, organic and residual/ general). Following this, VOICE visits their premises and gets down to the details, as we literally sift through every piece of collected rubbish within. Rubbish types are sorted into piles, weighed, and recorded. In addition to this complete audit of bins, the company's canteens and lunchrooms are inspected for re-usable and single-use containers as well as any issues which might fall short of best practice.

Armed with this information, VOICE prepares a detailed report which outlines the steps required for the company to substantially cut down on waste in a sustainable manner whilst also keeping on the right side of current waste laws. We anticipate this work continuing and growing as a future funding source for VOICE activities.

Representation on Committees:

National Waste Action Group:

Mindy is a member of this government stakeholder's group, which met only twice in 2022. 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 very infrequently.

Sustainable Water Network (SWAN):

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

Environmental Pillar:

Mindy retired from the Pillar Steering Committee and now Colin O'Byrne was elected as a committee member.

Irish Environmental Network:

Our Chief Executive is active in the Plenary meetings.

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 Task Forces:

VOICE sits on many of the BFFP task forces, ranging from Transition to Reuse, Plastic and Health and DRS.

Break Free From Plastic Reuse Policy Task Force and Reusable Menstrual Products Task Force:

Mindy is the co-convenor of the policy 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 2023 on the review of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive, the Sustainable Product Directive and the Green Claims Directive. Sorchá was also a member of this task force.

Abi is the co-convenor of the Reusable Menstrual Products Task Force, looking to increase the take up of reusable solutions to reduce plastic waste.

Highlights of the year:

- We celebrated our 25th anniversary with many friends, colleagues, our board and current and past team members.
- We got most of the cafes back to accepting reusable coffee cups after the pandemic.
- Minister Ossian Smyth officially launched the Deposit Return Scheme.

- Seven Cork Communities finalised their sustainable development plans and legacy projects
- Our Picker Pals programme facilitated over 140,000 litter picking adventures
- We created, filmed and launched 4 school waste management videos, both in English and Irish.
- The Circular Economy Act was signed into law.
- We travelled and met with most of our MEPs about legislation moving through the EU Parliament.
- We were awarded multi-annual funding from Pobal for our food waste reduction community initiative in Kerry.

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

Some of our analytics are below:

E-Zine Stats	
Subscribers	3,265
Opening Rate	61%
Monthly editions	12

Website	
Sessions	9,912
Website Views	16,175
Blog posts	31

Press Releases	8
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The following are Social Media statistics for VOICE accounts (does not include separate accounts including Sick of Plastic, Conscious Cup, Return for Change or Picker Pals)

Social Media Stats	Followers	Reach
Instagram	2,670	37,665
Facebook	3,500	9779
Twitter	5,385	
LinkedIn	477	
YouTube	52	
TikTok	55	
<i>Combined</i>	<i>12,139</i>	

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 interviews on such topics as waste, DRS, compostable cups, recycling, plastic, litter, picker pals and incineration. Between the whole VOICE team, we had 92 radio interviews, newspaper articles, TV appearances and articles.

Here is the breakdown of appearances:

1/9/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Newspaper	Irish Examiner	25 steps to be greener
1/11/2022	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	food waste solutions
1/14/2022	Abi	SECAD Project	Newspaper	West Cork People	Communities Training Programme
1/19/2022	Mindy	chemicals in the environment	Radio	Eastcoast Radio with Declan	tipping point of chemicals in the environment and what can we do
1/21/2022	Mindy	Circular Economy bill	Radio	Castlebar Radio	what is the circular economy and outlining provisions in the bill
1/21/2022	Mindy	Circular Economy bill	RADIO	KCLR RADIO, Kilkenny and Carlow	what is the circular economy and outlining provisions in the bill
2/8/2022	Angela K	PP	newspaper	Limerick Post	
2/15/2022	Angela R	Grocery sector report	Radio	Ocean FM	Plastic, reuse and refill in the grocery sector
2/16/2022	Angela R	Grocery sector report	Radio	West Limerick FM	Plastic, reuse and refill in the grocery sector
2/17/2022	Angela R	Grocery sector report	Radio	Connemara Community Radio	Plastic, reuse and refill in the grocery sector
2/18/2022	Angela R	Grocery sector report	Radio	East Coast FM	Plastic, reuse and refill in the grocery sector
3/3/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Online	CliC News	World Wildlife Day
3/18/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Online	CliC News	Global Recycling Day

