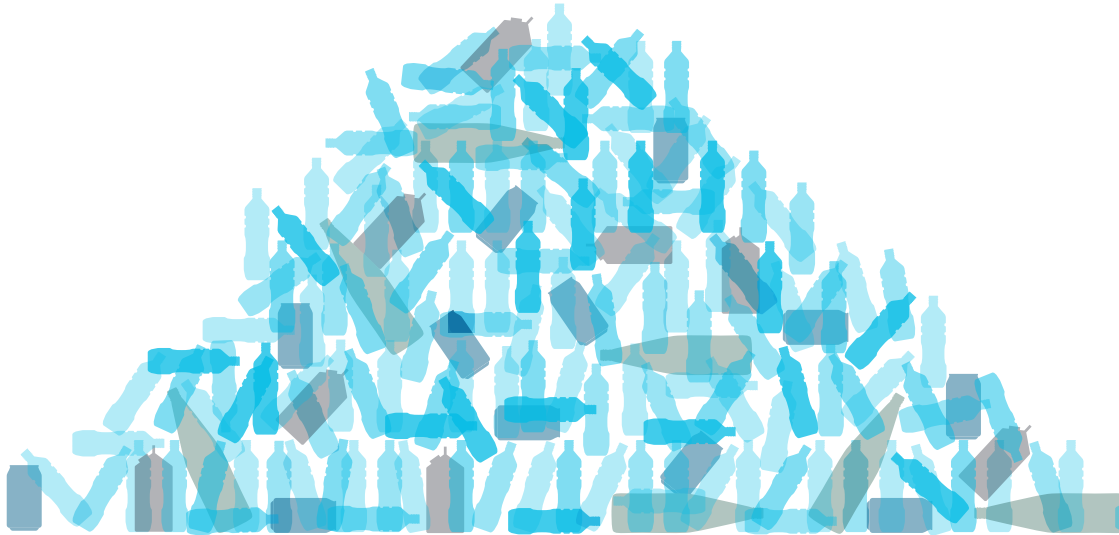


# Losing the bottle

Why we don't need single use containers for water



**green  
alliance...**



It's important to stay hydrated, especially in the summer months. In the UK, despite recent campaigns, we're still meeting this need by buying bottled water, rather than reaching for a tap or water fountain.

Consumption of bottled water has doubled in the past 15 years, and is still rising.

Single use plastic containers dominate the market. But, following rising public concern about plastic and marine pollution, this is changing, and it is now possible to buy water in aluminium cans, glass bottles or cartons.

This could reduce the amount of plastic used, but all the alternatives also have environmental impacts. In turning away from plastic, we should be careful not to create new problems for our environment by using other materials in huge quantities. The good news is that switching to other single use container types usually isn't necessary at all. Everyone in the UK has access to high quality tap water.

Not only is this the cheapest option, it's also getting easier to access on the go. Although more are needed, water fountains are now found in many public places. And, until they are everywhere, apps like Refill help people to locate more than 20,000 places where they can top up their reusable bottles, no matter where they are in the UK.

Sales of bottled water have increased  
by nearly a third since 2015

The average adult in the UK consumes  
150 single use water bottles every year



Over half of all single use  
plastic bottles used in the  
UK are for water

To solve the plastic problem, companies are switching to other single use containers for water, but this could cause new environmental problems.

All materials have impacts at every stage of their lifecycle. Refilling reusable bottles is the only low impact option.






Environmental impacts

● high \_\_\_\_\_

● medium \_\_\_\_\_

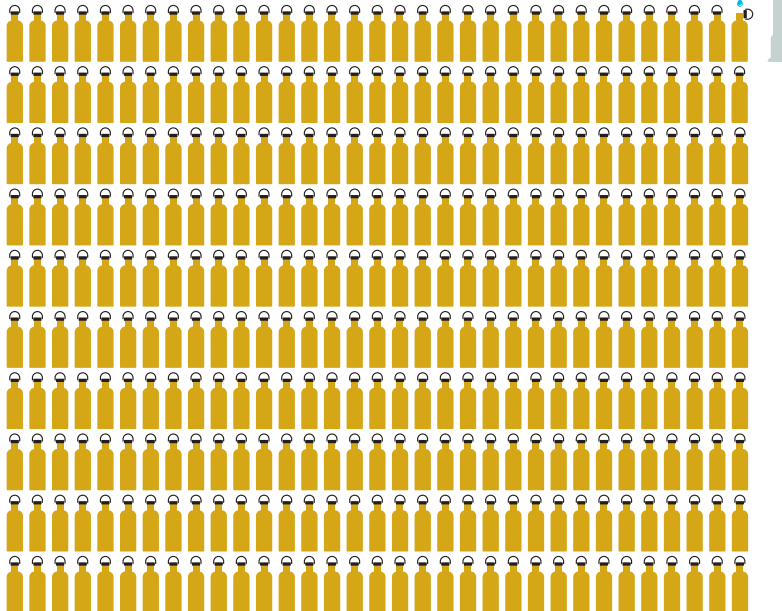
● low \_\_\_\_\_

### The impacts of single use vs refillable containers

Plastic	Aluminium	Glass	Cartons	Refillables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Production waste</li> <li>● Carbon emissions</li> <li>● End of life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Production waste</li> <li>● Carbon emissions</li> <li>● End of life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Production waste</li> <li>● Carbon emissions</li> <li>● End of life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Production waste</li> <li>● Carbon emissions</li> <li>● End of life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Production waste</li> <li>● Carbon emissions</li> <li>● End of life</li> </ul>
				
<p>700,000 plastic bottles are littered every day in the UK.</p> <p>Single use water bottles make up half of the plastic litter in the Thames.</p>	<p>If half of the UK's plastic water bottles switched to cans, mining the aluminium could generate 162,010 tonnes of toxic waste, enough to fill up the Royal Albert Hall over six times.</p>	<p>If half the UK's plastic water bottles switched to glass, that could generate 1.42MtCO<sub>2</sub>e. This is equal to the average emissions of 94,538 people in the UK, roughly the number who live in the city of Bath.</p>	<p>If half of the UK's plastic water bottles switched to cartons, it would create 98,141 tonnes of low quality waste every year because cartons can't be turned back into new cartons. That's enough to fill almost 9,000 bin lorries.</p>	<p>Tap water causes 180 times fewer emissions than a standard single use plastic bottle of water.</p> <p>A typical container designed for refill only has to be topped up 15 times to have a lower carbon impact than a single use plastic one.</p>

And tap water is much, much cheaper

33p pays for 330 litres of tap water



...or half a litre of bottled water



## Losing the bottle

### Why we don't need single use containers for water

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This infographic was produced by Green Alliance as part of our work programme for the Circular Economy Task Force. It is a forum for innovation that aims to lead policy discussions with ambitious business thinking.

Circular Economy Task Force members include:



#### Green Alliance

Green Alliance is an independent think tank and charity focused on ambitious leadership for the environment. Since 1979, we have been working with the most influential leaders in business, NGOs and politics to accelerate political action and create transformative policy for a green and prosperous UK.

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#### Sources

##### Page 2

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December 2017, *Plastic bottles: turning  
back the plastic tide*

##### Page 3

Green Alliance comparison of figures  
compiled in: Zenith, 2016, *UK water  
drinks report* and Zenith, 2019, *UK water  
drinks report*

EAC, op cit

##### Page 4

A full methodology explaining the  
environmental impacts of the different  
materials is available at:  
[www.green-alliance.org.uk/losing\\_](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk/losing_the_bottle_methodology)  
[the\\_bottle\\_methodology](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk/losing_the_bottle_methodology)

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