

8th June 2022

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for copying me into 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 95 per cent with the 5p charge 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 2021 includes a raft of new powers to address plastic pollution and litter, including a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers, which will recycle billions more plastic bottles and stop them being landfilled or littered. The Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for packaging will make manufacturers responsible for the full net cost of recycling their packaging waste and encourage more recyclable packaging. In addition, the Act establishes greater consistency in the recycling system and introduces new powers to make it easier to place charges on single-use plastic items that threaten our ecosystems.

The Environment Act also requires the Government to set at least one long-term, legally binding target within a number of the highest priority areas for environmental improvement, including Resource Efficiency and Waste Reduction. Draft regulations setting this target will be laid before Parliament by October 2022. These targets will be set following a robust, evidence-led process that includes seeking independent expert advice, a role for stakeholders and the public, and approval from Parliament subject to the affirmative procedure. Ministers want to set a Resources and Waste target that ensures a holistic approach to all materials and they believe that setting a wider reaching target that encompasses plastics as well as other materials will achieve the best environmental outcome. The Government recently consulted on the first suite of targets, including resource efficiency and waste reduction, and is currently analysing the responses.

These measures, alongside others within the Act, form a package of powers that will help incentivise and shift the market towards more reusable alternatives. This will make both businesses and citizens more aware of the environmental costs of the products they use. I am assured that Ministers will continue to review the latest evidence in partnership with stakeholders, including the

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Rt Hon Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

Waste and Resources Action Programme and the UK Plastics Pact, on problematic products to take a systematic approach to reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastic items.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP