

Beeping bottle shows plastic route

What route does plastic waste take when it ends up in the North Sea? You can see online by following a plastic capsule fitted with GPS.

The floating capsule was thrown in the sea on 12 August about 200 kilometres north of Terschelling. The device sends a GPS signal once a day; a mini-solar panel provides the necessary electricity. The route can be followed live on gps.verkis.is/pame/. 'The launch is part of a broader communication project involving a variety of northern countries,' says Wageningen plastics researcher Wouter Jan Strietman. 'We want to show the general public where plastic

can drift to once it ends up in the sea.' The capsule was first launched off the west coast of Texel in late May. After travelling in a circle for 400 kilometres, a fierce northerly wind blew it onto the Terschelling coast. Strietman hopes the capsule will float further north on its second voyage. 'Many people don't know that floating waste from the Netherlands can reach the Arctic in about 18 months due to the wind and ocean currents. Huge volumes of waste wash up in that region and stay there.'

The capsule launch was organized by WUR and Leeways Marine, in partnership with PAME, an Arctic Council working group, and the Dutch government, which is paying for the capsule.

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