

The answer is 90.5% but what is the question?

The winning International Statistic of 2018 released in December was... 90.5%, which was the percentage of plastic waste in the world that has never been recycled.

Ok, so you think plastic is great? In many ways it has proven to be the wonder material of the modern world used in everything from clothing, food packaging, construction, transport, farming and much more, for example the cool new waterproof £5 and £10 notes! And who doesn't like using glitter when craft making? But the problem with plastic is that most of it in the UK (and the rest of the world) is not biodegradable and if not recycled, remains around in the environment for hundreds of years, causing a host of environmental problems..

Some plastic facts..

Each year **400 million tonnes** of plastic is produced and **40%** of this is for **single use** plastic, meaning we will only use it once before binning (such as drink bottles, cups, straws and crisp packets). Each year it is estimated that **8 million tonnes** of waste plastic litters our lands and then enters the world's oceans annually – from tiny fragments to huge pieces of discarded fishing net. Every day **7 million** cardboard coffee cups are made with a waterproof plastic lining, but only **1 in every 400** are recycled. In London, Ocean rescue created a huge 10m long whale made out of UK beaches' plastic waste to show the amount of plastic waste that enters the ocean every second!



Plastic whale sculpture in London



As the concern over plastic waste continues to grow, the UK has brought forward some commendable changes, for example the scheduled ban of plastic straws and the charge on shopping bags doubling to 10p. But the UK still exports 66% of our waste plastic overseas, costing us around £50m a year. But countries like China are starting to ban the import of plastic from the UK because they seek to improve their own environmental record. **Is it right that we should be allowed to send our waste to poorer and less developed countries?** Controversially, some people are now suggesting that the UK creates special furnaces and starts burning plastic to create energy, **what do you think?**



Plastic recycling plant in Bangladesh, where some UK waste goes.

Uh-oh, the UK is breaking rules?!

In October 2018, BBC watchdog began to investigate claims that UK businesses are not recycling their plastic waste and instead it is left to reach UK Rivers and Oceans. Companies are also said to be sending illegal shipments of plastic waste to the Far East via the Netherlands. British exports are said to have sent 35 thousand tonnes more plastic than HM customs recorded last year.



Household waste imported from Britain that was improperly labelled as recycled plastic in Brazil



Top tips to create less plastic waste at work and home!



Pack lunch in reusable containers



Take your own shopping bags to the shop



Have reusable cutlery in the canteen/kitchen



Use products with no plastic packaging in the work place



Use and refill your own water bottle



Use cardboard for packaging/ ask your suppliers to

