

Press release: Foreign Secretary orders plastic to be binned from Britain's diplomatic network

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) will eliminate avoidable single-use plastics from its UK operations by the end of the year, and from its global operations by 2020. It is the first UK government department to announce such a ban.

This ambitious target makes the FCO a leader in the fight against plastic pollution not just in the UK, but globally too.

In recent weeks, the FCO has already removed all plastic cups, crockery, cutlery, straws and single-use condiment sachets from its London staff canteen, and is providing re-usable or biodegradable alternatives.

It plans to increase its "latte levy" from 10p to 50p to encourage staff to use their own mugs instead of disposable ones – and places the FCO firmly at the top of the pack in taking real action to end plastic waste.

The Foreign Secretary has set a deadline of year-end 2018 for the FCO to find alternatives to the remaining avoidable single-use plastics in use in its UK estate.

As well as a ban by year-end in the UK, the Foreign Secretary has given a 2020 target for its overseas estate, with a significant reduction this year.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

It is time for the world to truly wake up to the damage being done to the environment, and especially by the sheer volume of plastic that is dumped in our oceans.

If the UK is to turn the tide overseas on this crucial issue, it is only right that the Foreign Office leads the way at home.

Sir Simon McDonald, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office said:

Since 2009/10, the Foreign Office has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 39%, waste by 45%, paper consumption by 42% and water use by 12.9m litres in our UK operations. But we must do more to reduce our use of plastic. I am confident we can meet the challenge put to us by the Foreign Secretary.

In addition, the FCO is looking at how it can further reduce its environmental impact beyond plastic. Projects identified for

consideration include replacing existing vehicles with electric hybrid vehicles, waste to energy projects, and a global automated energy monitoring and reduction programme.

The drive comes on the back of the launch of the Government's 25-Year Environment Plan last month, which set out measures to eliminate avoidable plastic waste by 2042 across the whole of the UK.

Notes to editors

The drive comes on the back of the launch of the Government's 25-Year Environment Plan last month, which set out measures to reduce plastic waste.

The FCO already has a strong record in sustainability. Its most recent [annual sustainability report](#) show that in 2016/17 in its UK operations the FCO:

- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 39%
- Reduced water consumption by 12.9m litres
- Reduced waste & recycling produced by 45%
- Reduced paper consumption by 42%

In recognition of these efforts, we were shortlisted as a finalist in the British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM) Awards 2017 for its actions to drive significant reductions in water and energy use across the UK estate – the first central government department to achieve this success in the 16 years the awards have been running.

Estimates of the amount of avoidable single-use plastics in the FCO include:

- 103,201 cold drinks bottles purchased by the FCO in the UK in 2017 (stretching from FCO HQ to Heathrow Airport)
- 655,718 hot beverage cups purchased by the FCO in the UK in 2017 (FCO HQ to Milton Keynes / Brighton)
- 285,600 plastic water cups purchased by the FCO in the UK in 2017
- 14,950 pieces of plastic cutlery purchased by the FCO in the UK in 2017
- 1.37m avoidable single-use plastic items were used purchased by the FCO in the UK in 2017
- Initial estimates suggest that the FCO globally is consuming at least 3.45m items of avoidable single-use plastics.

Further information