



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP
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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 23 May on behalf of your constituents about The Big Plastic Count.

We share the enthusiasm for taking action in this space and we welcome the ongoing support of your constituents in driving change.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2042. In December 2018 we published the Resources and Waste Strategy, which sets out how we want to achieve this and move towards a circular economy. We know more needs to be done, and for the most problematic plastics we are going faster - which is why we have committed to work towards all plastic packaging on the market being recyclable or reusable by 2025.

Our Environment Act enables us to significantly change the way that we manage our waste and take forward a number of the proposals from the Resources and Waste Strategy. The Act includes powers to create Extended Producer Responsibility schemes (EPR); introduce Deposit Return Schemes; establish greater consistency in the recycling system; better control the export of plastic waste; and set new charges for other single-use items.

As your constituents highlight, we want to better understand the amount of plastic waste that is being produced. We estimate almost half of all plastic we place on the market is in the form of packaging.

EPR for packaging will move the full cost of dealing with packaging waste from households away from local taxpayers and councils to the packaging producers (applying the 'polluter-pays principle'). This gives producers responsibility for the costs of their packaging throughout its life cycle. EPR will be delivered in a phased manner from 2024, focusing on payments for household packaging waste and packaging in street bins managed by local authorities, with such payments being determined from 1 April 2024. We will introduce modulated fees based on recyclability from 2025, to incentivise producers to use packaging and packaging materials that can be recycled.

Under EPR, certain producers will also be obligated to report where packaging is placed on the market. These mandatory reporting requirements for producers will provide a much clearer picture as to how much packaging waste, including plastic packaging, is being generated.

With this information, we can better tackle problems associated with waste. Recycling of all types of packaging will increase to an estimated 76% by 2030 under EPR. We also estimate that the measures we have set out in the Government Response will lead to greenhouse gas savings of 2.2 million tonnes.

Your constituents also note making the case for a plastics reduction target. The Environment Act requires the Government to set at least one long-term target in the areas of resource efficiency and waste reduction, and we intend to set a target that covers more than just plastic. We are [currently consulting](#) on a target to reduce residual waste (excluding major mineral wastes) kg per capita by 50% by 2042 from 2019 levels. The consultation closes on 27 June 2022. We would encourage anyone who has relevant information to contribute to the consultation before it closes.

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. We want to ensure that the targets take a holistic approach to all materials and avoid unintended substitution effects. As well as being a significant global environmental waste and pollution issue, plastics are strong, durable, and versatile materials, bringing many 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.



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