

How to tread lighter... plastic and more

Libby Bowles



Tread Lighter

INSPIRATION | EDUCATION | CONSERVATION



www.treadlighter.org



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What can I do?
I am just one person



What you do makes a difference,
and you have to decide what
kind of difference you
want to make.

— *Jane Goodall*

AZ QUOTES



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed **citizens** can **change** the **world**; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

— *Margaret Mead*

AZ QUOTES



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What's your superpower?
Use it to make the world better!





REFUSE

must be the first default for single-use plastics



But what about biodegradable and compostable plastics?!

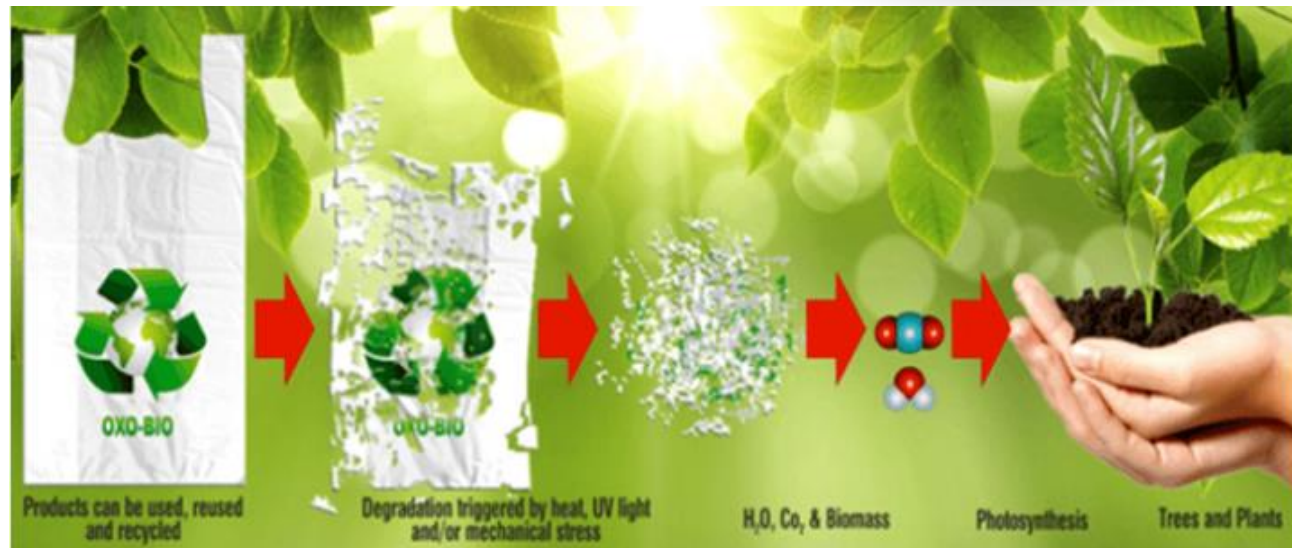
We need to move away from single-use stuff. Compostable and biodegradable are greenwashing buzzwords we hear frequently now, pedalled out by companies that rely on us using their single-use products. **But there is no magical single-use solution.**

These products are mostly **not compostable or biodegradable at home**. You can't recycle them, so they shouldn't go in with your recycling, in fact they count as a contaminant in your regular recycling, possibly causing your recycling to be thrown into landfill. We don't have the infrastructure to recycle compostable and biodegradable plastics yet. Most compostable plastic needs to be processed in an industrial composter for up to 60 or 90 days. This is not sustainable.





Greenwashing at its best... mostly (home compostable items will have 'home compostable' written on them, those ones are fine..)



