

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Dear Constituent

Thank you for your email about plastic pollution.

The Resources and Waste Strategy for England sets out the Government's plans to reduce, reuse, and recycle more plastic than we do now. Ministers have committed to work towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable or reusable by 2025.

Significant progress has already been made to address plastic pollution. This includes introducing one of the world's toughest bans on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products and restricting the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds. The use of single-use carrier bags has been reduced in the main supermarkets by over 97 per cent and this has been increased to 10p and extended to all retailers.

The Government recently consulted on proposals to ban the supply of single-use plastic plates, cutlery, and balloon sticks, and expanded and extruded polystyrene food and beverage containers, including cups. Ministers are committed to addressing other sources of plastic pollution and ran a call for evidence on other problematic plastic items, including wet wipes, tobacco filters, sachets, and other single-use cups.

The Environment Act requires the Government to set at least one long-term target in the areas of resource efficiency and waste reduction. I understand that the Government recently consulted on its target to reduce residual waste. The consultation closed on 27 June 2022. Over 180,000 responses were received and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is currently analysing responses and I look forward to reading the Government's response.

I understand that setting individual, material-specific legally-binding targets, such as a plastics waste reduction target, could risk shifting the environmental impact to other material types and could even lead to increases in residual waste due to switches to heavier materials. Ministers want to ensure that the targets take a holistic approach to all materials and avoid unintended substitution effects. As well as being significant global environmental waste and pollution issue, plastics are strong, durable, and versatile materials, bringing environmental and economic benefits. Setting wider-reaching targets that encourage reductions in our consumption of materials more broadly, not only plastics, will help ensure we achieve the best environmental outcome.

Finally, the export of plastic waste is subject to strict controls set out in UK legislation. Businesses involved in the export of waste are required to take steps to ensure that the waste they ship is managed in an environmentally sound manner throughout its shipment and during its recycling. Individuals and businesses found to be exporting waste in contravention of the requirements of the legislation can face a two-year jail term and an unlimited fine.

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The Government wants to deal with more of our waste at home and I understand Ministers committed to banning the export of plastic waste to countries which are not members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Environment Act contains a power that will enable the Government to deliver on this commitment.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours Sincerely
Peter Gibson

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