

Eliminating single-use plastic at source: A roadmap for the #OneLess movement in London

[#OneLess](#) was established in 2016 by the [Marine CoLAB](#) as an experimental initiative to tackle ocean plastic pollution.

It has catalysed a change in the way Londoners drink water, from single-use plastic water bottles to refilling and reusing, by taking a collaborative approach and connecting people to the ocean.

In six years, #OneLess has effected change across London; influenced policy, improved drinking water infrastructure, worked with businesses and venues, and inspired Londoners to make positive choices for the sake of the ocean.

With the substantial support of the growing [#OneLess pioneer network](#), we have positioned London as a global leader in tackling plastic pollution. However, we know that more action is needed to achieve the ambitious goal of eliminating single-use plastic water bottles from London.



#OneLess



London is transforming into a city where refilling is the norm

#OneLess



#OneLess impact to date



Supporting policy change



#OneLess network of drinking fountains dispenses **775,580 bottles** in two years, catalysing a **£5 million** investment from the Mayor and Thames Water to install 100+ fountains.



The 2018 **London Environment Strategy** sets bottle reduction targets.



> 40 organisations and businesses call on 2021 Mayor of London candidates for urgent action on single-use plastic water bottles.



Our broader impact

→ **United Nations HQ goes single-use plastic water bottle free**, changing the prescribed behaviour of delegates at all UN meetings. #OneLess provides a **blueprint for other geographies**, where #OneLess is being implemented, e.g. in the Chagos Archipelago.



Brokering collaboration



#OneLess Pioneer Network of **90+ organisations** remove **five million single-use plastic water bottles** and **nine million single-use plastic items** from supply chains.



Together with Greater London Authority and MIW Water Cooler Experts, **pioneering a drinking fountain fund** to help support Londoners to refill on the go.



Mentoring and learning events support organisations to reduce single-use plastics.



Collaboration with **17 designers and innovators** for 2018 London Design Festival creates product-service solutions to eliminate single-use plastic water bottles.



Teaming up with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to achieve greater impact, e.g. Surfers Against Sewage for the successful 'Plastic Free Parliament' campaign, resulting in **Parliament going single-use plastic free**.



Engaging Londoners and visitors



84% of Londoners report owning a refillable, **60% refill** at least once a month.



'Hello London, Goodbye Ocean Plastic' reaches **five million people**. **One in three Londoners** surveyed report being more likely to stop buying single-use plastic water bottles after seeing this campaign.



135,000+ plastic bottles removed from Thames by hundreds of Thames 21 and North Thames Estuary Litter Picking Group volunteers. **357 volunteers** trained to monitor plastic bottle pollution.



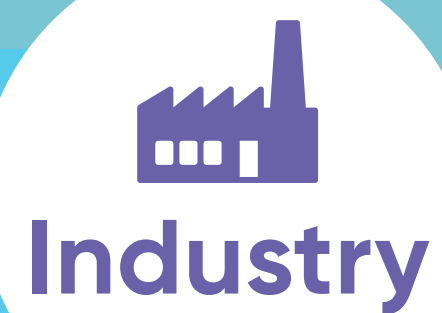
Roadmap to eliminating single-use plastic water bottles from London

Our latest research has revealed some achievable and exciting opportunities for positive change that will enable London to continue along the road to becoming a more ocean-friendly city. Whether you're a policy maker, a business or community group, here's how you can further the movement and play your part.

Legislation to disincentivise plastic bottled water and encourage refillables



Engage other businesses that have not yet eliminated plastic bottled water



Trust

Engage those who continue to drink plastic bottled water at home and on-the-go



Evidence base



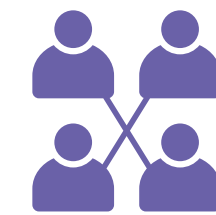
Continue to monitor change in London

Infrastructure



Ensure free and equitable access to drinking water for everyone 'on-the-go' in London and prioritise reduction of plastic bottled water

Joining up



Emphasise our sense of global connectedness and responsibility to the planet and each other by partnering with others



