

Why are oceans important?

- We depend on our oceans for life. Scientists think that up to 70% of our oxygen comes from tiny ocean plants called phytoplankton. Oceans also absorb carbon dioxide and so help to protect the Earth from global warming and climate change.
- As well as being a core part of the water cycle, oceans absorb heat from the sun and distribute it across the globe. This means oceans help determine climate patterns around the world.
- Oceans provide important transport links, with 90% of the world's trade carried by ships.
- Oceans are also a source of food, from fish to crustaceans.

Why are oceans in danger?

- 40% of Europe's plastics are only used once, then thrown away.
- Each minute, the equivalent of a rubbish truck load of plastic is dumped into the ocean.
- Plastic bottles are the third worst plastic polluter of the ocean and more than 13 billion single-use plastic bottles are sold in Britain each year.
- It has been estimated that the UK throws away between 4.4 billion and 8.5 billion plastic straws each year.
- Once thrown away, plastics break down into tiny fragments called microplastics. They're already found on most of the world's beaches, and scientists think there are 500 times more microplastics in our seas than stars in our galaxy.
- Because of ocean currents, plastics and other rubbish can gather together in areas called gyres. The North Pacific Gyre is twice the size of France!
- Recent studies have suggested that there might be 80% more plastics on beaches than scientists previously thought.

How does this affect marine life?

- Plastics in the ocean kill marine mammals such as whales and dolphins, as well as seabirds.
- More than 1,200 animal species are in danger from eating plastic or becoming tangled in it.
- Famous naturalist, Sir David Attenborough, has said: "There are fragments of nets so big they entangle the heads of fish, birds and turtles, and slowly strangle them... Other pieces of plastic are so small that they are mistaken for food and eaten, accumulating in fishes' stomachs, leaving them undernourished."



- Plastic fibres have been found inside the stomachs of sea creatures from 7 miles deep in our oceans

What is Sky Ocean Rescue?

- Through its news channels, Sky is raising awareness of how plastics and other pollutants are affecting our oceans, and inspiring people to take action.
- Sky is removing all plastic water bottles, and plastic cups and straws in its offices.
- Sky Ocean Rescue encourages people to #PassOnPlastic and cut down on the amount of plastic they use.

What else is being done to help solve the issue?

- The British government has announced plans for a deposit return scheme on plastic bottles – customers pay a fee when they buy a plastic bottle and get their deposit back when they return it for recycling. The government has also proposed banning plastic straws, drink stirrers and cotton swabs.
- British Prime Minister, Theresa May, has said: “Plastic waste is one of the greatest environmental challenges facing the world, which is why protecting the marine environment is central to our agenda at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.”
- A number of businesses are releasing alternatives to commonly used plastic products, such as a bamboo toothbrush, solid shampoo bars and glass drinking straws. There are also shampoo bottles and trainers that are partly made from recycled plastics from beaches.
- One UK store has stopped selling all single-use plastic bottles. It has a drinking fountain in the store so that people can fill up reusable bottles.
- The Natural History Museum has said it will stop selling single-use plastic water bottles as part of efforts to reduce pollution in the world’s oceans. Director of science at the museum, said: “It’s vital that scientific institutions like the museum lead the way in the fight to understand and protect the natural world.”
- Most supermarkets now charge for plastic carrier bags. A representative from the Marine Conservation Society has said: “The 5p single-use carrier bag charge has made a massive difference to the number of plastic bags entering our seas.”
- One food shop is experimenting with ‘tattooing’ information such as ‘best before’ date on its avocados, using a special machine, rather than using plastic labels.

