



L O N D O N

# Foreign and Commonwealth Office



\*Joined the **#OneLess** pioneer network in June 2019

## At a glance

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is the government department for foreign affairs, based in Whitehall. In February 2018 the FCO launched the #BeyondPlastic initiative and in one year, achieved a 98% reduction in single-use plastic consumption across UK catering operations.

[fco.gov.uk](https://fco.gov.uk)

### Eliminating plastic water bottles...

As part of the #BeyondPlastic initiative, 7 months later in September 2018, the FCO worked with their supplier to remove all plastic bottles from Whitehall and additional buildings in Milton Keynes. The **101,000** bottles removed from sale include **33,080** single-use water bottles. This has been replaced with cans, glass bottles and drink dispensers.

### ...For reusing and refilling

To keep staff hydrated without single-use plastic water bottles, the FCO sells and encourages the use of refillable water bottles, with water fountains available for refills at tea points in every building. The FCO has even launched its own bottled water in reusable glass bottles, served from an in-house bottling plant. This change provides filtered water for hospitality and meetings without the need for single-use plastic. The scale of the FCO's achievements include an annual reduction of **1.7 million** items of plastic in the UK.

33,080  
single-use water  
bottles a year  
removed from  
points of sale

**33,080**  
BOTTLES

1.7 million items  
of plastic a year  
removed from UK  
operations

**1.7M**  
ITEMS

### Global impact

Items removed from UK catering outlets include plastic straws, sauce sachets, cutlery, cups, takeaway containers, to disposable aprons, glitter and nappies from the in-house nursery at Whitehall. Over **1 million** plastic items have also been removed from Embassies overseas. As of February 2020, **18** British Embassies globally are plastic-free with a further 45 Embassies committing a date to achieve this status, and the other 212 setting out plans to do so.

18 British  
Embassies around the  
world are plastic free

**18**  
PLASTIC FREE  
EMBASSIES

“Be bold! The reason we got where we have with the level of reduction in single-use plastic is because we went for it in terms of timelines and scope, and our experience shows the change has been successful and it can be done!”

Andrew Collingridge,  
Sustainability Team

### Key opportunity



The FCO introduced a 25p 'latte levy' for disposable cups, plus a 25p discount for customers who brought reusable cups. This saw the use of reusable cups increase from 3% to 51% in one month across catering outlets, and greatly reduced the amount of disposable cups used.

## What's next

In Whitehall, the FCO is exploring the feasibility of a deposit return scheme for in-house glass bottled water (at the moment it's currently recycled). The #BeyondPlastic campaign continues to grow apace internationally.

Join the #OneLess  
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