

1st December 2022

Submission to the Inquiry into Plastic Pollution

Plastic pollution is a serious environmental problem. It can have a serious impact on wildlife, particularly marine wildlife such as turtles, who consume the plastics or get tangled in it. It can also contaminate or release chemicals into the environment, which can damage ecosystems. It is also, from our own perspective, a rather horrible way of polluting communal and natural areas. No one wants to go to the beach and walk across or swim in a place full of plastic pollution. While this is not the most serious reason, much of the tragic impacts of plastic pollution happens beyond the human eye, it is a visible reminder that we are doing something bad to the Earth. Indeed, this entered the plot of 2006 movie *Happy Feet* with the rockhopper penguin *Lovelace* trapped and choking on plastic from a drink container. While this was a fictional example, it is happening to all too many marine animals around the world daily.

Some companies have been moving away from single-use plastics (such as plastic straws in takeaway restaurants, or plastic bags in supermarkets). This are good steps and show that the industry can change. This should be supported and bolstered by legislation to phase out single-use plastics to encourage industries to move further. Many individuals too have been inspired by shows such as ABC *War on Waste*, but the key change needs to happen with regulation and changes in business practices.

Better collection and disposal of plastics would be helpful in reducing plastic pollution (i.e. putting them in waste disposal, rather than letting them escape into rivers or the land). However, dealing with plastic pollution could provide an impetus to deal with plastic at the source, and change to other ways of making and using things - including in how we shop and eat or other products we use. Plastics take up energy to make, which is wasted when they are used up quickly and thrown up. Making more durable products, apart from avoiding physical pollution, would be more sustainable in the long-term.

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