

# The world's big ecological headache in just one word: Plastics

After China's ban on waste imports, 'bottlenecks' of trash in Canada and elsewhere underscore the need for more recycling options

**KIMIKO DE FREYTAS-TAMURA**  
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LONDON—Ever since China announced last year that it no longer wanted to be the "world's garbage dump," recycling about half the globe's plastics and paper products, Western nations have been puzzling over what to do when the ban went into effect, which it did on Jan. 1.

The answer, to date, in Britain at least, is nothing. At least one waste disposal site in London is already seeing a buildup of plastic recyclables and has had to pay to

have some of it removed.

Similar backups have been reported in Canada, Ireland, Germany and several other European nations, while tons of rubbish is piling up in port cities such as Hong Kong.

Steve Frank, of Pioneer Recycling in Oregon, owns two plants that collect and sort 220,000 tons of recyclable materials each year. A majority of it was, until recently, exported to China. "My inventory is out of control," he said.

China's ban, Frank said, has caused "a

major upset of the flow of global recyclables." Now, he hopes to export waste to countries such as Indonesia, India, Vietnam, Malaysia — "anywhere we can" — but "they can't make up the difference."

In Britain, Jacqueline O'Donovan, managing director of the British waste disposal firm O'Donovan Waste Disposal, said that "the market has completely changed" since China's decision went into effect. Her company collects and disposes about 70,000 tons of plastic trash every year, she said, and expects "huge bottlenecks across the whole of England" in the coming months.

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Before its ban, China had been processing at least half the world's exports of waste paper, metals and used plastic.