Approx 270 industrial composters in the UK,

Approx 3,500 recycling plants

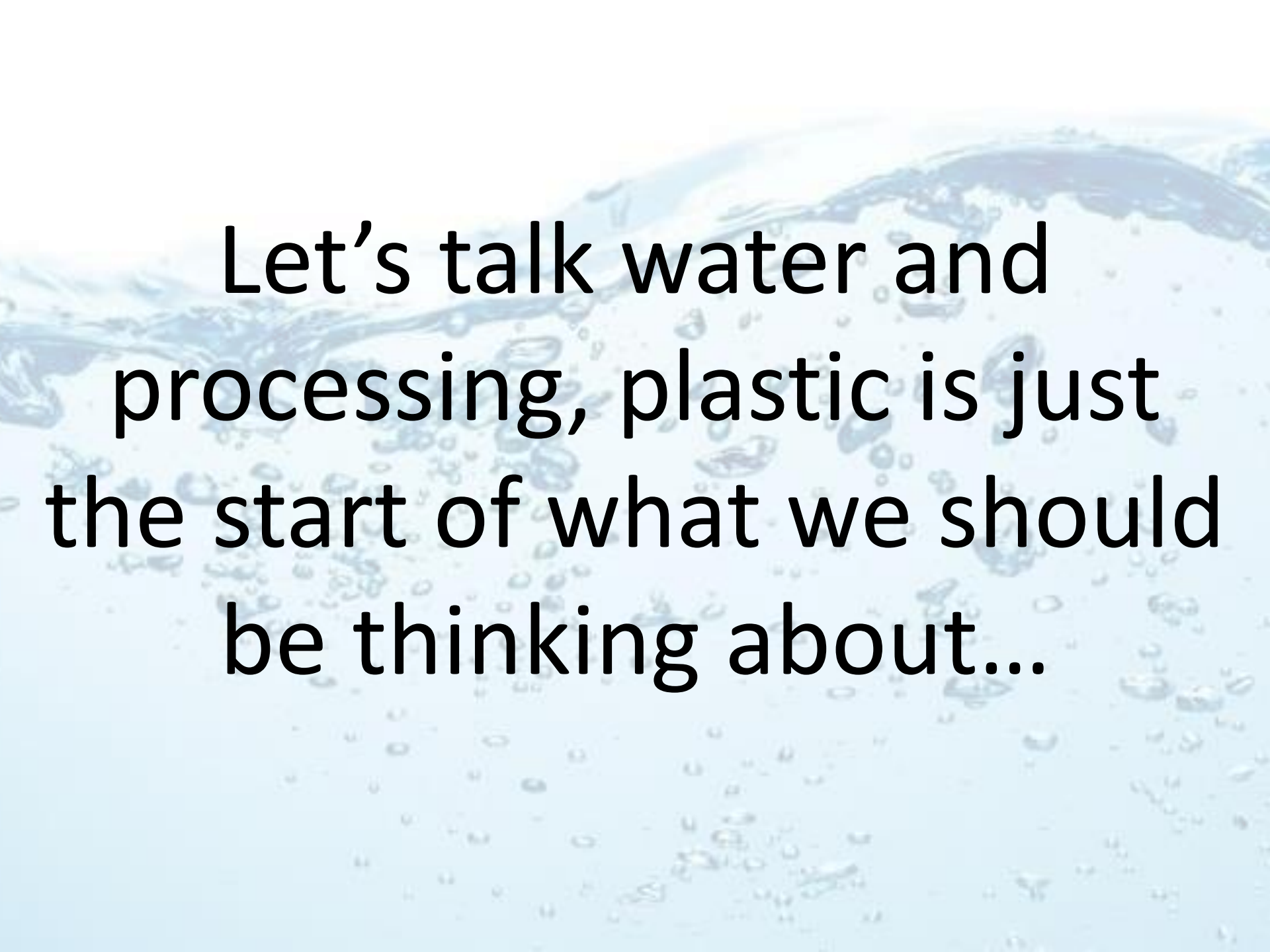
Approx 12% of our plastic is recycled

Soft plastics recycling points... forget it! Mostly it's burned or sent elsewhere...

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/oct/01/soft-plastic-collected-for-recycling-burned-tesco-sainsburys-campaigners>

<https://www.everydayplastic.org/blog/2023/4/4/qb9xp8ka4slgcbw376n7fgqxzzrhri>



A background image showing a dynamic splash of water with many bubbles and droplets, creating a sense of movement and freshness. The water is light blue and white, with a bright light source at the top left creating a glow.

**Let's talk water and
processing, plastic is just
the start of what we should
be thinking about...**

How much water does it take to make a 1 litre water plastic bottle?

Approximately 6 litres - <https://www.waterfootprint.org/en/>

2 days of drinking water

How much water does it take to make a t shirt?

Approximately 2,700 litres -

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/the-impact-of-a-cotton-t-shirt>

Nearly 3 years of drinking water

How much water does it take to make a pair of jeans?

