

News story: Environment Minister visits North America to turn tide on marine plastic

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey has joined forces with Canada and the USA in the fight against marine plastic.

During a visit to Washington D.C. and Ottawa this week, the Minister met her international counterparts to discuss the UK's priorities for the marine environment ahead of the G7 Environment meetings to be held later this year.

Like the UK, Canada has already banned microbeads in rinse-off cosmetics, and the Minister met the country's Environment and Climate Change Minister, Catherine McKenna, and Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, to look at how the two countries can unite in further tackling the threats facing our oceans.

Through its presidency of the G7, which includes a focus on climate change, oceans and clean energy, Canada will be pushing member states to take action to deal with plastic pollution, ocean acidification, and develop the blue economy.

Following her visit, the Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

There is no greater asset than our blue planet, and it is only by working together we can address the multitude of threats facing our marine life.

In the UK we have already banned microbeads and cracked down on plastic bags, and in 25 years' time we will have eliminated all avoidable plastic waste. I look forward to working with my international counterparts to do all we can to protect our oceans for future generations.

Minister McKenna and Minister Coffey also discussed the crucial role industry can play in turning the tide on plastic. And with businesses across the UK pledging to ban straws, cut plastic packaging and roll out water refills, the Minister met Mars and Coca Cola to see first-hand how big producers in the USA are tackling waste.

While in Washington D.C. the Minister also met Judy Garber, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary at the American Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, who was supportive of moving forward work on oceans – especially on improved data and marine mapping.

Minister Coffey also used a meeting with stakeholders from Pew Environmental Trust and the High Seas Alliance as an opportunity to discuss improving

biodiversity in the marine environment.