Legislation

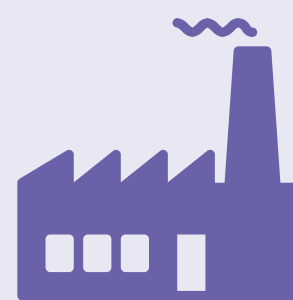
Legislation to disincentivise plastic bottled water and encourage refillables

What needs to be done

We need businesses who are leading the way to share their journeys and best practices with others. We need a more ocean-literate government, which recognises its value beyond economic gain. In line with [SDG14](#), ocean health needs to be positioned at the top of the environmental agenda at local, national, and international policy levels. Legislation to support the rapid and significant reduction of plastic bottled water across the UK is required, and commitments around Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) within the government's [Environmental Bill](#) must be delivered. The Mayor of London must continue to support and encourage a transition to refilling on-the-go across London, and provide support for businesses to enable this change.

Who is doing what

Plastic policy: [Wildlife & Countryside Link](#) is championing a DRS and putting pressure on UK government to ensure its delivery alongside [Surfers Against Sewage](#) (SAS), the [Marine Conservation Society](#) (MCS) and others. [Friends of the Earth](#) and [Greenpeace](#) are working to ensure that specific plastic reduction targets are set within the Environment Bill. [BRITA](#) is working with [Whale & Dolphin Conservation](#) to highlight the fundamental links between plastic pollution and climate change; a topic that the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) [published](#) ahead of COP26 to inform more integrated policies.



Industry

Engage other businesses that have not yet eliminated plastic bottled water

What needs to be done

We need businesses who are leading the way to share their journeys and best practices with others. Businesses have demonstrated that it is possible to continue to thrive while eliminating plastic bottles and staying true to Corporate Social Responsibility objectives. Many #OneLess pioneers have used eliminating bottled water as a stepping stone to tackling other single-use plastics within their organisations. We need pioneering businesses to support others in making necessary changes and to hold accountable those businesses that are not willing to change.

Businesses need to join together to demand more support from government. The switch from plastic bottled water to refill systems can impact revenue-generating opportunities, creating hesitancy to act. Government needs to do more to support and incentivise this change.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) need to coordinate pressure on industry to alter their business models. Coordinated campaigning is required to increase the pressure on industry laggards, as well as to track and respond to the potential danger of greenwashing or stalling tactics.

Who is doing what

Business support: [BRITA](#) is publishing a plastics reduction toolkit for corporate office-based organisations, while [Fauna & Flora International](#) (FFI) is promoting best practice in handling pellets and identifying hotspots for textile fibre loss. [MCS](#) is also tackling microfibres by advocating for factory fitted filters on washing machines. [Refill London](#) has been [working with businesses](#) to provide support on reducing single-use plastic and getting reusables back on the menu post-pandemic.

Industry pressure: [SAS](#) is driving plastic reduction through its [Plastic Free Communities](#). The [Changing Markets Foundation](#) is investigating how industry has obstructed and undermined proven legislative solutions around the globe. [City to Sea](#) published [Food to Go. Good to Go?](#) which provides a roadmap for the food sector to eliminate single-use plastic and scale reuse.



There is a diverse network of organisations and initiatives who are driving change and tackling plastic pollution across the system. Over the years, #OneLess has been privileged to work with many of them. In this briefing, we've provided just a small taster of 'who's doing what' in the space, to make it easy for you to explore further.



Trust

Engage those who continue to drink plastic bottled water at home and on-the-go

What needs to be done

The reputation of tap water needs a boost. Some people don't perceive tap water in the UK to be healthy and would rather drink bottled water. However, the UK has access to some of the cleanest tap water across the globe. We need better messaging and marketing to communicate the facts, evidence and high standards of our tap water, by individuals, businesses, and policymakers.

Concerns about the hygiene of public fountains exacerbated by COVID-19 need to be addressed.

Government research has shown that the virus is not transmissible by water and that drinking fountains are indeed safe to use. In parallel with an expanding fountain infrastructure in London, we need a communications campaign to ease concerns and drive uptake of fountain usage by the public. Strict cleaning regimes must be embedded to avoid further exacerbating hygiene concerns.

