



# Turning Off the Plastic Tap

## Top Tips

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

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

### Continue to Say “No” to Plastic Shopping Bags

Since the introduction of the 10p levy on **single-use plastic carrier bags** there has been a marked decrease in their use. But there is some evidence that “bags-for-life” are being increasingly used as substitute single-use shopping bags

So whenever 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 **reusable water bottle**. 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 packaging and transporting a single-use bottle of water is far more carbon intensive than simply refilling a reusable with tap water. So if you have to buy a bottle of water don’t forget to **recycle** the empty container, which will also help reduce your carbon footprint.

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

**Drinking Fountains** are also making a comeback locally, with new facilities available, or planned for, in both Falmouth and Truro.



N.B. The Government is committed to introducing a **Deposit Return Scheme** for drinks containers (Environment Act 2021). Experience from other countries show that a DRS can significantly boost recycling rates, reduce littering and stimulate the circular economy.

### Say "No" to Single-use Plastic Plates, Cutlery and other items

Plastic plates and cutlery, balloon sticks and expanded polystyrene food and drink containers are all sources of environmental pollution, and could be banned by the Government following a consultation in early 2022.

Opt instead for reusable plates, cutlery, and food containers for camping trips, days out and coffee mornings.

### Avoid plastic packaging

Seek out local products – particularly fruit, vegetables and loose dry foods – that are not packaged in plastic. Consider buying fresh **local produce** from local markets, and other independent retailers, where packaging is less, and help keep your carbon footprint in check at the same time.

Support **zero waste refill stores** in [Falmouth](#) and [Truro](#), and our **local mobile plastic-free shop** - [Incredible Bulk](#). For details search under "General Retailers" in the link below.

Try to remember to take your own refillable container, or reusable bag for perishables to cut down on waste.

Check out our Local Food and Drink Guide for more information on produce sourced in Cornwall and supplied in the Falmouth/Penryn and Truro travel-to-shop areas:

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



Image: Farmers' Market on Falmouth Moor

Note: several leading supermarkets have made commitments to reduce unnecessary plastic packaging, or to make their packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable. Some are now offering a recycling service for "soft" or "flexible" plastic packaging. For details <https://www.transitiontruro.org.uk/wp/projects/hard-to-recycle-materials-truro-area/>

## 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 drinking cup with you – they often attract a significant takeaway discount in many local cafes and national coffee chains. Just ask.

Reusable cups are available from shops in the Truro/Falmouth area, including [the ReFILL Store](#) and [Tugboat](#) (Truro) and [The Natural Store](#) and [un rap refill store](#) (Falmouth).

Or support our local **mobile zero plastic** waste shop - [Incredible Bulk](#) - who stock the made in Cornwall [Circular & Co](#) reusable cup



Note: single-use plastic coffee cups are no longer accepted at Household Recycling Centres in Cornwall, and significant confusion remains over which cups can be recycled or composted with many cups being littered or contaminating recycle.



Main Costa Coffee outlets will take back used clean plastic-lined cups (both their own and other brands) for recycling - lid-free. White lids can be included with your household kerbside plastic recycling.

Some plant-based single-use cups 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 e.g. industrial composters of which there are none in Cornwall and where no collection facilities are currently available.

**Best Option : take a reusable cup with you, or enjoy refreshments in a china cup in your favourite cafe**

### **Avoid Plastic Wet Wipes (and take action)**

...and certainly do not flush them away down the loo! Plastic wet wipes cause blockages in our sewerage systems, which in turn leads to overflows causing immense harm to aquatic and marine life in rivers and the sea.

Support the Marine Conservation Society, who are calling for a ban on **plastic wet wipes** <https://www.mcsuk.org/what-you-can-do/campaigns/swimming-in-wet-wipes/>

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee has also called for a ban on single-use cleaning and hygiene products containing plastics, in their recent hard-hitting Report on Water Quality in our Rivers (with exemptions for medical purposes).

One major supermarket (Tesco) has committed to removing branded plastic-based wipes from their shelves as from March this year; having already removed own brand wipes some months before.

### **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 Washing Bag** which traps these fibres which then can be disposed of safely in with household waste. More details at <https://en.guppyfriend.com/>



Support the Marine Conservation Society who are campaigning for filters to be installed in all new washing machines: <https://www.mcsuk.org/what-you-can-do/campaigns/stop-ocean-threads/>

### **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.

### **Wise up to Eco-friendly Toothbrushes**

Approximately 3.6 billion **plastic toothbrushes** are produced every year, and incredibly, some end up on our beaches.

Eco-friendly brushes made of wood are available on the market with **recyclable nylon bristles**. Make enquiries by searching online or enquiring at some local stores.

