

23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about plastic pollution in UK rivers.

The Government's Resources and Waste strategy sets out plans to reduce plastic pollution with a target of eliminating all avoidable waste over the lifetime of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. The majority of aquatic litter originates from land based sources therefore I believe the best approach to stemming the flow of plastic is by taking action on land.

The UK's world-leading ban on microbeads will help stop potentially billions of tiny pieces of plastic from entering the aquatic environment every year. As well as this, 15.6 billion fewer bags have been handed out to shoppers by the seven main retailers since the introduction of the plastic bag charge in 2015. I am also pleased that following an open consultation, a ban on the supply of plastic straws – excluding those needed for medical purposes - drinks stirrers and cotton buds will come into force in April next year.

Ministers have also consulted on a number of key policy measures which will significantly change the way we manage our waste. These include: reforming existing packaging waste regulations; exploring the introduction of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers; and increasing consistency in the recycling system; with a parallel consultation on the 'Plastic Packaging Tax' which the Chancellor announced in the Budget last year. The Government has now responded to each consultation, and further technical consultations will be carried out in due course.

In addition to this, the Environment Bill set out in the Queen's Speech will place environmental ambition and accountability at the heart of government. Legislative measures will be introduced to address the biggest environmental priorities of our age: air quality, nature recovery, waste and resource efficiency, and water resource management. The Bill will also put environmental ambition and accountability at the very heart of government.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**