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FAO the Scrutiny Panel

## How can we reduce our use of plastics?

### 1. What are the threats plastics pose to pollution of the environment and its wildlife.

The effects of plastic pollution on the ocean environment are becoming more widely known and regularly publicised. These are covered in more detail in the Plastic Free Jersey submission. Plastic (and their organic polymer equivalents “Bio-plastics”) are an excellent material but a material that is often poorly designed for many “single use” applications due to plastics durability and longevity in the environment (where it takes hundreds of years to breakdown but degrades and fragments into millions of smaller parts called micro-plastics and nano-plastics).

The global consumption boom and widespread lack of effective waste management, recycling, collection or use of degradable alternatives means the problem will get worse before it gets better and whether we act or not Jersey as an island will be on the frontline. Action is required on a global scale but thankfully unlike climate change there is no debate about whether a problem exists and it can be solved relatively simply by recycling much more and using much less (encouraging reusable or degradable alternatives) to stop plastics entering the environment in the first place.

The principal impacts locally are the ingestion of microplastics by local sealife (and associated health concerns for human consumption) and the unsightly pollution of the islands lanes and coastlines by seaborne and local plastic waste. Microplastics are also known to contaminate soil and water supplies. The islands water supply already has higher nitrate contamination than most EU countries and is provided from a limited catchment area on an increasingly populated island. It is therefore possible that it also has higher concentrations of nano-plastics such as synthetic clothing fibres and car tyre fragments.

Plastic pollution is also a concern for the island’s aquaculture industry as shellfish such as oysters and mussels are particularly at risk, the Independent recently reported that microplastics were found in 100% of Mussels sampled at UK supermarkets:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/mussels-plastic-microplastic-pollution-shellfish-seafood-oceans-uk-a8388486.html>



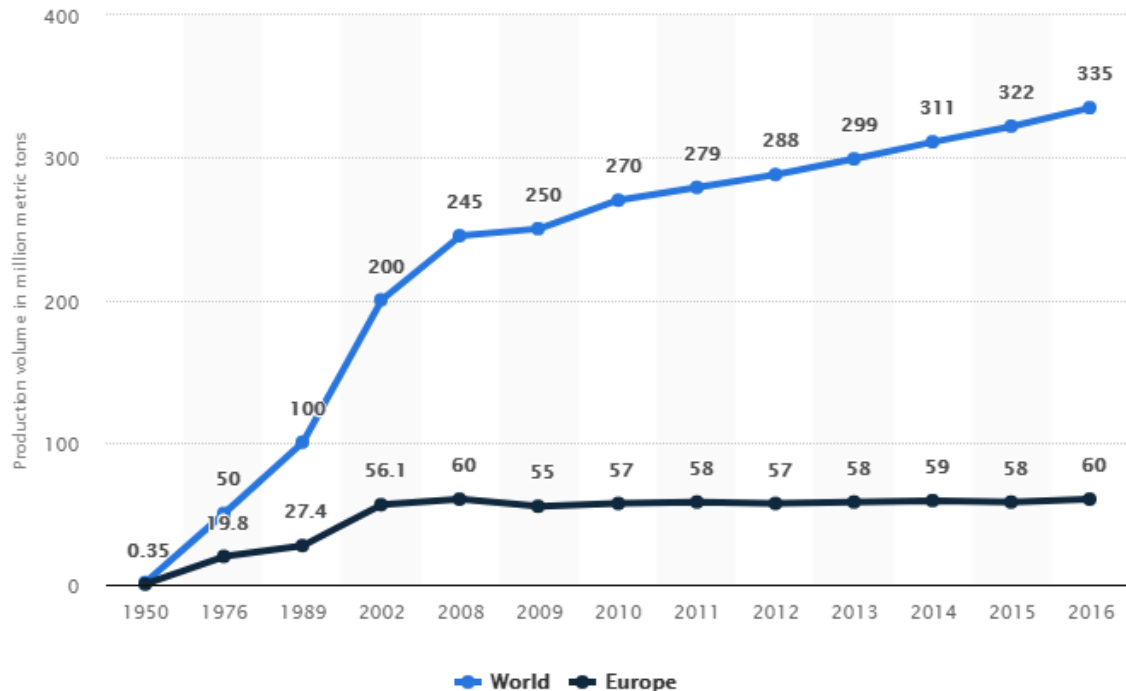
### [All UK mussels contain plastic and other contaminants ...](https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/mussels-plastic-microplastic-pollution-shellfish-seafood-oceans-uk-a8388486.html)

[www.independent.co.uk](https://www.independent.co.uk)

All mussels sampled from UK coastlines and supermarkets were found to contain tiny shards of plastic and other debris in a new study. The scientists behind the report

said microplastic consumption ...

