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Environmental Audit Committee

Plastic bottles: Turning Back the Plastic Tide

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Environmental Audit Committee

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Summary

The UK uses 13 billion plastic bottles every year. Only 7.5 billion are recycled. The remaining 5.5 billion are landfilled, littered, or incinerated. Eunomia Research and Consulting told us that landfill and incineration of plastic bottles produces approximately 233,000 tonnes of CO₂e emissions a year. Littering of plastic bottles spoils our streets and threatens our wildlife. Clearing litter and enforcing the law cost local authorities £778 million in 2015/16. Plastic bottles make up a third of all plastic pollution in the sea. If marine plastic pollution continues to rise at its current rate, the amount of plastic in the sea will outweigh fish by 2050. Plastic bottles are an avoidable source of marine plastic pollution, as well as an engaging and tangible issue for the general public, sparking consideration of other types of marine plastic pollution.

Our inquiry has been guided by the Waste Hierarchy - reduce, reuse, recycle. The most desirable method of waste management is the prevention of waste. We also took account of the 'Polluter Pays' principle; that those who produce pollution should bear the costs of managing it. The Waste Hierarchy and the Polluter Pays principle are enshrined in EU law, but are also internationally recognised sustainable development principles. The UK Government has commitments under the UN's Global Goals for Sustainable Development to responsible consumption and production (Goal 12), as well as protecting life below water (Goal 14) and life on land (Goal 15) by 2030.

While the introduction of household improved the recycling rate of plastic bottles from 1% in 2001 to 57% today, we heard that the recycling rate has plateaued in the last five years. This means 15 million plastic bottles are littered, landfilled or incinerated every day. Deposit Return Schemes encourage high levels of recycling of plastic bottles, primarily by collecting bottles which are littered or disposed of on-the-go. Around 700,000 plastic bottles are littered every day in the UK and fewer than half of local councils provide on-street recycling bins. The UK needs an effective system to capture all plastic bottles, not just those disposed of in household waste. We therefore recommend the Government introduce a well-designed Deposit Return Scheme, providing an economic incentive for consumers to recycle plastic bottles. The Government should consult with industry stakeholders and local authorities to ensure that their concerns are accounted for in the design of the Scheme. The monies raised from this scheme should be reinvested in plastic reprocessing facilities in the UK. We currently export 280,000 – 320,000 tonnes of mixed plastic to China each year. Given the recent Chinese ban on mixed plastic waste from the UK, this investment is both urgent, to avoid a huge increase in landfill, and will save money and create jobs in the long run.

We have heard that plastic bottle manufacturers continue to use mixed polymer plastics, such as sleeve wrappings and coloured plastics, which contaminate the recycling stream and reduce the value of the recycled material. We recommend the Government introduce a mandated minimum use of 50% recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET) in new plastic bottles by 2023 at the latest. We also recommend that the Government use its Waste Strategy to reduce the number and type of plastics in use in the UK to move to a truly sustainable, resource efficient economy. The former would create demand for recycled plastics even when the oil price is low and incentivise greater capture and

collection of all plastic bottles - not just water bottles. The latter would incentivise the beverage container industry to reduce their use of unnecessary mixed polymer plastics and improve the quality of rPET produced in the UK.

We have used plastic bottles as a starting point for discussion of wider issues related to packaging recycling and disposal. We heard that the UK's weak Producer Responsibility Obligation fees (which are among the lowest in the EU) leave taxpayers to cover around 90% of the costs of packaging waste disposal. Litter costs UK taxpayers £800m a year. This indicates that Producer Responsibility Obligations do not make producers financially responsible for the packaging they are putting on the market. We recommend the Government introduce a varied compliance fee structure that reduces costs for easily recyclable, simple plastics and raises costs on packaging that is difficult to recycle. This would give producers and retailers an incentive to only produce and use packaging that can be easily recycled within the UK's current recycling infrastructure. We also believe the de minimis level for companies covered by PRO schemes should be reduced. This would give the industry a greater financial incentive to produce and use only packaging that can be recycled within the UK's current recycling infrastructure.

