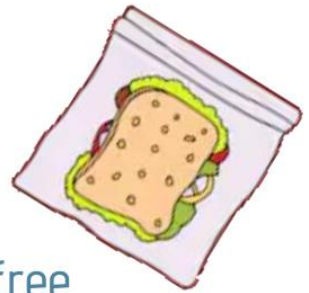
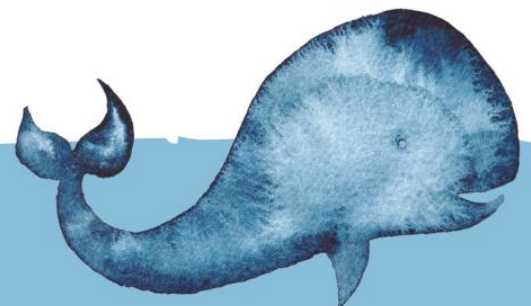




# NO MORE PLASTIC!



The issue of plastics in Ireland and why go plastic-free to help our ocean



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An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil  
Department of Housing,  
Planning and Local Government



**Fáilte Ireland**  
National Tourism Development Authority

# INTRODUCTION

The aim of this guide is to help groups, communities & individuals reduce their plastic usage and seek alternatives where possible. The aim is for people to move towards a more sustainable lifestyle which is healthier for the environment.

Plastics are everywhere, from the packaging of our food to toys for our kids, from heat-saving domestic insulation to life-saving medical innovations.

But we aren't getting the best out of plastics. Too much of it is used only once before we throw it away, and it ends up polluting the environment, depriving the economy of a valuable resource.

Every item of plastic that has ever been created is still with us on the planet today.

Up to 13 million tons of plastic waste ends up in the world's oceans every year. Plastic pollution devastates local economies, damages fishermen and destroys tourism potential. The damage to marine environments is estimated to at least \$8 billion per year globally.

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# GLOBAL PLASTIC CONSUMPTION

Plastic production is estimated to use 8% of yearly global oil production and is set to reach 20% by 2050. These are rare resources that contribute to climate change and should be preserved for more important purposes such as medical supplies. We produce more than 300 million tons of plastic per year – That's almost 5 more times then what we produced 50 years ago!

Currently, we are producing nearly 300 million tons of plastic every year, half of which is for single use. More than 8 million tons of plastic is dumped into our oceans every year. This is equivalent to dumping a truck of plastic into the sea every minute. It is now predicted that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish and that 99% of seabirds will have ingested plastic.



Plastic is cheap and incredibly versatile with properties that make it ideal for many applications. However, these qualities have also resulted in it becoming an environmental issue. We have developed a “disposable” lifestyle and estimates are that around 50% of plastic is used just once and thrown away.

Plastic is a valuable resource and plastic pollution is an unnecessary and unsustainable waste of that resource.



Only two types of plastic - polyethylene terephthalate (PET, used for synthetic fibres and water bottles) and high-density polyethylene (HDPE, used for jugs, bottle caps, water pipes)—are routinely recycled. Between 22-43% percent of plastic worldwide is disposed of in landfills, where its resources are wasted, it takes up valuable space, and it blights communities.

Plastic packaging accounts for close to 39% of the total European plastics market and 62% of the plastic waste generated in the European Union each year.

Plastic is primarily used to extend the shelf life of food and reduce transportation costs due to weight. The social benefits of plastics must be weighed against the expansion of bio-alternatives, and the problems that plastics durability and their incredible volume worldwide constitute as a waste stream.

**Plastics make up 80% of all marine litter from surface waters to deep-sea sediments (IUCN, 2018).**

## Did you know?



Every day, we use 20 million plastic water bottles.



In Europe. 15,000,000 tonnes of the end of life plastic goes to landfill each year.



It takes 250ml oil and 3 l of water to make a 1 l bottle of water. 63 billion gallons of oil are used every year just to supply the US with plastic water bottles.



50 % of all plastics is single use. Plastics have an average useful lifetime of 12 minutes.



# IRELAND AND PLASTIC

In Ireland we are producing in the region of 210,000 tonnes of plastic per year. The most recent EPA Waste Packaging Statistics for Ireland 2013, states only 40% of plastic packaging is recycled and according to the National Waste Report 2011 in 2011, at least 52.5% of all plastic packaging waste in Ireland went straight to landfill.

Much of our actual recycling is carried out in other countries and recent cases show that up to 40% of recyclables are often too contaminated to recycle.

The situation of micro-plastics pollution in Irish waters is now so severe that recent EPA/GMIT research shows eating freshwater fish may constitute a risk to people's health.

It is clear that prevention of waste is the best cure for the current plastic crisis. In 2002, Ireland proudly initiated the first plastic bag tax in the world in 2002. Since then, many European and African countries now also ban or charge for single-use carrier bags, resulting in an over 90% drop in their usage. Once again, Ireland has the opportunity to be a world leader in banning plastic.