<https://www.newstalk.com/po>

2/27/2022	Sorcha	Conscious Cup Campaign	Radio	Newstalk, Mandy Johnston-Taking Stock Business Show	CE, Latte Levy and behaviour change...what it means for businesses	https://www.newstalk.com/po
3/19/2022	Mindy	Climate Change	newspaper	Irish Times	how plastic contributes to climate change	How to really cut your carbon fo
3/30/2022	Mindy	CE bill	Radio	Newstalk	happy with Circular Economy bill?	
3/30/2022	Mindy	CE bill	Radio	Today FM with Matt Cooper	CE bill	
3/30/2022	Mindy	CE bill	Radio	Eastcoast FM	CE bill	
4/1/2022	Mindy	CE bill	radio	C103 Mallow Co Cork	CE bill	
3/31/2022	Colin	RfC	Radio	KCLR FM	Return for Change roadshow	
4/5/2022	Colin	RfC	Radio	Midlands FM	Return for Change roadshow	Received e-mail from Green Par
8/4/2022	Sorcha	RTE Radio, Claire Byrne Show	Radio	CCC	Levy on coffee cups	Interview with Evelyn O'Rourke
4/13/2022	Mindy	Recycling	Radio	Eastcoast: Declan	recycling of easter eggs	
4/11/2022	Colin	RfC	Radio	Midlands FM	About deposit return scheme	Pre-recorded for Let's Go Green
4/22/2022	Mindy	Earth Day	Radio	Eastcoast: Declan	Actions to take on Earth Day	
4/23/2022	Lyndsey	Earth Day	newspaper	Irish Times	Living Sustainably	
4/25/2022	Angela	PFAS	newspaper	Irish Times	The Great Detox	https://www.irishtimes.com/ne
5/17/2022	Colin	RfC	Radio	KCLR FM	Deposit Return Scheme - Roadshow	Stream The Way It Is; Money ba

5/18/2022	Colin	RfC	Radio	Community Radio Kilkenny City	Deposit Return Scheme - Roadshow	SoundCloud The Kilkenny Today drivetime p 18th-may-2022-podcast
5/24/2022	Lyndsey	SoP	Radio	Newstalk	Under wraps? report	Hardshoulder
5/26/2022	Lyndsey	SoP	Radio	Castlebar Radio	Under wraps? report	
5/27/2022	Lyndsey	SoP	Online	Buzz.ie	Under wraps? report	https://www.buzz.ie/news/irish
6/13/2022	VOICE	VOICE	Newspaper	The Independent	Latte Levy	Caroline Doherty articl Debunki
6/13/2022	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Q102	Latte Levy	
6/14/2022	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	RTE Radio 1	Latte Levy/ Refill Day	https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio
6/13/2022	VOICE	VOICE	Newspaper	Irish Mirror	Latte Levy	https://www.irishmirror.ie/new
6/14/2022	VOICE	VOICE	Newspaper	Irish Times	Latte Levy	https://www.irishtimes.com/bu
6/14/2022	VOICE	VOICE	Online	Buzz.ie	Latte Levy	https://www.buzz.ie/news/irish
6/16/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	C103	Refill Day	Trisha on Cork Radio
6/21/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	Nearfm	Latte Levy	Adrinne Murhy
6/16/2022	Angela R	SoP	Radio	Connemara FM	Refill Day	
6/17/2022	Angela R	SoP	Newspaper	Irish Daily Mail	Latte Levy	Ronan Smyth
6/17/2022	Angela R	SoP	Newspaper	Irish Times	Latte Levy	https://www.irishtimes.com/op

6/19/2022	Angela R	SoP	Newspaper	Sunday Times	Latte Levy	Val Flynn
6/24/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Online	Buzzfeed	Latte Levy	
6/30/2022	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk Drivetime	latte levy	
7/25/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Newspaper	Sunday Times	Best before labelling being removed M&S	
7/26/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	Best before labelling being removed M&S	
7/25/2022	Angela R	VOICE	Radio	RTE Radio 1	Best before labelling	Drivetime
7/27/2022	Angela R	SoP	Radio	Phoenix FM, Dublin	Latte Levy	D15Today Brian Greene
7/28/2022	Angela R	SoP	Radio	Highland Radio, Dublin	Best before labelling	
7/26/2022	Mindy	VOICE	Newspaper	The Times	DRS rollout	https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/2022-07-26
7/26/2022	Colin	VOICE	Newspaper	Irish Times	DRS rollout	Plastic bottles deposit return scheme
7/12/2022	Picker Pals	PP	Newspaper	Laois People	School recruitment for PP	
7/8/2022	PP	PP	Newspaper	Dundalk Democrat	School recruitment for PP	
7/12/2022	Picker Pals	PP	Newspaper	Limerick Leader	School recruitment for PP	
7/19/2022	Picker Pals	PP	Newspaper	Clare Herald	School recruitment for PP	
8/9/2022	Mindy	Food waste	Radio	Newstalk: Sean Moncrief	reduce food waste and use cans	
8/22/2022	Angela R	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk: Kieran Cuddihy	PFAS	
8/15/2022	Angela K	PP	Newspaper	Meath Chronicle	BMW sponsorship launch & school recruitment	

