

Free drinking water along Wales Coast path to tackle plastic pollution

Addressing an Environmental Summit at the Volvo Ocean Race today, Environment Minister Hannah Blythyn will name the 870 mile Wales Coast Path as the first location for the roll out of a Refill scheme for Wales as part of the Welsh Government's ambition to become the world's first refill nation.

As the first delivery phase of a Refill Nation, the Minister will commit to delivering Refill into communities along the Wales Coast Path within the next year. The Welsh Government will work with towns, villages and food and drink businesses to sign up to become refill points.

Those signed up to this drive to decrease use of single use plastics in Wales will be visible to walkers through window stickers and be listed in a bi-lingual refill app.

The app will provide the public with a list of locations where free drinking water is available making it easier for people to refill their water bottles without needing to purchase further single use beverages.

In a further bid to improve the management of plastic waste, the Minister also said that the £6.5 million Circular Economy Capital Investment Fund would be prioritised on the recycling of plastics.

The fund will help Welsh businesses manufacturing plastic products to increase the recycled content of their products, keeping resources in circulation locally instead of being exported for recycling elsewhere, used as a fuel or ending up in landfill.

Hannah Blythyn said:

"I'm delighted to announce today that the Wales Coast Path will be the first location in our drive to make Wales the world's first refill nation.

"Wales is the first country in the world to have a dedicated footpath that stretches the entire coastline and we as a Government as very much looking forward to working with the communities along these 870 glorious miles to curb the use of single use plastic. This is just the first step in our ambition to become the world's first 'Refill nation'.

"More refill points along our coast will help reduce the number of plastic bottles ending up in the sea, which can have a devastating effect on our marine environment.

"2018 is Wales' Year of the Sea and with the Volvo Ocean Race here in Cardiff, it's great to be able to make this announcement at the

Environment Summit, which is an important step towards eliminating plastic from our seas.”

Anne-Cecile Turner, Volvo Ocean Race Sustainability Programme Leader, said:

“By committing to reduce plastic waste through the coast path refill scheme, Wales has, yet again, shown true global leadership in the continuing fight to address the impacts plastic pollution is having on our seas and the vast range of biodiversity they support.

“Collectively, we have a unique opportunity to preserve our Blue Planet. The Ocean Summit plays a vital role in helping to solve this crisis and announcements, such as the Welsh Government’s, only help to amplify that message and the need for urgent action.”

Clare Pillman, Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales, who manage the Wales Coast Path on behalf of the Welsh Government, said:

“I am delighted that the iconic Wales Coast Path is to play a leading role in Wales’ refill ambitions. NRW is committed to supporting this initiative in order to help protect our fantastic marine environment.

“Taking steps to eliminate avoidable waste will ensure that we manage our limited resources in a better way, which is good for the people, economy and environment of Wales.”