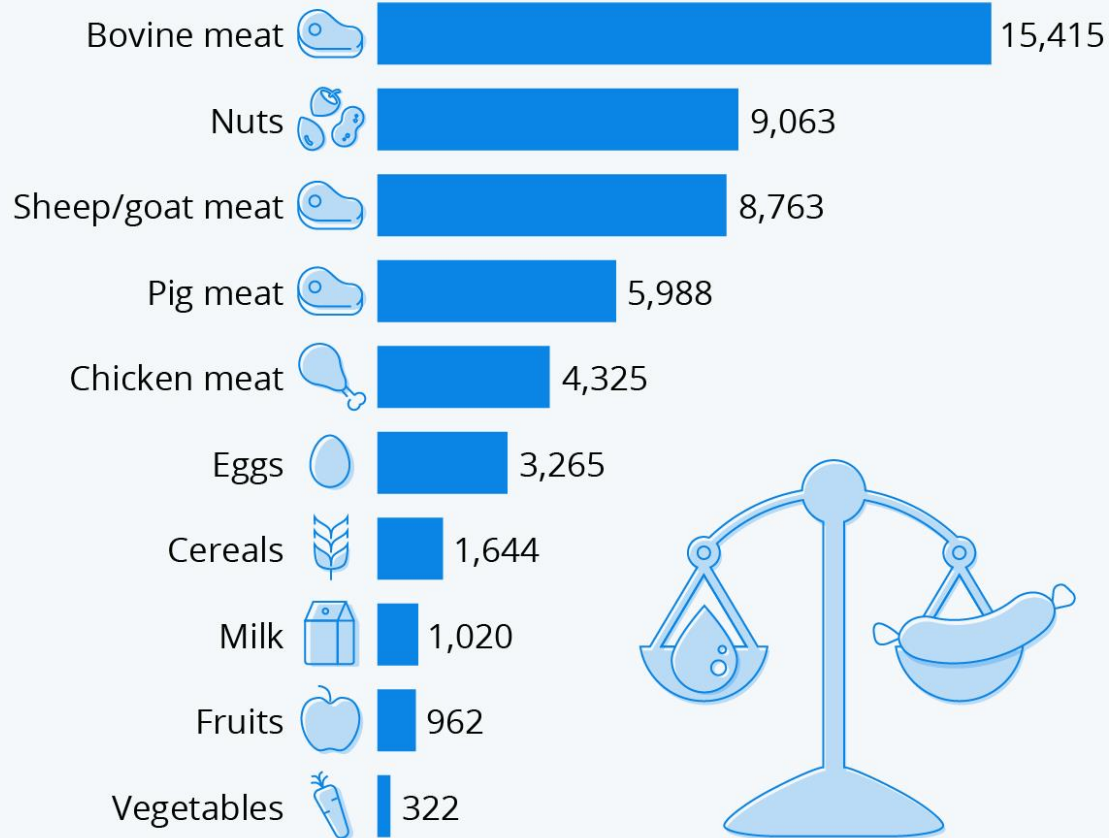
Approximately 10,000 litres - [https://easyecotips.com/it-takes-up-to-](https://easyecotips.com/it-takes-up-to-10-000-liters-of-water-to-make-a-pair-of-jeans/)

[10-000-liters-of-water-to-make-a-pair-of-jeans/](https://easyecotips.com/it-takes-up-to-10-000-liters-of-water-to-make-a-pair-of-jeans/)

9 years of drinking water

How Thirsty is Our Food?

Liters of water required to produce one kilogram of the following food products*



* Global averages

Source: Water Footprint Network





**"I want you
to act as if your
house is on fire.
Because it is."**

- Greta Thunberg

'The climate crisis is our third world war.'

Stiglitz, June 2019



'Yes, we can afford it..... We must afford it. Our lives and civilisation as we know it are at stake, just as they were in the second world war.'

American economist and public policy analyst

University Professor at Columbia University

Recipient of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences

Former senior vice president and chief economist of the World Bank

Former member and chairman of the (US president's) Council of Economic Advisers

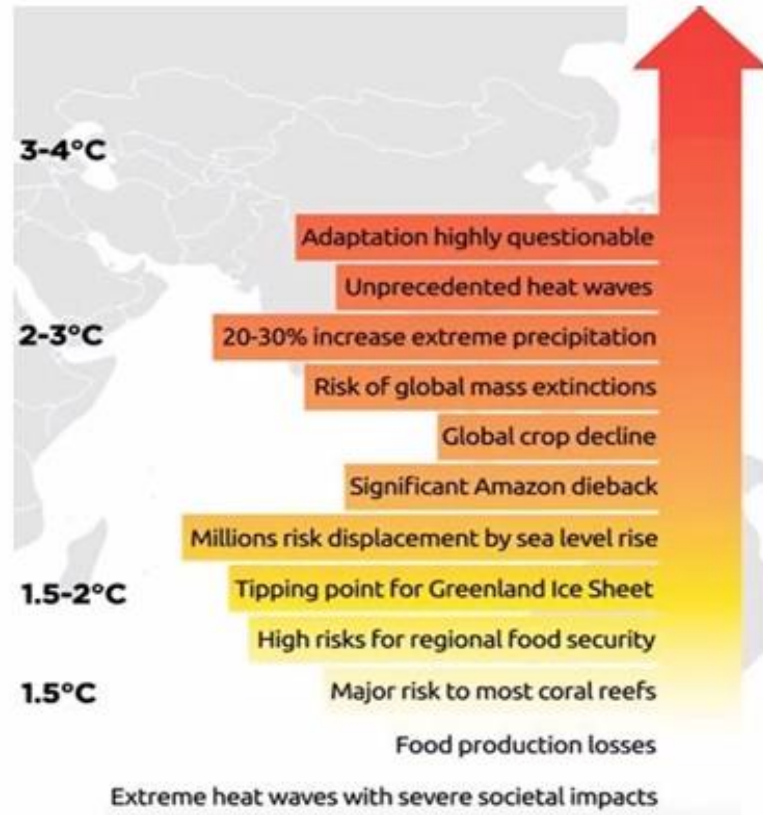
Covid taught us that we will move when the danger is explained to us – and it's equitable....