For example: mobile plastic-free shop [Incredible Bulk](#) stock the well-recommended Geo Organics Toothbrush.

When no longer usable the nylon bristle brush head can be removed and returned to the company for recycling. Note: a minimum of 4 heads - any brand - can be returned by Freepost: more details at <https://uk.georganics.com/pages/zero-to-landfill>

Also check out the [ReFILL Store](#) in Truro (Lemon Street Market) or [un wrap](#) in Falmouth (Webber Street)

**Plastic toothbrushes** can be recycled, along with spent **toothpaste tubes** at certain collection points provided by dental practices and chemists.

**Spent toothpaste tubes** can be recycled at **Boots**, Falmouth (Market Street) or Truro (Pydar Street) <https://www.boots.com/boots-recycling-scheme> for details



Both **plastic tubes and plastic toothbrushes** can be dropped off at the **Oak House Dental Practice**, Truro (St.George's Road) for recycling under the Terracycle Oral Care Recycling Programme Check their opening times at <https://www.the-oak-house.com/>

Also try finding alternative packaged **toothpaste** at your local eco-shop. Eco-friendly toothpastes are sometimes available in non-plastic containers. Pop in and ask, or search 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** in January 2018.

Plastic microbeads, like other forms of micro waste, are hugely polluting when 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. Cleaning products are also not included. Plastic pollution campaigners are calling for these beads to be replaced with natural alternatives, and are asking the Government to intervene.

More information on microplastic pollution is available from the Marine Conservation Society: <https://www.mcsuk.org/clean-seas/microplastics>

### Is there Plastic in your Tea?

This question started to be asked widely back in 2017 when concern was being expressed over **tea bags containing plastic** and their compostability credentials

Since then progress has been made by some companies keen to go “plastic-free”, but the picture is still somewhat confusing, with some tea bags being suitable for **home composters**; others suitable only for **industrial composters**, and others still made of or sealed with **plastic**.



One particular concern is consumers expecting their tea bags to break down fully in their compost bins, only to discover that they are in fact breaking down into **microplastics** ending up in the soil.

Given that it is estimated over 60 million tea bags are used every year, this has been the subject of much research and action.

One piece of research recommended here has been carried by Moral Fibres in early 2022

<https://moralfibres.co.uk/the-teabags-without-plastic/>

Here are two examples of Cornish companies promoting their tea bags as 100% plastic-free, along with other packaging:

**Westcountry Tea** (Newquay)

<https://www.westcountrytea.co.uk/disposal-guide/>

**Cornish Tea Company** (Little Trethew)

<https://www.cornish-tea.co.uk/sustainable-2/>

Both are confident that their tea bags will compost fully in home composters over time. Check the links above for more details.

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

## 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 organisations 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 Cornish Plastic Pollution Coalition via <https://cppccornwall.org.uk/contact/>

Educational packs for schools and students on balloon litter can be found at <http://www.cleancornwall.org/holdtight.php>



## Think Global, Act Local - some useful Local and International links

### Local Plastic Repurposing and Recycling:

Transition Falmouth's "Too Good to Waste" Guide includes best examples of the local Circular Economy in action putting plastic waste to positive use

<https://www.transitionfalmouth.org.uk/wp/groups/economics/too-good-to-waste-working-towards-a-local-circular-economy/>

### Recycling Local Hard-to-Recycle Materials :

Transition Truro's updated Guide includes recycling collection points in the area for waste plastic products not accepted at the kerbside.

<https://www.transitiontruro.org.uk/wp/projects/hard-to-recycle-materials-truro-area/>

Note: Transition Falmouth's Guide is currently under revision.

### Cornwall Plastic Pollution Coalition

A county-wide coalition of environmental and beach-cleaning groups working to tackle marine plastic pollution <https://cppccornwall.org.uk/>

### Latest International Context

Plastics Soup Foundation 11/2/2022

<https://www.plasticsoupfoundation.org/en/2022/02/new-report-should-convince-politicians-of-the-need-for-an-international-plastic-treaty/>

**OECD Report on Plastics:** Global Plastics Outlook 22/2/2022

<https://www.oecd.org/environment/plastic-pollution-is-growing-relentlessly-as-waste-management-and-recycling-fall-short.htm>

**UN Environment Assembly** approves resolution to develop global plastic pollution treaty 2/3/2022

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/historic-day-campaign-beat-plastic-pollution-nations-commit-develop>

*Transition Falmouth: last updated March 2022*

<https://www.transitionfalmouth.org.uk/wp/groups/waste-recycling/turning-off-the-plastic-tap/>