

16th July 2021

Dear Rebecca Pow,

We write to you today to collectively urge you to ensure your government continues to **fulfil its ambition to become a global leader in tackling plastic pollution.**

In the wake of the G7 summit and in the lead up to COP26 - when the eyes of the world are on the UK - we are concerned that at present the government is not only failing to take the lead on tackling plastics, but is falling behind our European neighbours and devolved nations within the UK.

The [Directive \(EU\) 2019/904](#) on single-use plastics was adopted in June 2019 with the aim of preventing and reducing the impact of the most polluting types of plastic products in the environment. **These measures were intended to be the *very minimum standards*. It was always understood that some governments would exceed them, but few thought that any government would fail to meet them altogether.**

Despite the [banning of straws, stirrers and cotton buds](#) in October 2020, the UK has yet to legislate for the banning of all items included under article 5 such as; plastic cutlery, plates, sticks attached to balloons, or food containers made of expanded polystyrene and products made from oxo-degradable plastics. **As such, we are now in danger of falling seriously behind the rest of Europe in implementing these most minimum of steps.**

We have now passed the date (3rd July 2021) when the Directive should be transposed into national law and applied. At this point, we would have expected the UK government to have finished consulting on, drafting and passing suitable legislation and to have, at the very least, matched all of the Directive.

As you will be aware, packaging from take-away food and drinks is a huge cause of plastic pollution and items like plastic cutlery and take-away containers are consistently the most polluting items found on beaches around the world. New research has revealed that food containers and food wrappers are amongst the four most widespread items polluting the seas, making up almost half of human-made waste in our rivers, oceans and on our beaches¹. **With this in mind, it is crucial that we do not delay further action on tackling these items.**

We understand that you are planning to start a consultation on plates, cutlery, and balloon sticks, but this is now two years after the EU Single-Use Directive was passed with the UK's support. **And crucially, it is far behind the consultations put out by the Scottish and Welsh governments.**

As such, we are now in danger of having a fragmented approach across the home nations **risking the integrity of our internal markets and our united efforts to tackle plastic pollution.** With Northern Ireland compelled under the Northern Ireland Protocol to have to transposed "certain articles" of the Directive by 2022 and with both Scotland and Wales proposing a ban, we urgently need suitable legislation in to ensure consistency across our internal markets that enables bold action on plastic pollution.

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-021-00720-8>

While we understand your desire to work through the Environment Bill that would give you the powers to implement such bans going forward, we would suggest that **the delay that this would cause is not acceptable** (we would also note that the bill would be improved by removing the risk of producers simply switching from plastic to other single use materials by broadening the power proposed in Clause 54 to **cover all single-use items**).

We were promised post-Brexit that the UK would be a world leader in environmental standards but at the first hurdle we seem to be stumbling. As such we **collectively urge you to ensure the UK government at the very least matches the ambition shown by our Welsh, Scottish, Northern Ireland and other European neighbours** and meet the minimum standards as set out in the EU's single-Use Plastics Directive.

Yours sincerely,

1. Natalie Fee, Founder and CEO, City to Sea
2. Nina Shrank, Senior campaigner, Greenpeace UK
3. Camilla Zerr, Plastics Campaign Lead, Friends of the Earth England
4. Kath Dalmeny, Chief Executive, Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming
5. Hugo Tagholm, Chief Executive, Surfers Against Sewage
6. Laura Foster, Head of Clean Seas, Marine Conservation Society
7. Allison Ogden-Newton, Chief Executive, Keep Britain Tidy
8. Sonja Eisfeld-Pierantonio, Whale and Dolphin Conservation
9. Megan Bentall, 38 Degrees
10. Julia Davis, Founder, We Have The Power
11. Mike Winter, Managing Director, MIW Water Cooler Experts
12. James Butterfield, Founder & Managing Director, Chilly's Bottles
13. Catherine Conway, Unpackaged
14. Amanda Keetley, Co-Founder, Less Plastic CIC
15. Abigail Forsyth, Managing Director, KeepCup
16. Nigel Harris, Tearfund CEO
17. Paula Hopkinson, Founder, Green Goblet Ltd
18. Daniel Webb, Founder, Everyday Plastic
19. Linzi Hawkin, Co-Founder, Protect Blue
20. Emily Stevenson, Co-founder, Beach Guardian
21. Jessica Gitsham, Natracare
22. Vera Zakharov, Sugar Smart

