

St George's Market – Wrigley LLC YRE Investigation 2019-2020

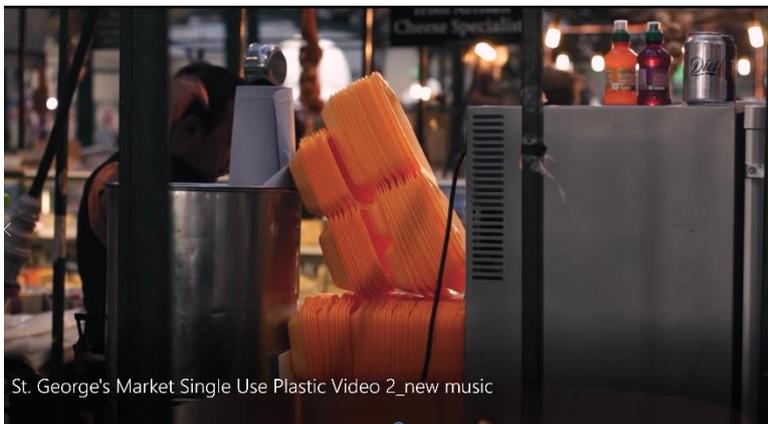
Between January 2019 and March 2020 YRE Northern Ireland team has worked with two post-primary schools involved in the programme. St Louise's Comprehensive College in 2019 and St Dominic's Grammar School for Girls in 2020, carried out two journalistic investigations on the use of pointless plastic (Single Use Plastic) at one of the most important touristic attraction in Belfast (Northern Ireland) as part of their Litter Less Campaign.



The pupils would like to see a plastic-free market and support traders and St George's Market in creating a new selling point as an 'Eco-Friendly' Market, and in turn attract more people!

Project Background

The idea of a survey about single use plastic at St George Market comes from the urgency to increase awareness about the hazard of plastic pollution and to reduce the use of plastic as immediate consequence.



St George Market is a pivotal attraction for tourism in Belfast (Northern Ireland) and every year gets millions of people visiting it. More than one million people visited the Market between 1 January and 31 December 2018. Almost 20,000 people visited the Market each weekend, meaning that each of its trading days enjoyed an average of more than 6,500

shoppers. Many of them enjoys also the international food served at the market.

Two issues are connected to this experience:

1. Unfortunately the majority of food vendors use polystyrene containers and plastic cutlery
2. The number and location of recycling bins within the market's area is not suitable to sustain the amount of plastic and polystyrene used

Outcomes

2019 (St Louise's School)	2020 (St Dominic's School)
Food vendors 70% use single use plastic	Food vendors 66% said they had made changes
Food vendors around 90% interviewed believe single use plastic is a serious issue*	Food vendors around 90% confirmed the results of 2019 about the seriousness of the issue
Public Over 70% used single-use plastic at the market (including bags, cutlery, containers, cups, etc.)	Public 25% used single-use plastic bags (only carrier bags were observed) 29% used re-usable bags
Public 85% aware of the problem	Public 87.5 aware of the issue and consider it very serious

*Fortunately, 100% of the food vendors said they would consider using alternative options to single-use plastic.

Extra results

Only 60% of the vendors were aware of potential alternative options to use. Although, 100% of the vendors surveyed would encourage customers to bring their own reusable containers only 30% would offer incentives to encourage customers to do so.

A positive note was that 100% of the public surveyed said they would consider using alternative options to single-use plastic. Yet, only half of those surveyed said they would refuse a beverage or food served in a single-use plastic container.

In terms of waste, only around 50% of the public knew where the bins were located at St. George's market. Alarmingly, nearly 45% of the public surveyed said they recycled their rubbish at St. George's market despite there being no recycling bins on the premises.



Conclusions

Since both schools carried out their journalistic investigations and presented their outcomes

- Deputy Mayor of Belfast took a very keen interest in developments and actively got involved with engaging with St George's Market. This was great backing for the project and a catalyst for change.
- Plastic bags will not be given out by traders any longer. Instead local community group created reusable bags from scrap cloth and given to traders to offer to customers who didn't a reusable bag with them
- St George's purchased 10 new recycling bins and tested bins in different places and monitored use
- For the first time St George's emailed traders directly and requested they phased out the use of Styrofoam and single use plastic items with immediate effect
- Communications department incorporated reducing single-use plastic messages, requesting customers to bring their own reusable bags, cups, water bottles, food containers and cutlery in with their social media plan
- Posters were created with similar messages for the market
- Activity will be monitored and reviewed