

Hannah Blythyn AC/AM  
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd  
Minister for Environment



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-829  
Ein cyf/Our ref HB/00756/18

David John Rowlands AM

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

24 August 2018

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 25 July regarding Petition P-05-829, which calls for a ban on all single use plastic items in Wales. The Welsh Government recognises the growing concern around single use plastic and welcomes the steps being taken by citizens, businesses and the public sector to address it. We recognise that to be successful, change must happen at the community level.

The Welsh Government is working to reduce the unnecessary use of plastic where alternatives exist. For example, the National Procurement Service (NPS) is collaborating with Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) and the Future Generations Commissioner's office to develop a range of measures to allow us to identify trends and implement actions to help reduce the use of plastics (including straws) in the future. Pilot projects are currently underway with several councils to look at the issue of plastic waste reduction in relation to procurement. The Welsh Government and NPS are happy to work with councils and companies on ways to avoid it.

Plastic is ubiquitous in modern life and has many useful applications, for example in medical environments where it can provide safe and sterile, single-use equipment which guards against contamination. Much of what we use in our homes every day is made of, or packaged in, single use plastic and sometimes there are good reasons for this. Fresh food, for example, can have a much longer shelf life if it is wrapped in plastic. Food waste, which has a significantly higher carbon footprint than its packaging, is therefore reduced.

Whilst it is clear that we need to reduce unnecessary plastic consumption, the key to addressing this challenge is the development of new business models to retain plastic in economic use for as long as possible and avoid its escape into the environment. We need to make sure that we have the infrastructure needed to keep plastic recycle in Wales so that more Welsh manufacturers will use recycled materials. We also want to encourage designers to create products and packaging with waste minimisation and circularity in mind. The publication of WRAP Cymru's ['Towards a Route Map for Plastic Recycling'](#) demonstrates the scale of our ambition, and our commitment to making it a reality. To support this aim, I am focusing new capital funding in 2019/20 on businesses working towards a more circular plastics economy in Wales through our £6.5 million Circular Economy Investment Fund.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

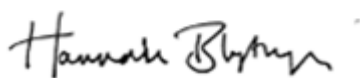
In Wales, we have long been taking steps to reduce plastics in our environment and improve the way we deal with plastic waste. In 2011, we were the first in the UK to introduce a charge for single use carrier bags, and we have continued to lead the way with ground-breaking legislation in the form of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

We have identified plastic as a priority waste for action. Wales' recycling rate is already the best in the UK, second in Europe and third in the World and we are always looking at how we can do more. Our long-term goal is zero waste (100% recycling) by 2050, with an interim target of 70% by 2025. We have set out a wide range of actions to achieve this and I am keen to keep Wales at the forefront of efforts to reduce and recycle all types of waste. It is also my ambition for Wales to become the first 'Refill Nation' in the World. Within a year, we will deliver a drinking water refill scheme into every community along the Wales Coastal Path. We want to make it easy for people to get fresh drinking water in more places, whilst reducing plastic.

I am also considering the possibility of a UK-wide Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers and I met my counterparts from the UK and Scottish Governments to discuss this issue in July. I am keen to ensure that any scheme delivers optimum benefits for Wales and that we take account of risks and benefits to existing provision and recycling levels here, including the possible effect on Local Authorities' statutory recycling targets. We are also seeking to work closely with the UK Government in relation to any action to ban specific single use plastic items.

In addition, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance is currently considering a potential disposable plastics tax. I am pleased that HM Treasury is also looking at this issue and we are working with them to help devise the best way forward over the coming months. We are also considering the possibility of a Welsh tax, levy, or charge on single-use drinks containers. Above all, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance has been clear that any potential tax in this area needs to be fair and proportionate, in line with the principles set out in the tax policy framework.

Yours Sincerely,



**Hannah Blythyn AC/AM**  
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