In the last 15 years, consumption of bottled water has doubled. Water bottles now make up around half of all plastic bottles. To reduce the 7.7 billion plastic water bottles used each year in the UK, a culture of carrying a reusable bottle should be embedded through the provision of public water fountains and access to free tap water. We call upon the Government to introduce a regulation for all premises which serve food or drink to provide free drinking water upon request, including sports centres and leisure centres. The Government should review the health and litter-reducing benefits of providing public water fountains and amend the Water Industry Act 1991 to give water companies formal powers to erect water fountains. These actions could cut usage of plastic water bottles by 65%. The House of Commons and the Government should show leadership and phase out bottled water sales and encourage the use of re-usable bottles.

1 Introduction

1. This is one of two reports published as part of our Disposable Packaging Inquiry. This inquiry was originally launched in the 2015 – 2017 Parliament and was then closed when Parliament was dissolved for the 2017 General Election. The new Committee relaunched the inquiry in September 2017. Written evidence accepted for the previous inquiry was considered in the relaunched inquiry. Our examination of plastic bottles and coffee cups highlighted the difficulty of recycling packaging on-the-go. We also discovered issues specific to plastic bottles which required separate analysis and recommendations. They are set out in this report.

2. Recent media and television coverage on marine plastic pollution has brought this issue to the forefront of public awareness. Plastic bottle waste finds its way from the land into our rivers and seas, where it degrades into microplastics, easily consumed by fish and sea life.¹ We were told that plastic bottles make up a third of all plastic litter found in the sea, and that if the current trend of marine plastic pollution levels continue, the tonnage of plastic in the sea will outweigh fish by 2050.²

3. Approximately 13 billion plastic bottles are used each year in the UK. Only 7.5 billion are recycled. Plastic bottles, such as drinks bottles, milk bottles and toiletries bottles make up over 60% of household plastic packaging.³ While the introduction of household collection has improved the recycling rate of plastic bottles, from 1% in 2001 to 57% today, we heard that recycling of plastic bottles has flat-lined in the last five years. This results in 5.5 billion plastic bottles being landfilled, littered or incinerated each year. Additionally, we heard that, every day, 700,000 plastic bottles are littered. This litter blights our towns, cities, and countryside, where it poses a threat to wildlife, which eats or becomes entangled in it. Plastic bottles attract further littering and they have been found to accumulate more quickly than any other litter type.

4. Plastic bottles are one element of disposable packaging waste. We use plastic bottles as a starting point for discussion of wider packaging recycling issues, in particular packaging producer responsibility obligations. Our focus on plastic bottles and coffee cups also pointed to how recycling is hampered by on-the-go consumption and disposal; an issue given careful consideration throughout the inquiry and in our final reports.

5. The terms of reference for the inquiry can be found on our website. We held four public hearings with environmental researchers, NGOs, retail body representatives, packaging producers, local authority representatives and Dr. Thérèse Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). We received 122 pieces of written evidence which are published on our website. A full list of witnesses can be found at the end of this report. We are grateful to all those who gave evidence to this inquiry. We would also like to thank Louise Smith and Dr. Elena Ares from the House of Commons Library for providing research assistance throughout this inquiry.

1 Q165, Q173, Surfers Against Sewage (PKG0047A), Greenpeace UK (PKG0064A), Marine Conservation Society (PKG0074A), #OneLess Campaign (PKG0083A). Written evidence accepted as part of the original Packaging Inquiry launched in the 2015 – 2017 Parliamentary Session is marked A, and evidence accepted as part of the relaunched inquiry is marked B.