Who is doing what

Driving behaviour change: Refill London connects people to over 5,000 refill points, making it easier and more affordable to access free drinking water on the go than buying a plastic water bottle. Thames Water offers key information on drinking London's healthy tap water.



Infrastructure

Ensure free and equitable access to drinking water for everyone 'on-the-go' in London and prioritise reduction of plastic bottled water

What needs to be done

The provision of public drinking water must be increased. We need to ensure that everyone has access to refill points when on-the-go in the inner city level and throughout London's suburbs. We must look forward and future-proof London from plastic pollution by embedding public refill points as a requirement within urban design, providing access to drinking water across the Transport for London network, as well as growing the number of buildings that provide refill points.

Reduction and reuse must be prioritised over recycling. Plastic bottled water is being framed as increasingly recycled in content and infinitely recyclable. However, research indicates as many as half of all plastic bottles from UK households aren't recycled, while new evidence depicts the challenges faced by plastic waste exported to countries with lower environmental safeguards. We need tighter measures to reduce export-related fraud, as well as clear overall targets for reduction. Recycling as a single solution is simply not enough - research demonstrates we need significant action to reduce plastic production. Through the Environment Bill there is an opportunity to set and achieve targets to reduce single-use plastic by 50% by 2025.

Who is doing what

Refilling on-the-go: 29 #OneLess fountains continue to provide free and healthy drinking water to the public across London, while Thames Water and the Mayor of London are installing 110 new fountains by July 2022. The Refill London campaign mobilises existing infrastructure (e.g. cafes and restaurants) to provide water refills to the public at no cost.



Evidence base

Continue to monitor change in London

What needs to be done

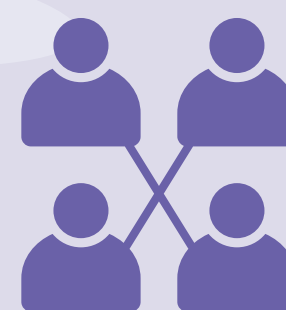
We need to address evidence gaps, share information, and collaborate with changemakers. There is a need for ongoing research to track changes over time, to innovate and encourage sustainable alternatives, to communicate effectively, and to overcome barriers. We need to continue building our understanding of plastic pollution in London, and its pathways to the ocean, as well as its impact on wildlife and human health.

Who is doing what

Plastic pollution and wildlife research: [ZSL](#) leads a number of citizen science and river monitoring initiatives across London, including work on plastic pollution. Alongside collaborators, ZSL is [monitoring plastic bottles](#) fitted with GPS trackers as they move across the ocean. London universities that are actively researching plastic pollution include [Imperial College London's](#) Ocean Plastics Solutions Network and [Royal Holloway University](#).

Monitoring through litter clean-ups: [Thames21](#) is working with local communities and businesses to monitor plastic litter along the foreshore of the River Thames. The [Thames Estuary Partnership](#) works with the [Port of London Authority](#) to deliver the [Thames Litter Strategy](#). The citizen science volunteering community continues to grow through [MCS](#), [SAS](#), [Trash Free Trails](#) and many more local initiatives.

Valuing the ocean: The [Marine CoLAB](#) fosters collaborative projects, which adopt a values based approach to create a more ocean-friendly society.



Joining up

Emphasise our sense of global connectedness, and responsibility to the planet and each other by partnering with others

The turbulent state of our planet constantly reminds us how deeply connected we all are, and how what happens in one part of the world can have a massive impact on people elsewhere. Plastic pollution generated in one place can end up all over the world and one of the easiest things we can do is reduce the amount of single-use plastic we use. Now we have an opportunity to go beyond London, to connect with others around the world, and to champion this movement on the global stage for the sake of our ocean. To date, #OneLess is already being implemented in [Cambridge](#), [Hull](#), the [Chagos Archipelago](#) and the [Philippines](#).



Other handy tools and resources from #OneLess

[#OneLess - a practical guide to tackling ocean pollution at source](#)

[#OneLess - a guide to installing drinking fountains](#)

[The River Thames - plastic bottle pollution - 2019 report](#)

[#OneLess pioneer network case studies](#)

