

Amount of plastics in the environment set to rise

March 22 2018



Credit: Heriot-Watt University

A leading Heriot-Watt academic has issued a statement on the news that the amount of plastic in the ocean is set to treble in a decade unless litter is curbed.

A report by [Foresight Future of the Sea](#) for the UK government says plastics is just one issue facing the world's seas, along with rising sea

levels, warming oceans and pollution.

Commenting Dr. Mark G J Hartl, director of the Centre for Marine Biodiversity & Biotechnology at Heriot-Watt, said: "It's clear that without strong implementation of the policies on single use plastic items, either recently agreed or proposed by the Scottish Government and other authorities, then the amount of plastic found in the environment is likely to rise.

"Currently, [biodegradable plastics](#) do not degrade under [environmental conditions](#) on a meaningful timescale. They require conditions akin to composting—high temperatures and the right kind of bacteria. Therefore the term on labels is misleading."

The academic goes to on say that more research needs to be directed towards the development of plastics for single use items that are rapidly biodegradable under environmental conditions, adding: "A much better approach would be to avoid unnecessary use of single use plastic items in the first place.

"We need to look at alternative materials and more research into large-scale monitoring of plastics in the marine environment, to be able to gauge the effectiveness of policy measures."

Provided by Heriot-Watt University

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