2 Have You Got the Bottle? (PKG0078A), #OneLess Campaign (PKG0083A)

3 RECYcling of Used Plastics Limited, 2017 RECOUP Household Collection Survey

Progress during this Inquiry

6. During this inquiry, both Government and industry have made the following announcements:

- a) On 2nd October DEFRA established the Voluntary and Economic Incentives Working group to look at measures that can reduce the incidence of commonly littered items and improve recycling and reuse of packaging.⁴ The working group has begun by looking at measures for drinks containers, such as deposit return schemes and will publish its findings shortly.
- b) On the 11th October 2017, Pret A Manger announced that it recognised the “shocking statistics about millions of tonnes [of plastic] ending up in our oceans” and has installed water fountains in three of its shops. These shops also began selling two sizes of reusable glass bottles.⁵
- c) On 24th October 2017, DEFRA announced that maximum litter fines will almost double to £150 from April 2018. New fines will be introduced for owners of vehicles from which litter is thrown.⁶
- d) On 26th October 2017, The Times reported that Lucozade Ribena Suntory, the manufacturer of Lucozade and Ribena bottles, had committed to remove plastic films and sleeves on their bottles. This followed a detailed discussion of the recyclability challenges caused by these mixed polymer items during our evidence session on the 24th October.⁷
- e) On 22nd November 2017, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon Phillip Hammond MP, announced in the Autumn Budget that the Government would “investigate how the tax systems and charges on single-use plastic items can reduce waste.”⁸
- f) On 30th November 2017, Co-op and Iceland became the first retailers in the UK to announce their support for a Deposit Return Scheme for plastic bottles in a survey conducted by Greenpeace.⁹ This is in addition to Coca-Cola, who were the first major drinks manufacturer to announce their support for a well-designed deposit return scheme.
- g) On 6th December 2017, all 193 countries in the UN signed a resolution to eliminate plastic in the sea. The resolution requires all signatories to start monitoring how much plastic they put in the ocean and to explore ways of making it illegal to dump plastic in the ocean.¹⁰

4 <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/call-for-evidence-drinks-containers/>

5 <https://www.pret.co.uk/en-gb/what-if-pret-stopped-selling-plastic-water-bottles>

6 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-steps-to-tackle-littering-announced>

7 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/lucozade-sport-to-ditch-unrecyclable-bottles-v0z8vlnlm>

8 House of Commons, Autumn Budget Statement, (Hansard, 22nd November 2017, c.1050)

9 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/nov/30/co-op-iceland-bottle-deposit-scheme-uk-reduce-plastic-pollution>

10 <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/world-commits-pollution-free-planet-environment-summit>

- h) On 18th December 2017, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said he was considering measures to cut the amount of plastic in circulation, reduce the number of different plastics in use, improve the rate of recycling and move towards more consistently in what is and is not recyclable. Detailed proposals have not been announced.

2 Plastic Bottle Waste in the UK

Scale of Plastic Bottle Waste

7. RECOUP (RECYcling of Used Plastics Limited) has calculated that UK households use 13 billion plastic bottles a year, including beverage bottles, milk bottles and toiletries bottles.¹¹ Most plastic bottles are made of PET (polyethylene terephthalate) whilst milk and toiletries bottles are more usually made from HDPE (high density polyethylene). We heard that, of the 13 billion plastic bottles used each year, 7.7 billion are plastic water bottles. Consumption of water in plastic bottles has doubled in the last 15 years according to the #OneLess Campaign. The average person in the UK will use 150 plastic water bottles every year. In London, usage is 175 plastic water bottles per person per year.¹²

8. Plastic bottles make up 26% of total plastic packaging. Research by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation found that global plastics production and use is set to double over the next 20 years, and quadruple to 318 million tonnes by 2050.¹³ We received evidence from a range of major plastic bottle producers including the British Plastics Federation, the British Soft Drinks Association and Coca-Cola European Partners.¹⁴ Coca-Cola European Partners produce around 25% of soft drinks and approximately 41,000 tonnes of plastic packaging in the UK each year.¹⁵