Photo by [Rido](#)

'The scale of the threats to the biosphere, and all its life forms – including humanity – is so great that it's difficult to grasp, for even well-informed experts.'

Jan 2021



A green recovery is very uncertain

Some simple priorities – make permanent

- Protect the world's forests
- Support low carbon, regenerative agriculture – rethink your food
- Discuss *all* your energy consumption with fellow householders
- Rethink your leisure time – new, low carbon hobbies
- Rethink your travel for post-lockdown, your holidays
- Rethink your 'stuff' consumption now – check out the circular economy
- Rethink your banking and investments – ask where your money is
- Plan for solar, insulation, EV
- Shout LOUDLY – support good causes

Source: Avon Needs Trees – Nikki Jones's talk - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiehUNiqHzw>

THE BIGGER PICTURE



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QUICK MONEY WINS FOR BIG, PASSIVE CHANGE

Here are some things you can change easily, to create a big change...

Banking — Co-operative, Triodos, Nationwide

<https://www.theguardian.com/money/article/2024/jun/15/ethical-banking-in-the-uk-how-to-put-your-everyday-account-to-good-use>

Pension – Nest, Pension Bee, Aviva – ask your pension company what they are investing your money in, you can request a greener pension with most companies

<https://good-with-money.com/2024/12/19/top-7-ethical-pension-funds/>

Energy- Ecotricity, Octopus, Good Energy

<https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/energy/shopping-guide/energy-suppliers>



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QUICK DIGITAL WINS FOR BIG, PASSIVE CHANGE

Search engine – Ecosia – they plant trees when you web-search with them

Streaming movies or music – download before streaming

Website carbon footprint

<https://www.websitecarbon.com/>

Carbon footprint calculator

<https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/>



KITCHEN

Food – make your own, avoid processed foods, plan ahead

Storage - stainless steel, jars, tubs you already have – USE THEM!

Water – stainless steel flask, UV sterilisation, Water-to-go bottle

Olio – app to give away waste food

DO NOT STORE OR COOK FOOD IN PLASTIC, EVER

BATHROOM

Toothbrushes, shampoo bars, flannel, reusable period products, shaving gear

ON THE GO

Solar panels, dynamo hub on bikes



CLOTHING

Best buys...

Materials – synthetic vs natural, organic – organic uses more water, but doesn't shed microplastics – whatever you buy, don't wash it too often and make it last

Secondhand

Clothes swapping

~~Fabric softener~~

Filters



DIET

Refill containers – takeaways etc. – USE THEM!

(don't use single-use plastic for hot food or liquid – chemicals leach into your food)

Red meat and dairy reduction

ironically, the best way to stop deforestation to plant soya (used to feed cattle) is to eat soya rather than meat

Organic

Up your plant intake

Loose food – less packaging and less waste



THE BEST BUYS...

The one you don't make

The one that involves the least processing

The one that has the least packaging / transport

The one that you're going to look after and make last for a LONG time – buy less, buy better




GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL OPTIONS
(spoiler, there are loads!)

ZERO WASTE SHOPS

REPAIR CAFES

LIBRARY OF THINGS – borrow stuff, don't buy it all!





Every time you spend money,
you're casting a vote for the
kind of world you want.

Anna Lappé

The best motto to think about is to not waste things. Don't waste electricity, don't waste food. Live the way you want to live, but just don't waste.



**Take one thing,
start small and keep going**
(shampoo bottle example)

Whatever tiny steps you take build up
This time next year your tiny steps will have added up to big change

WHAT YOU DO MATTERS



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