

Boris Johnson: Recycling doesn't work – we need to use less plastic

Addressing schoolchildren at a Downing Street press conference, PM says reprocessing 'doesn't begin to address the problem'

By

Lucy Fisher,

DEPUTY POLITICAL EDITOR

26 October 2021 • 12:05am

From: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2021/10/25/boris-johnson-recycling-doesnt-work-need-cut-plastic-use/>



Recycling is a "red herring" and "doesn't work", Boris Johnson said as he urged Britons to reduce their use of plastic.

On Monday, Mr Johnson suggested too much focus had been put on the benefits of reprocessing toxic substances such as plastic instead of cutting manufacturing of them.

Addressing schoolchildren at a press conference in Downing Street, he said recycling "isn't the answer" and "doesn't begin to address the problem".

He hit out at Coca-Cola as one of 12 major companies responsible for manufacturing the "overwhelming bulk" of global plastics and said everyone needed to "cut down on our use of plastic".

"You can only recycle plastic a couple of times, really. What you've got to do is stop the production of plastic," he added.

Appearing alongside him, Tanya Steele, the chief executive of the UK's World Wildlife Fund, said: "We have to reduce, we have to reuse – I do think we need to do a little bit of recycling, PM, and have some system to do so." But Mr Johnson said: "It doesn't work."

His remarks split campaigners, with the Recycling Association claiming he had "completely lost the plastic plot" and calling the comments "very disappointing".

But others expressed agreement. Sian Sutherland, of A Plastic Planet, said the idea of recycling was used to "justify overproduction" of plastic, while only 10 per cent of plastic is actually reprocessed in the UK.

Mr Johnson also used the event with pupils to try to reset expectations for [the Cop26 summit](#), which starts in Glasgow on Sunday, warning that achieving its goals would be "touch and go".