9. The UK recycles 57% of the 13 billion plastic bottles used each year. The introduction of local authority household recycling in 2001 saw the recycling rate of plastic bottles rise from 1% to the current level. Over 99% of local authorities now provide a collection for plastic bottles. However, we heard that since 2012, the recycling rate has plateaued at around 57–58%.¹⁶

10. In the UK, 5.5 billion plastic bottles escape household recycling collection every year. They are littered, landfilled or incinerated. Of these bottles, 55% (approximately 3 billion) are incinerated and 45% (approximately 2.5 billion) are landfilled every year.¹⁷ The waste hierarchy, ranks waste disposal methods according to their impact on the environment, incineration is the second worst waste management process and landfill is the worst. Eunomia Research and Consulting told us that landfill and incineration of plastic bottles produces approximately 233,000 tonnes of CO₂e emissions a year.¹⁸

Littering

11. 700,000 plastic bottles are littered every day. Keep Britain Tidy's 2014/15 Local Environmental Quality Survey of England found that soft drinks litter (including cans, bottles and cartons) was the third most prevalent type of litter, found on more than 52% of sites studied. Of the 7,200 sites recorded, 24% had plastic bottles litter.¹⁹ Hugo Tagholm, CEO of Surfers Against Sewage explained the scale of plastic bottle litter:

11 RECYcling of Used Plastics Limited, 2017 RECOUP Household Collection Survey (June 2017)

12 #OneLess Campaign (PKG0083A)

13 Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the Future of Plastics* (January 2016)

14 British Soft Drinks Association (PKG0069A), British Plastics Federation and Plastics Europe (PKG0106A)

15 Coca-Cola European Partners and Coca-Cola Great Britain (PKG0061A and PKG0033B)

16 RECYcling of Used Plastics Limited, 2017 RECOUP Household Collection Survey (June 2017)

17 Eunomia Research & Consulting Ltd (PKG0086A)

18 As above.

19 Keep Britain Tidy (PKG0084A)

The latest figures estimate that 700,000 plastic beverage containers are littered every single day in the UK. That is perhaps hardly surprising, given we use 38.5 million single-use plastic bottles in this country every day and only 57% of those are recycled.²⁰

12. This suggests that 1.8% or 234 million plastic bottles are littered in the UK each year. This litter blights our towns, cities, and countryside, where it poses a threat to wildlife.

13. We have heard that large litter items such as plastic bottles often act as ‘beacons of litter’ - a normalising cue which encourages further littering. Keep Britain Tidy commented on their Centre for Social Innovation’s field experiment findings:

Therefore, we assert that while plastic bottles (and indeed coffee cups) are not the most littered items in the country, they are one of the most visible items littered, with instantly recognisable branding, and their presence creates disproportionately more littering as a result.²¹

14. The field experiment involved using test and control sites; some littered with large, highly visible types of litter, such as drinks containers and crisp packets, and others with no litter, or only small types such as cigarettes and chewing gum. Keep Britain Tidy’s Centre for Social Innovation found that the visibility of large litter “appears to prompt others (either consciously or subconsciously) to do the same with their [similar] items.”²² They suggest a policy prioritisation:

Drinks bottles are likely to accumulate more quickly than any other litter type. It is therefore recommended that these items should be prioritised for cleansing.²³

15. DEFRA’s Litter Strategy for England published in April 2017 reported that 28–30% of people perceive litter and rubbish lying around to be a problem in their area and 81% of people are angry and frustrated by the amount of litter they see.²⁴ The Litter Strategy stated that direct costs (i.e. the cost of clearing litter and enforcing the law) cost local authorities £778 million in 2015/16.²⁵ A recent House of Commons Library briefing on litter calculated the indirect costs of litter. While this information is not specific to plastic bottles, as beverage containers are the third most common type of litter, it is relevant to the issue of plastic bottle litter. It said:

Indirect costs are harder to quantify. In particular, there are health costs associated with infections from contaminated litter, accidents caused by litter, environmental damage, injuries to wildlife, and loss of tourism. There is also some evidence of a correlation between crime and litter.²⁶

