

Turning Off the Plastic Tap

Twelve Top Tips

The huge problem of pollution caused by single-use plastic is now well documented. Both the marine and wider environment are being seriously degraded, and no matter how much we focus on recycling there is a pressing need to avoid single-use disposable plastic altogether.

Here are some top tips to help reduce our individual plastic footprint by choosing not to buy products containing plastic in the first place, opting instead for environmentally-friendly alternatives.

Continue to Say "No" to Plastic Shopping Bags

Whenever and wherever you can, try to remember to take a reusable jute/hessian bag (or rucksack) on shopping trips, and/or carry a lightweight foldaway bag in a pocket for extra shopping or in case of an unplanned purchase.

Ditch the Single-Use Water Bottle

If you want to rehydrate "on the go" consider investing in a lightweight stainless steel bottle which can be reused over and over again. Many local shops, cafes and restaurants/pubs will now be happy to refill your bottle on request – look out for the ReFill logo.

There is also evidence that the making of a plastic bottle of water is far more carbon intensive than simply using tap water, so if you have to buy a plastic bottle of water don't forget to recycle the empty container which will also reduce your carbon footprint.

Stainless steel water bottles are now readily available from many local shops. Some have a thermal lining which make them ideal for both hot and cold drinks.

More information on the [ReFill Campaign here](https://www.cornwallrcc.org.uk/cornwalls-communities-join-the-refill-revolution/) and at <https://www.cornwallrcc.org.uk/cornwalls-communities-join-the-refill-revolution/>



Say "No" to Plastic Drinking Straws and Stirrers

The recent announcement of a Government consultation later this year may well lead to a ban on these polluting items, but, in the meantime, consider avoiding plastic straws and stirrers in favour of disposable paper straws, or reusable straws and stirrers made of bamboo and stainless steel. Support the Final Straw Campaign in Cornwall

More information on the Final Straw Campaign here:

<http://finalstrawcornwall.co.uk/>

Consultation information : <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43817287>

Single-use plastic cups, plates and cutlery are also a major source of marine pollution. Use reusable **dishware** whenever possible. Buy stainless steel cups and bamboo/wooden utensils for those days out or camping trips.



Avoid excessive packaging

Many supermarkets and other retailers are making commitments to reducing unnecessary plastic packaging, or making their packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable, but it could be some years before these are fully implemented.

Meanwhile, seek out products – particularly fruit and veg – that are not wrapped in plastic. Consider buying fresh produce from Farmers' Markets where packaging is less and try to remember to take your own special container or reusable bag for perishables to cut down on waste.

For more information on buying local:

<http://www.transitionfalmouth.org.uk/wp/groups/food/tf-food-database>



Support the call for Plastic-free Aisles in Supermarkets:

<https://www.change.org/p/all-ceos-of-the-uk-supermarkets-we-want-a-plastic-free-aisle-in-our-supermarkets>

Refuse Single-Use Disposable Coffee/Tea Cups

These cups are a major source of litter and pollution and need to be avoided if at all possible.

If you like your refreshments "on the go" remember to take a reusable/refillable coffee cup with you – they often attract a significant takeaway discount in most local cafes and national coffee chains.

But if a disposable cup has to be used, Costa Coffee outlets will **take back used cups** (both their own and other brands) for recycling – but no lids though; these can be included in your household kerbside plastic recycling.

Costa Coffee is working with 14 other companies to provide collection points for used coffee cups in a bid to increase recycling rates and reduce their impact on the environment.

More details : <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-43801491>

The latest news is that the world's first reusable coffee cup made from used paper cups – **the rCup** – is now in production and available in Cornwall

A range of reusable cups are available from stores in the Truro/Falmouth area including **Archie Brown's, Tugboat** and **The Refill Store** (Truro) and **The Natural Store** (Falmouth). Also available from the Surfers Against Sewage shop at St. Agnes <https://www.sas.org.uk/>

Some cups available claim to be "fully compostable", but it is unlikely they will break down in a home compost bin. They are mostly suitable for composting only in high-temperature conditions.

A good example is the Cafeteria in Boscawen Park, Truro where compostable cups are provided for customers, and then collected for local composting in suitable conditions.

Avoid Plastic Cotton Buds

These are also included in the above consultation on plastic straws and stirrers leading to a possible ban later in the year, but, in the meantime say "no" to these seriously polluting items which often end up on our beaches. Buy cotton buds made with cardboard stalks instead.

