Before you read this

What follows describes a programme in development. The evidence on plastic pollution it cites is documented, cited, and independently verifiable. The architecture it proposes was built drawing on established work in citizen science, environmental litigation, deliberative democracy, and institutional scenario design. It has not yet been tested at the institutional scale it requires. The invitation is not to accept it as it is. It is to engage with it, challenge it where it falls short, and contribute to making it better.

Threshold is a proposal in development. This document is part of its working canon.

Power is the problem

Plastic entered commercial use in the 1950s on a promise of necessity. The promise was delivered. Our lives are measurably better.

The question of what to do with the material when it was no longer in use was never asked, and was never resolved. It became rubbish, thrown away.

There is no such place as away. There is only everywhere. Two billion tonnes in seventy-five years, and everywhere now includes our blood.

This was known, measured, and written about as a threat to life on earth for over fifty years. The facts are done. The research is done. The understanding is done.

What has not been done is to stop it.

For half a century, every pathway has failed. Regulation has been outpaced. Voluntary pledges have been broken. Advocacy has been absorbed. Markets have not responded. Litigation has resolved single cases while the system continued.

The reason is not ignorance, and it is not lack of will. The reason is power. The wealth created by plastic does not want the wealth to stop, and has the resources to ensure it does not.

That is the problem this programme is designed to address. The Threshold is what follows.

A verified, legally usable evidence base, built by the people who carry the harm in their bodies. Every observation held to a published standard. Chain of custody from phone to proceeding. A deliberation that judges possible policy initiatives and keeps every dissent on permanent record. An evidence infrastructure built upstream of the actors who will eventually use it, ready before they need it.

Not protest. Not policy. Not litigation. The architecture that makes all three forceful enough, sooner.

The Threshold is still a proposal. Its purpose is to make the cost of continued suppression exceed the cost of accountability.

The Threshold is built to be ready. Whether and when the threshold is crossed depends on what is built, and on who joins in building it.

THE THRESHOLD

Turning citizen observation into verified, legally usable evidence on plastic pollution.

Andrew Henderson · Lead Architect · thresholdinitiative.org · October 2026

THE PROBLEM

Twenty-two million tonnes of plastic enter the environment every year (OECD 2022). The evidence is measured, documented, and in the blood of every living person. Everyone knows. Nothing has changed.

The farmer who photographs the plastic in his irrigation ditch. The nurse who notices something in the water. The school class that comes back from the river with something on their hands that shouldn't be there. Every one of them unheard. Not because what they saw wasn't real. Because there was no structure to receive it, score it, and turn it into something the system has never had to face.

The question that makes the damage stop has never been asked in a way that demands an answer.

THE MECHANISM

The Threshold is a proposed independent initiative built on a single insight: the data already exists. Ordinary people with phones and honest eyes. What has been missing is the structure that makes their observations legible.

The Spotter Network. Citizens submit geotagged photographic observations. Each can enter as protected civic evidence or, by the Spotter's choice, as identified evidence held to a published standard and graded by two independent reviewers. The chain of custody runs from a farmer's phone to a regulatory proceeding. That is the complete act. It takes four minutes.

The Althing Round. Twelve paid Members, seated as those who cause harm, those who bear it, governors and enablers, and those who know, judge possible policy initiatives on real evidence, alone and then again after seeing the group. Every dissent is published. Not because they become good. Because the arithmetic changes.

The output is not a report. It is the right questions, properly formed, evidenced, in the record, and increasingly difficult to ignore. Questions that only humanity can answer.

THE PROPOSITION

The Threshold is in development and is not yet incorporated. A fiscal sponsor comes first, then a Swiss entity. The design is written into the Canons. The relationships are being established. The case is being made to the people who can bring it into existence.

This is not a campaign. Not a petition. Not another documentary. It is a mechanism that changes what appears on the spreadsheet of the people making the decisions. When the true cost appears alongside the profit, the rational actor changes behaviour. That is the only thing that has ever actually moved anything.

THE ASK

CHF 3,850,000 over five years builds the institution. The founding round is Years 1 and 2: CHF 1,705,000. Operating rounds are separate.

THE STANDARD

Graded by two independent reviewers. Publicly inspectable. Legally usable. Nothing overwritten.

THE MOMENT

The plastic is in the blood of children being born today. The question is what we do now that you know.

What follows from reading this

You have now read the evidence. The medical evidence is in our blood and our children's. The economic case for recycling, as it has been sold, is dead. The policy interventions exist and have been costed. The architecture that would resolve a case of this shape has been mapped.

From this point you are an informed witness. That is the threshold.

The next question is not whether you care. The historical pattern is clear. Systemic harm has been resolved in every documented precedent (tobacco, asbestos, lead, opioids) not by enough people caring but by enough informed witnesses acting in ways small and large. The relevant distinction is not between those who care and those who do not. It is between those who act and those who do not. The difference is witnessed commitment, not feeling.

Three civic acts cross the threshold.

Vote. Vote for political representatives who will price the externality, build the levy, and pass the producer liability framework. Plastic is a political problem before it is a chemical one.

Vote in the Threshold poll. When the Knowledge Base presents the ranked interventions that emerge from the Althing Round, vote on them. The poll is the public record of which interventions citizens have endorsed.

Write your Pledge. If you care, show it. Write to your unborn grandchildren. Tell them what you knew. What you did. What you did not do. Tell them why they will live with the consequences. Seal it with your mark. Send it to the Threshold. We will hold it until the threshold is crossed, or until the year you have chosen, whichever comes first. This is the act that crosses your own. You will carry it forever.

The Threshold Effect is the pattern by which documented systemic harm crosses a threshold making it increasingly difficult to ignore, legally, medically, and politically, in documented historical cases, deliberately and systematically.

The case has crossed every threshold but yours.
Whether you cross it is now observed.