

English ban on single-use plastics

- 1 Plastic drinking straws, cotton buds and other single-use plastics could be banned from sale in England next year in the next phase of the campaign to try to halt the pollution of the world's rivers and oceans. Cotton buds, often flushed down the lavatory, are one of the most serious sources of marine pollution. Altogether it is estimated that there are 150m tonnes of plastic in the world's oceans, and over 100,000 sea mammals die from eating or getting tangled up in plastic waste.
- 2 Plastic microbeads have already been banned, and the introduction of the 5p plastic bag charge in England has led to a dramatic fall in their use: 9bn fewer bags have been distributed, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) figures show. A consultation will start later in 2018, and a ban could be enforced as early as next year. Other work, such as research into the impact of a tax on disposable coffee cups and a deposit return scheme on plastic bottles, is also under way in an attempt to get Britons to change their present, polluting habits.
- 3 But sources say behaviour will not be changed through regulation and compulsion. Ministers are keen that the public should be better informed about plastics that are reusable and recyclable, and want the process to be well supported, as the plastics bag charge was when it was finally implemented.
- 4 There is evidence that increasingly prosperous countries of the global south are beginning to react to environmental damage and pollution. Earlier this year, China decreased imports of plastic rubbish. As a result it became painfully clear how much the UK relied on sending its waste offshore. In India, Delhi banned all forms of disposable plastic more than a year ago after complaints about the illegal mass burning of plastic and other waste at local rubbish dumps, and the air pollution it caused.
- 5 The evidence of the damage that plastics do not just to wildlife and the food chain but to some of the world's most beautiful places is now widely reported. The government has committed £61.4m to its latest initiative, some of which will be used for research and to help Commonwealth¹⁾ countries develop ways of stopping plastic waste entering oceans.



adapted from *The Guardian*, 2018

noot 1 Commonwealth = de Gemenebest: samenwerkingsverband van een aantal landen, voornamelijk voormalige koloniën van het Verenigd Koninkrijk