These are now increasingly available from many well-known retailers.

Help stop Microfibre Pollution

Synthetic microfibres escaping from the routine washing of textiles like polyester and acrylic fleeces are a serious form of marine pollution.

One answer is to consider buying a Guppy Friend Laundry Bag which traps these fibres which then can be disposed of safely.



Guppy Bags are available locally from Surfers Against Sewage
<https://www.sas.org.uk/>

[More details here](#)

Say "Goodbye" to Shower Gel and Liquid Soap

Liquid Soap is contained in wasteful and often unnecessary plastic packaging. It has also been found to have a carbon footprint 25% greater than bar soap. Consider buying good old solid bars of soap for use at home, which, while sometimes costing a few pence more, will last longer and are often handmade with natural ingredients. Shop around.

Say "Yes" to Coffee Beans and Granules and "No" to Plastic Coffee Pods

Don't be tempted by all those coffee machines that only make coffee by inserting a plastic pod containing non-recyclable plastic. Nespresso are trialling the recycling of their aluminium pods but the majority of the huge number of used pods are made of a mix of materials including plastic and are not recycled.

Ground coffee or beans and a cafetiere or espresso/cappuchino machine make great cups of coffee. Also consider the eco-friendly option of using biodegradable coffee capsules at home. Recently developed by the Eden Project they are also Nespresso-compatible and will break down in a home compost bin.

Eco-capsules are available from the Eden Project shop or Waitrose supermarket

More information ("[Eden's 100% compostable coffee capsules help beat plastic pollution](#)")

Wise up to Eco-friendly Toothbrushes and Toothpaste

Approximately 3.6 billion plastic toothbrushes are produced every year, and incredibly many end up on our beaches. Eco-friendly brushes made of bamboo (with biodegradable bristles) are available if you search online or enquire at some local stores. Remember that biodegradable materials may break up, but could still take a long time to breakdown fully in the environment. But better than plastic!

Eco-friendly toothpastes supplied in non-plastic containers (glass jar with metal cap) are also available. Billions of plastic tubes go to landfill or are incinerated every year. Try asking for alternatives at your local eco-shop ([the Refill Store](#) in Truro) or exploring online



Try to Avoid Products containing Plastic Microbeads

The UK Government announced a widely welcomed ban on plastic microbeads in “rinse-off” personal care products and cosmetics, which took effect in **January 2018**. Microbeads, like other forms of micro waste, are hugely polluting as they escape from waste-water treatment works and end up being ingested by marine life.

The ban, however, does not extend to “leave-on” products, including sunscreen, lipstick and some facial scrubs. Cosmetics companies have resisted calls for these products to be included in the ban arguing it would be difficult and expensive to dispense with plastic microbeads altogether. Plastic pollution campaigners continue to call for these beads to be replaced with natural alternatives.

More information on microplastic pollution is available from the Marine Conservation Society:

<https://www.mcsuk.org/clean-seas/microplastics>

Give Balloon Releases the “Thumbs Down”

What goes up must come down ! Balloons released into the open air can cause serious harm to marine life, and to livestock and other animals in the countryside. Help prevent this form of plastic pollution by contacting the Cornish Plastic Pollution Coalition with details of any organisation(s) involved in balloon releases. The CPPC will then write a formal letter highlighting the problem of balloon litter and suggesting eco-friendly alternatives.

To register a sighting contact Delia Webb of the Portheras Beach Care Group at deliawebb@btinternet.com

Educational packs for schools and students on balloon litter can be found at [Hold Tight! take action against balloon litter.](#)

Is there Plastic in your Tea?

With concern mounting over tea bags which are sealed with plastic, or made wholly of plastic which cannot be composted, it's worth checking with the companies who make your tea to see if there is plastic in their tea bags.

Useful guidance on steps being taken by some major tea bag manufacturers to phase out plastic seals can be found at <http://moralfibres.co.uk/is-there-plastic-in-your-tea/> and also which tea bags can be safely disposed of in a home compost bin.

Of course, there are no such issues with doing the traditional thing and enjoying a brew made in a teapot with loose leaf tea!

Transition Falmouth, June 2018

(Acknowledgement: elements of the above are based on an article that first appeared in the St.Feock Parish Magazine and reproduced with their permission and our thanks)