## Facts and figures



- Cigarette related litter makes up over 50% of all litter items nationally. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable. It takes 12 years for a cigarette butt to break down.
- There is an estimated over 500K disposable coffee cups a day in Ireland going into landfill. This works out at 22,000 every hour or 366 every minute. The cups are lined with plastic polyethylene, on the plus side making them waterproof but not recyclable.
- China – the world's largest recyclable materials importer – has decided to ban the importing of plastics from European countries. This policy came into effect on 1 January. Around 22 million plastic bottles are purchased in Ireland each week – and, if laid end to end, would reach Boston in Massachusetts. That's roughly 5 bottles per person per week.

## 1. You're making a positive impact on our planet

By living with less plastic, you're making a positive impact on our planet right now AND you're simultaneously making it better for future generations. As more people start making the change, this impact will grow exponentially, helping to clean up our oceans, reduce the amount of waste in our landfills, and lessen the effects of global warming.

## 2. You're setting an example for the people around you and the people who look up to you

Living plastic-free is a righteous cause. No matter where you live or your stance in life, the health of our environment affects us all equally, and you're helping to make it a better planet for everyone who lives here. This sets a great example for the people around you, especially for the people who look up to you. You're sacrificing your own convenience for the greater good of humanity and for future generations.

## 3. You can inspire others to make the change as well

One person living with less plastic isn't going to make a big impact. But if that one person can inspire another person, and that person inspires two more people, and those people go on to inspire other people to make the change, then we've suddenly started a domino effect that snowballs into something very impactful. By choosing to live this lifestyle and openly share it with others, you will inspire people to start being more aware of their own environmental impact and the global issues surrounding plastic consumption.

## 4. You join a global community of supportive people who care about our planet's future

The plastic-free community spans across the globe. It crosses cultures, age, sex, and religion. By living plastic-free, you join a growing community of supportive individuals with the same goals and philosophy driving them.

## 5. You've achieved something to be proud of

The plastic-free lifestyle can be challenging, so achieving it is something to be proud of. You've made a change that most people aren't willing or capable of doing just yet, and you're one of the front-runners helping to spearhead massive change in how we affect our planet going forward.

## 6. Increased health and vitality

Many people forget that one of the best "side effects" in our opinion about living plastic-free is an increased health and vitality in your body. This is often attributed to the fact that living life with less plastic means you often eat fresher and are not eating processed or "junk" food. It is not uncommon to experience even some weight loss if you are carrying a few extra pounds, after you make the switch to a plastic-free life.

## 7. It's not just about plastics...

Plastic is an extremely valuable and versatile material. However, the problem is our culture of single use as a whole. The resources that we use to produce all of our products are finite, and producing materials always has an environmental impact. The take-home message is that can greatly reduce this impact by producing less waste, in any form. Say no to single-use and give possessions a value again!

# TOP TIPS TO GO PLASTIC FREE

**Plastic bottles & coffee cups** – ditch single use and get a reusable bottle and cup instead. For the bottles, we recommend stainless steel or aluminium rather than hard plastic. Stainless steel is durable and keep drinks deliciously cool, but aluminium is lighter to carry and cheaper to buy.



**Cling-film** – soft plastics such as cling-film, crisp packets and wrappers are not currently recyclable. Alternatives to cling-film include beeswax wrap covers which can be rinsed and re-used. We do not recommend tinfoil as an alternative as this creates more waste. Good quality reusable lunch boxes can be purchased in a variety of shapes and sizes which also reduces the need for cling-film.



**Straws** – Metal, bamboo and paper straws are now widely available as an alternative to plastic straws. A few steps in the right directions have been made. For example, since April 2019 schools are prohibited by law from buying single-use plastics such as straws.

**Food packaging** – this may be the most difficult single-use plastic to control as many food products come pre-packaged. When shopping, opt for packaging free products and support businesses that offer these options.

**Balloons** – a major offender in terms of plastic litter is balloons. Every balloon that is released, whether intentionally at a graduation ceremony or other celebration, or accidentally, ends up as litter on land, or more often in our oceans. Both the plastic of the balloon and the cord or ribbon it is tied to are hazardous to wildlife causing entanglement, choking and death from ingestion. Please do not release balloons at school events! There are many alternatives to mark a special occasion – including blowing bubbles, flying kites, planting a tree or decorating with bunting, flags or streamers.



**Glitter** – glitter is often overlooked as a source of plastic pollution, but these tiny fragments of plastic end up washed down our sinks and make their way into our oceans, where they are consumed by fish and marine invertebrates and have a major detrimental impact on ocean food-chains. Biodegradable glitter made from plant cellulose is available but be aware that this is not always completely plastic-free.



**Personal hygiene** – A few brands are moving towards plastic free cosmetics: you can now get soap, shampoo and deodorant bars. You can also get bamboo toothbrushes and steel razors.

For more info and resources  
check out

[www.cleancoasts.org](http://www.cleancoasts.org)



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