

ESS and Royal Navy win Institute for Collaborative Working Chairman's Award

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[ESS Defence](#) and the Royal Navy have been awarded the Institute for Collaborative Working's prestigious Chairman's Award, in recognition of a joint sustainability initiative that has eliminated single-use cups at Navy Command Headquarters.

The accolade was presented at a special ceremony at the House of Lords and recognises 'No Single Wets', a collaborative project between ESS and the Royal Navy to remove disposable cups from HMS Excellent. The Chairman's Award is reserved for partnerships that demonstrate exceptional collaborative working and deliver clear, measurable impact.

ESS operates a high-volume café at Royal Navy Headquarters, serving thousands of hot drinks each month. Prior to the initiative, fewer than five per cent of drinks were served in reusable cups, with the majority ending up as waste. Reducing this waste stream was identified as a priority, prompting the Navy to challenge ESS to develop a bold and practical solution.

Following a review of several options, including recycling, the partners agreed to eliminate single-use cups entirely and introduce a 100 per cent reusable cup policy. Known as 'wets' within the Royal Navy, the initiative was launched as 'No Single Wets'. From April 2024, the café stopped stocking disposable cups, requiring customers to bring reusable cups for takeaway drinks, with a 25p discount offered as an incentive.

Since its introduction, the scheme has prevented 52,649 single-use cups from entering the waste stream, equivalent to 0.94 tonnes of waste. Customers have also saved more than £13,000 through the reusable cup discount. Following its success, the programme is set to be rolled out across the wider Royal Navy

estate.

The initiative has already received wider industry recognition, having been Highly Commended at the recent Waste2Zero Awards.

Lord John Hannett, Chairman of the Institute for Collaborative Working, commented: “This is a collaboration that truly stood out to me – a partnership between industry and the public sector that is solving an everyday problem and serious environmental challenge. ESS and the Royal Navy have demonstrated how shared purpose, commitment and collective capability has resulted in an innovative approach that makes them worthy winners of this special award.”

Warrant Officer 1 George Reeves, Royal Navy Climate Resilience & Environmental Management, commented: “This is a fantastic achievement! We are incredibly proud of the ‘No Single Wets’ initiative and delighted that it has been recognised by the Institute for Collaborate Working. Implementing change is always a challenge, not least when it comes to sustainability, but working alongside ESS we’ve demonstrated what can be achieved by joining forces to build on our shared values. A huge thank you and congratulations to all those involved in making this such a success.”

Bob Gray, Managing Director – ESS Defence, Marine & Aerospace, added: “We’re thrilled that ‘No Single Wets’ has been recognised with the Institute for Collaborative Working Chairman’s Award! This important sustainability initiative is the result of a positive, committed approach to collaborative working between the ESS and Royal Navy teams. The results speak for themselves and we’re looking forward to supporting the Navy with the roll out across the rest of the estate.”