

13<sup>th</sup> August 2021

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about UK waste exports.

I am pleased that the UK is a global leader in tackling plastic pollution and the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out the ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042.

I was elected on a Manifesto which pledged to ban the export of all plastic waste to non-OECD countries and I would like to reassure you that my Ministerial colleagues remain committed to clamping down on illegal waste exports. I know that Ministers plan to introduce tougher controls on illegal waste exports, and the Environment Bill includes a power to introduce mandatory electronic tracking of waste which will make it harder for criminals to obtain and export waste illegally. I understand that a consultation on this will be launched in the Autumn.

It is illegal to export waste from the UK to be dumped or burned overseas. Under the UK legislation on waste shipments, businesses involved in the export of wastes are required to take all necessary steps to ensure that the waste they ship is managed in an environmentally sound manner throughout its shipment and during its recycling. It is welcome that over the last 12 months, monitoring by the Environment Agency has had a particular focus on preventing illegal plastic waste exports.

I am encouraged that the Environment Agency has been proactively engaging with the authorities in Turkey on the issue of illegal plastic waste exports over the past year. The Environment Agency has also liaised with Greenpeace, following their recent report, in order to seek information which could assist them with their compliance monitoring and enforcement of waste exports to Turkey.

I would like to assure you that all waste exports need to be made in accordance with the relevant legislation and the UK regulators have a system of inspections in place to verify compliance under the waste exports and packaging regimes respectively. Any operators found to be illegally exporting waste can face severe sanctions, from financial penalties to imprisonment for a period of up to two years. In 2020, the Environment Agency prevented the illegal export of 46 shipping containers of plastic waste to Turkey and this year they have already prevented the illegal export of 122 further containers. The Environment Agency has developed a good relationship with the Turkish Ministry of Environment, who have expressed their thanks for the UK's collaborative approach in preventing illegal exports of waste to Turkey. As you may be aware, Turkey has now banned the import of most plastic wastes.

It is important that we promote UK-based recycling and export less waste to be processed abroad. I am therefore pleased that we are recycling more in the UK than ever before. This is not only good for the environment but can boost economic growth and create jobs. Where the UK cannot currently recycle materials economically, exports can help ensure those materials are recycled in recipient

**Follow Alok on Twitter: @AlokSharma\_RDG**

**Please reply to: The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA  
e: [alok.sharma.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:alok.sharma.mp@parliament.uk) w: [www.aloksharma.co.uk](http://www.aloksharma.co.uk) t: 0118 941 3803**

## **Rt Hon Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West**

countries. While there is a legitimate global market for secondary materials, it must be, and is, subject to strict controls.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**