

# Team GB athletes to fly the 'preventing plastic pollution' flag

An Environment Agency flyer made of plantable (UK-only) seed paper has been included in the athletes' official Tokyo Olympic 2020 kit bags.

It signposts athletes to the [Big Plastic Pledge website](#) – a global campaign founded by Olympic sailing champion Hannah Mills that aims to unite athletes and fans from around the world to help tackle the issue of plastic pollution and eradicate single-use plastic in sport.

Gold medallist Hannah Mills said:

It's great to have this message in the Team GB kit bags. I believe through the power of sport, we can change the fate of our planet.

The flyer features 3 key messages for athletes – make one simple change, like using a bamboo toothbrush instead of plastic varieties, shout about their preventing plastic pollution support, and use their position as worldwide role models to influence others.

It has been produced by the Environment Agency's plastics and sustainability team on behalf of the [Interreg Preventing Plastic Pollution \(PPP\)](#) project, a cross-Channel partnership of 18 expert organisations which identifies and targets hotspots for plastic, embeds behaviour change in local communities and businesses, and implements effective solutions and alternatives.

The flyer is the first of a number of initiatives with Team GB having also provided learning and teaching resources for its family and school education programme [Travel to Tokyo](#) – a free programme of virtual activities for children aged 5 to 11.

Environment Agency project officer Hannah Amor said:

We are thrilled to be working with representatives for Team GB and the Big Plastic Pledge. The flyer is an incredible opportunity to encourage athletes to help prevent plastic pollution and become worldwide ambassadors for behaviour change.

Everyone has a part to play in minimising the amount of avoidable plastic they use. It is estimated that 12 million tonnes of plastic enters the environment each year – that is a bin lorry load every minute. If everyone kicks plastic out of sport and is kinder to our planet, we could see this staggering figure reduce, helping to protect our wellbeing and wildlife for generations to come.

As a regulator, preventing waste plastic entering the environment by cracking down on waste crime and poor waste management is a key activity for the Environment Agency. As an influencer, it also has an ambition to promote better environmental practices that result in a reduction of plastic waste, helping to achieve the goals and commitments outlined in its 5 year plan to create better place for people, wildlife and the environment, and the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

Under the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, it is committed to eliminating all avoidable plastic waste by 2042. Steps already taken by ministers include banning microbeads in rinse-off personal care products, prohibiting the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds, and introducing a charge for single-use carrier bags which has cut sales by 95% in the main supermarkets, with this being extended to all retailers in May and increased to a minimum of 10p.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

I'm thoroughly looking forward to seeing Team GB in action at the Olympics, setting the pace both on the track and by doing their bit to prevent plastic pollution.

With all eyes on the Games, this is a fantastic opportunity to draw attention to the scourge of plastic pollution and what we can do to stop it.

The UK is a global leader in tackling plastic pollution, from banning the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds to our plans for a deposit return scheme to stop millions of plastic bottles being littered every year, and I hope the heroes of Team GB will pick up the baton and help us win the race.

## **Notes to editors**

Preventing Plastic Pollution is a €14million funded EU INTERREG VA France (Channel) England Programme project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund which works mainly across 7 pilot sites: Brest Harbour, Bay of Douarnenez, Bay of Veys, Poole Harbour, and the Medway, Tamar, and Great Ouse estuaries.

The 18 partners are the Environment Agency, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Queen Mary University of London, LABOCEA Conseil, Expertise et Analyses, Syndicat mixte établissement public de gestion et d'aménagement de la baie de Douarnenez, Office Français De La Biodiversité, Parc naturel marin d'Iroise, Brest Métropole, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Conseil départemental de la Manche, Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer, The Rivers Trust, Syndicat de bassin de l'Elorn, ACTIMAR, Brest'aim, Westcountry Rivers Trust, South East Rivers Trust and Plymouth City Council.

Further policies to cut plastic waste are also underway in government,

including a plastic packaging tax from April 2022, a Deposit Return Scheme for single-use drinks containers, an Extended Produce Responsibility system which will make producers more responsible for their packaging waste and incentivise them to hit higher recycling targets, and consistent collections to ensure that more plastic waste is captured in homes and sent for recycling.