Daily News

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UK Government to Ban Single-Use Plastics

Photo: Plastic straws will be banned in England.

What's the problem with plastic?

- **Plastic is often thrown away and can take hundreds of years to break down.**
- **A lot of plastic ends up in our oceans, where animals can mistake it for food or become trapped.**

Is this the final straw for single-use plastic? The UK government has said they will ban plastic straws, cotton buds and drink stirrers from next April in England.

The days of getting a plastic straw from a restaurant or takeaway could soon be coming to an end.

The UK government has confirmed that a range of single-use plastic items will either be banned or restricted.

These include plastic drink stirrers. At the moment, around 316 million are used in the UK each year, most of which go straight in the bin.

Most shops won't be able to sell cotton buds with plastic stems or plastic straws. Restaurants will be banned from handing plastic straws out unless someone specifically asks for it.

The government hopes that this will tackle the problem of plastic pollution. According to the government, the UK uses nearly 5 billion plastic straws and nearly 2 billion plastic cotton buds each year!

This is a real problem for our environment and marine wildlife. Plastic isn't biodegradable and can take hundreds of years to break down.

A lot of it ends up in our oceans, where animals can mistake it for food and eat it. Others can get trapped in the plastic.

It's thought that a million seabirds and 100,000 sea mammals die each year from plastic waste this way.

Nearly half of all plastic waste in our oceans comes from single-use plastic. This is plastic which is used once and then thrown away.

Plastic straws and cotton buds aren't being banned completely. There are exemptions for people with medical needs or a disability as other alternatives are sometimes not safe.

Many environmental groups are really pleased with the new law but some believe it should go further, banning bags, balloons and other single-use plastic items.

Glossary

stems	Long, thin cylinders in an object.
marine	Relating to the sea or ocean.
biodegradable	A material which can be broken down easily and decomposed by bacteria.
exemptions	The fact of not having a law apply to something.

Questions

1. What does the author mean by the phrase 'the final straw'?

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2. 'The UK government has confirmed that a range of single-use plastic items will either be banned or restricted.'
   Tick the word which is closest in meaning to 'restricted' in this sentence.

   - ○ limited
   - ○ forbidden
   - ○ loosened
   - ○ outlawed

3. Which plastic items has **not** been banned or restricted by the UK government in England? Tick one.

   - ○ plastic straws
   - ○ cotton buds with plastic stems
   - ○ plastic balloons
   - ○ plastic drink stirrers

4. Why do you think reusable plastic is better for the environment than single-use plastic?

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5. Summarise the news story in 20 words or fewer.

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6. Do you think other plastic items will be banned in the future? Explain your answer.

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7. Do you think there should be exemptions for people with disabilities? Explain your answer.

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Answers

1. What does the author mean by the phrase 'the final straw'?
   Accept any reasonable answer which refers to the end of single-use plastic, e.g. The author means that this new law will be the thing which could end single-use plastic.

2. 'The UK government has confirmed that a range of single-use plastic items will either be banned or restricted.'
   Tick the word which is closest in meaning to 'restricted' in this sentence.

   - ✓ limited
   - ○ forbidden
   - ○ loosened
   - ○ outlawed

3. Which plastic items has **not** been banned or restricted by the UK government in England? Tick one.

   - ○ plastic straws
   - ✓ cotton buds with plastic stems
   - ○ plastic balloons
   - ○ plastic drink stirrers

4. Why do you think reusable plastic is better for the environment than single-use plastic?
   Accept any reasonable answer which refers to the reduced waste reusable plastic creates, e.g. Reusable plastic is better because single-use plastic is only used once before it is thrown away, which creates a lot of plastic waste. This can harm marine wildlife.

5. Summarise the news story in 20 words or fewer.
   Accept any reasonable summary which is 20 words or fewer, e.g. The UK government is going to ban some single-use plastics to reduce plastic pollution and protect marine wildlife.

6. Do you think other plastic items will be banned in the future? Explain your answer.
   Accept any reasonable answer which refers to the news story, e.g. I think they will ban more plastic items, such as plastic bags and balloons, because many groups want them to go further.

7. Do you think there should be exemptions for people with disabilities? Explain your answer.
   Accept any reasonable answer which refers to the news story, e.g. I think there should be exemptions because for many people with disabilities plastic straws are safer than any of the alternatives.