8/18/2022	Angela K	PP	Radio	GalwayBayFM	BMW sponsorship launch & school recruitment
8/22/2022	Angela K	PP	Radio	ConnemaraFM	BMW sponsorship launch & school recruitment
7/7/2022	Angela K	pp	Newspaper	Limerick Leader	Picker Packs
26/07/22	Colin O'Byrne	RfC	Print	Irish Times	Launch of deposit return scheme
26/07/22	Mindy O'Brien	RfC	Print	The Times UK	Launch of deposit return scheme
8/5/2022	Angela R	SOP	Radio	Midlands 103	Under Wraps Report
8/25/2022	Angela K	PP	Print	Sunday World	BMW sponsorship launch & school recruitment
8/20/2022	Angela K	PP	Print	Saturday Herald	BMW sponsorship launch & school recruitment
9/12/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	Midlands 103	Second Hand September
9/3/2022	Lyndsey	SoP	Print	Irish Times Magazine	Sick of Plastic Campaign
9/7/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Print	Irish Times	Tents / Waste at Festivals
9/8/2022		PP	Podcast	The Pat Kenny Show	Hear all about the Picker Pals Programme
9/13/2022	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk Hard Shoulder	EPA report on packaging and recycling rates
9/19/2022	Angela R	VOICE	Print	Irish Times	Food waste

[Plastic bottles deposit return sc](#)

<https://www.midlands103.com>

<https://www.sundayworld.com/ireland/416154577.html>

9/23/2022	Patrick	Picker Pals	Online	The Irish Times	Plans being prepared to halt raw sewage discharge into sea at Howth
10/4/2022	Mindy	SoP	Radio	Radio Kerry	SUP items still being found. need people to report
10/5/2022	Mindy	VOICE	Radio	Morning Ireland RTE	Coke Greenwashing as sponsor of COP27
10/14/2022	Mindy and Abi	We Choose Reuse	Print	Irish Mirror	WCR Petition to EU, Brussels trip
10/14/2022	Mindy and Abi	We Choose Reuse	Online	Buzzfeed	WCR Petition to EU, Brussels trip
10/14/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Newspaper	Irish Independent	DUPD labelling on takeaway cups
10/14/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	Newstalk	Pat Kenny show - takeaway cups
10/14/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	RTE	Drive Time - compostable cups
11/17/2022	Mindy	VOICE	TV	RTE	GIY Food Matter with GIY
11/28/2002	Mindy	DRS	TV	RTE	Launch of DRS
11/29/2022	Mindy	DRS	Radio	Highland Radio, Donegal	launch of DRS
11/29/2022	Colin	DRS	Radio	Midlands FM	Launch of DRS
11/30/2022	Colin	DRS	Radio	Tipp Midwest FM	Launch of DRS
2/12/2022	Colin	DRS	Radio	Midlands 103	Launch of DRS
28/12/2022	Mindy	DRS	TV	RTE ONE News	Launch of DRS
7/12/2022	Mindy	circular economy	Radio	Newstalk Hard shoulder	EPA waste report and CE
8/12/2022	Lyndsey	VOICE	Radio	Connemara Radio	VOICE is 25years old
30/12/22	Mindy	recycling	Radio	RTE One Claire Byrne Show	recycling Christmas waste

8/12/2022	Angela	Picker Pals	Newspaper	Gloss Magazine	How The BMW Group Is Designing For The Future
8/15/2022	Angela K	Picker Pals	Newspaper	Business Plus	BMW Drives Environmental Change Through Picker Pals Programme
9/2/2022	Angela K	Picker Pals	Radio	Live95	'Picker Pals' project officially welcomed to Limerick schools