# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE:** | **Publication of the Reducing Single Use Plastics Consultation Summary of Responses**  |
| **DATE**  |  **12 August 2022** |
| **BY** | **Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change** |

Urgent change is needed in both our use of plastics and the law regarding their sale to avoid a toxic legacy being left for future generations. Many people in Wales are already taking action to reduce our reliance on single use plastics, changing habits and making products and services more sustainable. As a government we are committed to supporting their efforts. This includes using the powers available to us to abolish the use of more single use plastics and encouraging more communities and businesses to make positive changes that reduce plastic waste.

Plastic products are often difficult to recycle, frequently disposed of inappropriately and persist for many years, resulting in them accumulating on our streets, in our countryside and on our beaches. Once they do break down, they cause harm to our wildlife, with growing evidence of plastic being found in fish, shellfish, sea birds and marine mammals, some of which are part of the human food chain. Research shows plastic in the environment attracts and absorbs other pollutants, such as heavy metals, making it even more dangerous to the animals, microbes and plants which come into contact with it. The long-lasting, wide-ranging, uncertain and rapidly accumulating impacts of plastic pollution demands a radical and resolute approach.

Our *Reducing Single Use Plastics* consultation, which I am pleased to publish the [summary of responses](https://gov.wales/reducing-single-use-plastic-wales) today, shows there is strong support for our legislative proposals, with many urging us to go further. This demand for action is evident in the growing number of “Plastic Free Communities” being established across Wales.

Many young people are championing action to tackle plastic pollution, including those in the Welsh Youth Parliament. I have had many discussions with school children, who say this is a matter we must urgently fix.

On 5 July, the First Minister of Wales announced the first phase of our work, which will be delivered through the Single Use Plastic Products Bill, to be introduced during the second year of this Senedd term. I see this as the first step in a programme of measures aimed at tackling plastic pollution and delivering on our Programme for Government commitment to abolish commonly littered single use plastic products. Members across the Senedd have been calling for urgent action to curb the use of non-essential and non-medical single use plastics, and I look forward to working with all parties to ensure that action on plastics is as ambitious as possible, building on our common concerns and those of the communities we represent.

The proposals in our consultation were to ban single use plastic cutlery, plates, stirrers, drinking straws, cotton buds, balloon sticks, expanded and extruded polystyrene cups, food containers and products made of oxo-degradable plastic. Following feedback from the consultation, I am keen to go further and intend to use this legislation to drive our wider waste ambitions set out in our [Circular Economy Strategy, Beyond Recycling](https://gov.wales/beyond-recycling) and our draft [Litter & Fly-tipping Prevention Plan](https://gov.wales/litter-and-fly-tipping-prevention-plan-wales). This includes actions for Wales to become the first country to send zero plastic to landfill and to reduce our reliance on fossil fuel derived products contributing to the climate and nature emergencies.

The scale of these emergencies means the health of our environment must be prioritised. The recent extreme heat experienced in Wales and elsewhere saw temperatures reach new highs in excess of those predicted by conventional climate models. This underlines that fact we have no time to lose, and the window for action may be even shorter than previously thought. To help reduce the threat from rising global temperatures, and protect our soils, waters and wildlife from harm, we must reduce the amount of single use plastics as quickly as possible.

Shifting away from using plastics will require us to change our habits, to become used to accessing products and services in different ways. Such change is entirely possible, as many innovative businesses and enthusiastic communities across Wales demonstrate to us every day. We are mindful of the fact that some people and businesses will find the changes more difficult than others and will need time and support. There is, however, an urgent need to accelerate the rate of change in order to prevent creating environmental damage at significant cost to present and future generations. Equally, there are opportunities for local economic benefit, for communities to come together around the desire for a cleaner local environment.

The consultation on single use plastics reflects the extent to which the public in Wales demand change, their commitment to realising these benefits and to overcoming the challenges. We are committed to ensuring the reforms we bring forward in this area respond to the leadership shown by the Welsh public, to bring about a decisive shift in our use of plastics for a greener, fairer and more prosperous Wales.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.