

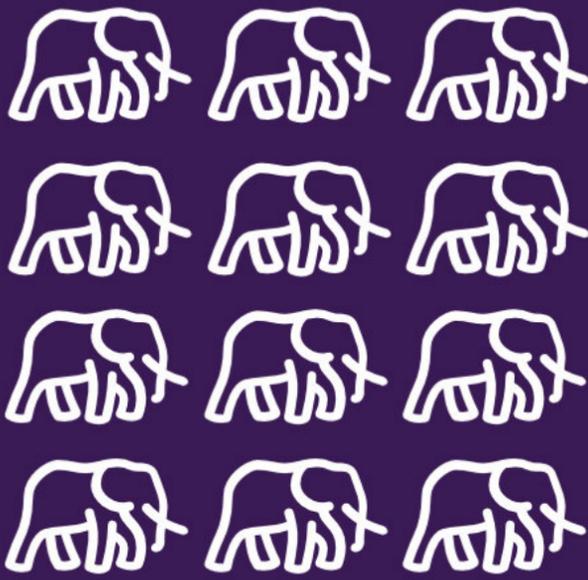
FROM LAND TO SEA

PLASTIC'S JOURNEY IN OUR WATERWAYS



Over the past 50 years, plastic has revolutionised the way we live. It's cheap, convenient, tough and virtually indestructible. But the problem with indestructible is that, well, it's indestructible.

So it'll probably be no surprise to you that a staggering amount of our plastic ends up clogging our oceans every year - but how does it get there?



The ocean, via litter

Humans have produced a lot of plastic in the short time since inventing it. How much you ask? **About the equivalent weight of one billion elephants, according to Greenpeace's latest figures.** That's a lot of noodle wrappers and friendship bands.

And while we all like to think that letting one plastic bag blow away at the park isn't going to make much of a difference, six billion of us doing the same thing soon adds up. You've seen the beach after holiday makers leave or the park after a festival, well that mess is blowing into rivers becoming part of more than **12 million tonnes* of plastic that end up in our oceans every year.**

The ocean, via land fill

If you put plastic in anything not marked recycling then it's going to landfill. That may sound obvious, but it's something we never think of. I mean, how often do we picture those stinking mountains of man-made trash when popping a crisp packet in the kitchen bin?

On top of that, a surprising amount of rubbish is lost in transport between your house and the depot. And even if it does get there, it's still at risk of blowing into the nearest river or ocean. Whether it's through mishandling by well-meaning sanitation workers or simply the fact that **plastic is lightweight and can be blown away with the gentlest of breezes...** the result is the same. Plastic floating into rivers or washed into our drainage systems and once again out to sea.



The ocean, via your sink

It might seem hard to believe, but there was a time when people washed their faces with nothing but a flannel and a bar soap. Shocking, right? Nowadays of course there's a cosmetic for every occasion and many contain microbeads, **small exfoliating plastics that are too small for our water systems to filter** and consequently end up in not just our sea, but the bellies of sea life and the cod in your fish and chips.

While a recent UK ban on microbeads is a step in the right direction, it's only a first step. We might not realise it, but even washing clothes can release microfibrils into our drains, while for some reason people still think it's ok to flush their wet wipes. Just think of the poor sewage workers!

So...

Despite our best efforts to keep plastic from our waterways with bans and recycling plants, there's only really one way to stop it altogether: and that's cutting our dependence on plastic.

*greenpeace.org (2018)

Find out more

hull.ac.uk/myplasticpledge