## Global plastic production from 1950 to 2016 (in million



Source: statista

As shown above global plastic production has been increasing exponentially, scarcely 75% of all plastic ever produced is now waste and only 6% has ever been recycled, which coincidentally is about the same amount of plastic that Jersey recycles presently. Most of the rest has either been landfilled or ended up in water courses and the sea (whilst in Jersey it is mostly incinerated). The largest market for plastics is packaging which is mostly single use. This accounts for 50% of plastic waste and most is neither recycled nor incinerated. Source: University of California Santa Barbara

## 2. Why and how should Jersey reduce its use of single-use plastics?

As a wealthy self-governing island surrounded by beautiful coastline Jersey is ideally positioned to become a leading light in tackling the scourge of single use plastics and encouraging more sustainable practices. As an island nation we are at the forefront of the problem and protecting our oceans, waves, beaches and wildlife for future generations (and for residents and tourists to enjoy) should be a priority. Being able to set our own laws enables us to lead rather than follow and develop expertise in sustainability and zero-waste alternatives. A strategic initiative of Government is to diversify the economy and boost other key sectors such as Agriculture and Tourism. Whilst certain plastic free initiatives may involve some short term upheaval and cost there could be significant long term benefits. Note plastic is only as cheap as it is because no-one is paying for the significant environmental externalities it causes, single use plastic will become taxed much more heavily worldwide just as alcohol and tobacco are today and Jersey need not wait.

Arguably Jersey's reputation as a tourist destination has been adversely affected in its key UK market by an increasingly left leaning press and the perception that Jersey is a tax haven that harbours illicit funds and helps the wealthy avoid tax. Mainstream media and TV programmes such as Panorama have tarnished Jersey's "brand". Developing a less wasteful society, becoming single-use "plastic free" and developing a more circular

economy can only help the islands eco-tourism credentials. Ideally this could be combined with a move towards renewable energy, electric vehicles, organic agriculture and the support and promotion of other environmental attractions and organisations such as Durrell, Les Ecrehous RAMSAR site, Jersey National Park, National Trust, Jersey Heritage, Societe Jersaise etc. Ecotourism is the fastest growing sector within tourism and an obvious fit for a largely unspoilt scenic coastal destination like Jersey with a rich historical and cultural heritage. Developing a stronger national identity and local “Terroir” could help boost the prospects for tourism from France which given it’s proximity could be a significantly larger market.

**Some action Jersey could take to reduce single-use plastic:**

- Ban or heavily tax plastic bags
- Ban plastic straws, stirrers and cocktail sticks (reusable and degradable alternatives are readily available for low cost)
- Ban plastic lollipop sticks and plastic cotton wool swabs
- Tax single use coffee cups (difficult to recycle)
- Tax single use coffee pods (difficult to recycle)
- Introduce a deposit return scheme for plastic bottles such as those that operate highly successfully in Norway and Germany and are about to be introduced in the UK. Norway's Tomra systems (the global leader) operate sophisticated reverse vending machines in public places, shops and supermarkets, given the high refunds given Norway successfully collects a staggering 97% of its plastic bottles.
- Increase the provision of reusable alternatives such as canvas bags, bamboo coffee cups, reusable water bottles etc
- Introduce widespread water fountains and water refill stations
- Introduce significantly more recycling bins such as those used in St Helier which also contain cigarette butt disposal areas, especially near beaches and slipways where they are regularly overfilled and end up back in the environment thanks to the wind and seagulls.
- Encourage retailers to stock less heavily packaged locally sourced produce (e.g. GST could be waived on local or unpackaged produce)
- Introduce island wide household waste collection and recycling
- Charge more severe penalties and fines for littering and fly-tipping
- Encourage the use of home composting
- Encourage businesses to speak to a Plastic Free Jersey representative
- Net storm drains which drain into the sea

**3. To consider public awareness initiatives/campaigns and any resulting benefits this may have in reducing plastic waste.**

These initiatives are already being carried out for no cost by the non-profit organisation Plastic Free Jersey who are speaking to Businesses, Government, Retailers, Schools, and Individuals as part of a major UK-wide campaign.

As part of Surfers Against Sewage’s (SAS) nationwide Plastic Free Communities campaign, Plastic Free Jersey is initially seeking to achieve “Plastic Free Community Status” for Jersey and national recognition. Plastic Free Communities is a movement inspired by the Fair-trade model which seeks to engage and connect individuals, communities, and businesses in the collective effort to reduce the flow of single use plastics into the marine environment and requires the following 5 objectives to be completed:

1. Local Governance - Gaining support from local government to support single use plastic free initiatives and committing to alternatives
2. Local Businesses - Jersey’s population requires us to have a certain number of businesses signed up to and successfully completing their pledges to remove three items of single use plastic and replacing these with sustainable alternatives.
3. Plastic Free Allies - The support of a flagship employer and the requirement to undertake widespread community action at schools, community centres, beaches etc to ensure as many people as possible are aware of the campaign

4. Plastic Free Rallies - To undertake at least two community events, beach cleans and one fundraising event for SAS.
5. Local Strategic Group - The formation of a local steering group of key stakeholders (including Government) to meet regularly and set/meet objectives to obtain "Plastic Free Community Status"

From my experience of extensive beach-cleaning the biggest sources of locally sourced beach plastic are cigarette butts and fishing materials (net fragments, fishing line, rope, ghost nets, lobster pots, mesh fragments, rubberised bands from oyster farms etc). I expect a lot of both will also originate from France and further afield. I note from a separate submission that Jersey Sea Farms have undertaken extensive work without States support to minimise their loss of plastics and investigate the impact nano-plastics have on their products.

