

Six steps to solving plastic pollution

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"Recycling plastic is both simple and complex".

In theory, we should be able to simply discard all plastic based products into our recycling bins and rely on our local councils and collection companies to process the waste correctly. In practice, this isn't easy. Our waste collection companies don't have the complex facilities required to correctly recycle plastic, so they remain simply, waste collection companies. They harvest what they can, such as bottles to sell on and make money, the rest is sent off to 'somewhere'. Somewhere is either on a shipping container to another country, to a UK based incinerator or landfill.[1][2][3][4]

The approach taken by the UK in these referenced articles is far from ideal and doesn't fix today's problem, "billions of tonnes of plastic exists as waste in our oceans and on on land. We need to destroy it, recycle it in the most effective way possible. This 'is' today's problem".

What can we do, how can we start 2020 in the most positive way, with the biggest impact to reduce all existing plastic waste.

The answer is not to use less plastic, that's a different problem with a whole set of specific issues. The work required to even slightly affect the capitalist world we live in shouldn't be underestimated. We we will not resolve today's problem by focusing effort here.[5] The timescales and approach does not 'today' remove plastic from the environment, it only looks to reduce future production.

Besides, we could choose to realise plastic is not the problem. The problem is the lack of effective and responsible recycling, something which should of been put in place decades ago. We must stop blaming plastic, this will not remove the billions of tonnes of plastic waste from our environment.[6]

To fix today's problem, several things need to happen. First, we need facilities in place which can recycle plastic. You'll be pleased to know, they exist and are starting to come online around the world[7][8][9][10][11][12]. Second, we need to change our mind set. "Stop focusing on the production of plastic and instead focus on ensuring we can effectively and responsibly recycle all plastic we manufacturer without generating waste". We can refer to these facilities as chemical recycling plants.

Third, We need waste collection companies to use these new facilities. This can be achieved by County Councils changing existing contracts with collection companies to ensure all waste plastic is sent for chemical recycling. We should also refer to waste plastic as the type collection companies cannot resell for mechanical recycling, companies who for example manufacture benches and garden furniture.

Forth, we need companies such as Sky to act, not preach. Sky's Ocean Rescue does not rescue our oceans. Sky talks a good talk, but isn't setting sails to the wind and removing plastic from our oceans. I have nothing against Sky, I'm a customer, but an organisation of such wealth and scale can do more. In fact, they could do the following...

Sky could sponsor some sort of "Ocean Rescue ContAiner ship" (ORCA), something which maybe has a crane or

scoop which follows, the Giant Plastic Catcher![17]

It is a shame Sky is instead using such funds to focus on observation rather than collection which I think does little more than provide an advertising and marketing platform for Sky. I don't think this rescues our oceans.[13][14][15]

Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against the above but strongly think Sky is missing a massive trick here. Surely the people in these boats must be thinking as they spot every piece of plastic, wouldn't it be really useful if we actually collected the plastic! Maybe, they could send the co-ordinates to the Giant Plastic Catcher! Seriously, this isn't rocket science! Come on Sky, must do better! Please put that 25m GBP investment fund towards creating more Giant Plastic Catchers (GPCs).

Sky, using their new ORCA container ship, could then drop off all plastic waste to a port, near one of the facilities mentioned above which has the chemical recycling capability to effectively recycle plastic waste.

Fifth, we need our Government to stipulate every council in the UK must ensure all waste collection companies collect all plastic waste and forward this to the chemical processing plants. If parliament can pass a Brexit bill in a day then this should be a breeze.

Finally, from a commercial perspective, chemical recycling works. Waste plastic has little value to waste collection companies and is the feedstock used for chemical recycling. Once operational costs are taken into account, chemical recycling plants are able to run a viable business, given the products produced from chemical recycling are oil based.[16].

So, In summary...

1. Maximise use of new facilities
2. Change our mindset
3. Revise contracts between councils and waste collection companies
4. Wealthy companies need to act 'Now'!
5. Government and Councils need to stipulate change
6. Develop commercial frameworks for end-to-end recycling of plastics.

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