Elsewhere the country lanes, drains and run-off pipes also collect the usual plastic bottles, drinks cans, crisp packets, glass bottles, plastic cable ties etc.

#### **4. What role can businesses play in the reduction of plastics and the benefits to the environment this could bring.**

All businesses whatever sector can play a part. The majority of businesses use some non-recyclable single use plastics without necessarily realising. If there is greater demand for reusable or degradable alternatives the tide will start to turn.

The Business toolkits available on [plasticfreejersey.com](http://plasticfreejersey.com) suggest many ideas of how to remove single use plastics from day to day life and have specific ideas for individuals, hotels, retailers, cleaning companies and offices. Most businesses will have Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) objectives some of which will fit closely with Plastic Free Jersey initiatives designed to prevent the depletion of scarce resources, lessen pollution and prevent or pay for externalities. Many of these suggested actions are easy to undertake and implement and often money saving. For example replacing bottled water with water fountains or tap water, encouraging reusable coffee cups where many retailers provide discounts, avoiding single use cutlery and stationary, introducing recycling, etc

#### **5. Are recycling initiatives in Jersey are fit for purpose, specifically plastics, and to identify what improvements (if any) can be made and/or what other initiatives could be introduced.**

I live in St Brelade and am very happy with the recycling services offered with regular household collection and the provision of recycling bins for glass, metals, paper/card and plastic bottles. Ideally it would be good to be able to recycle more plastic (such as cartons, yoghurt pots, food packaging etc) but I am also trying to eliminate as much of these plastics as possible. Unfortunately many islanders are not so lucky as only half the parishes currently offer kerbside collection. Whilst we will always want to support our local parish it does not make any sense to have de-centralised recycling provision across 12 different parishes on a 9 by 5 mile island. Centralised island wide recycling would require some investment but would help increase recycling rates significantly and lessen the unnecessary cost and complexity. The recycling centre at La Collette is an excellent facility in a good area but anywhere that requires more effort to get to will generally get less take up from the public. We have communal bins for six households and have noticed a significant reduction in general household waste since St Brelade introduced household recycling collection (we used to have to drive to the St Ouen or La Moye recycling centres previously).

In Jersey Plastic bottles (usually PET1) are sent to a designated recycling facility in the UK whilst other types of plastic which are collected are incinerated with general waste. It is worth noting that our closest neighbours France, Guernsey and the UK collect and recycle a much wider range of plastics (there are six main types PET, HDPE, LDPE, PP, PS and PVC). Unlike glass and aluminium cans which are infinitely recyclable plastics can only be recycled a limited number of times and certain types of plastic are much more difficult and costly to recycle (polystyrene, crisp packets, milk cartons, coffee cups). It is not currently economical for Jersey to recycle any plastics locally however consideration could be given to sharing other types of recyclable plastics with the

other nations mentioned whilst ensuring there is a clear audit trail and that this can be done at an acceptable cost.

**6. What are other countries practising in terms of reducing / eliminating use of plastics and identify what lessons Jersey could learn from this.**

Many island states, nations, regions and cities have announced considerable measures to restrict or ban single use plastics:

- Taiwan this year announced the farthest reaching bans on plastics in the world restricting the use of single-use plastic bags, straws, utensils and cups.
- St Vincent & The Grenadines last year banned Styrofoam (Polystyrene) products as have numerous other countries including Zimbabwe. PS is non biodegradable, difficult to recycle, absorbs more pollutants, looks like food and is ubiquitous in the ocean environment
- Singapore has had a long standing ban on chewing gum, a big polluter and a polymer made from the same material as car tyres
- Vanuatu last year banned plastic bags and bottles.
- The UK will shortly introduce a nationwide deposit return scheme for plastic bottle. Similar schemes in Norway and Germany have been highly successful in recycling the majority of plastic bottles.
- Kenya has a total ban on plastic bags with heavy fines for using or supplying. Numerous other countries have banned or intend to ban plastic bags including Morocco, Rwanda, and various states in Australia
- Canada, the US and the UK alongside various other countries have a total ban on plastic microbeads used in cosmetics
- France will bring in a total ban on plastic cups, plates and cutlery in 2020
- The city of Hamburg has banned single plastic coffee pods and Seattle has banned straws and stirrers

Jersey should consider implementing number of these measures, a move that would be welcomed, overdue and would likely generate positive PR for the island.

Yours Sincerely

Ross Garrard (Surfers against Sewage rep and Plastic Free Jersey committee member)