20 Q162

21 Keep Britain Tidy (PKG0084A)

22 Centre for Social Innovation, *Journal of Litter and Environmental Quality* (Volume 1, Number 1, June 2017)

23 As above.

24 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *Litter Strategy for England* (April 2017)

25 As above, Q355, Q356

26 House of Commons Library, *Litter*, Briefing Paper No. CBP06984 (July 2017)

16. Derek Robertson from Keep Scotland Beautiful also emphasised the link between social deprivation and litter:

We released a report this week that showed that in areas of deprivation environmental quality was in greater decline than in more affluent areas ... we have no doubt that there is evidence that communities that are in most need are the ones that are suffering the most from environmental decline.²⁷

17. The UK uses 38.5 million plastic bottles every day, of which 15 million are not recycled. 700,000 plastic bottles are littered every day, encouraging more littering and causing damage to natural habitats and human well-being. Plastic bottle waste is not simply a recycling or environmental issue; it is a social issue with considerable direct and indirect costs for taxpayers through litter picking and healthcare.

Impact on the Marine Environment

18. The Green Alliance have stated that beverage litter makes up a third of all marine plastic pollution.²⁸ The issue of plastic pollution in the marine environment has captured the attention of the general public. The BBC's Blue Planet Series and Sky's Ocean Rescue campaign have raised interest in marine environments and prompted awareness of how single-use disposable plastic pollutes our oceans. Fiona Llewellyn, project manager of the #OneLess campaign, highlighted the growing public interest in plastic bottle marine pollution as a starting point for consideration of wider plastic pollution:

People are finding inspiration in the ocean messages and using the single-use plastic bottle as almost a flagship species for the wider issues of marine plastic pollution. Having something that people can see, touch and feel in their day-to-day lives and understanding the actions they are taking, that they can do something about, is quite empowering, which is what we are finding.²⁹

19. We heard that plastic litter often finds its way from the land into our seas, leading to around 12.2 million tonnes of plastic waste being deposited in the marine environment each year around the world.³⁰ We also heard that 10% of litter in the Thames is plastic bottles.³¹ Dr Sue Kinsey from the Marine Conservation Society explained how our rivers and seas become polluted by plastic bottles:

About 80% of that litter is coming from the land itself. For example, this country is a very small wet and windy island, as people have seen recently, and that litter is getting there through the wind action, it is going into our rivers and then being swept out into the sea, and some of it is being dropped directly on to our beaches and then swept out to sea. Once it is out there, it is incredibly difficult to collect. The most effective and cost efficient way is to stop it getting there in the first place because once it is in our seas and oceans it starts breaking down into microplastics.³²

27 Q172

28 The Green Alliance (PKG0026B)

29 Q174

30 #OneLess Campaign (PKG0083A), Q173

31 #OneLess Campaign (PKG0083A)

32 Q173

20. At sea, plastic waste is categorised into macro (over 20mm diameter), meso (5–20mm) and micro (under 5mm) plastics. Plastic bottles are categorised as macro and cause a threat to wildlife. They also contribute to the environmental damage caused by microplastics, which was highlighted in the previous EAC’s report *Environmental Impacts of Microplastics*. The Marine Conservation Society explained in their written evidence:

Plastic items break down in the marine environment leading eventually to microplastics. Both macro and microplastics cause harm through entanglement and ingestion, as well as being able to transfer toxins directly to the animals that ingest the plastics and potentially up the food chain to us as consumers.³³

21. Hugo Tagholm from Surfers Against Sewage was concerned about the impact of marine plastic pollution on human health. He told us that “the average seafood consumer in the UK will be ingesting about 11,000 plastic particles every year already. Those are figures to be very worried about.”³⁴

22. In the Committee’s report into the Environmental Impact of Microplastics in the last Parliament, we concluded that “the most effective solution to tackling microplastic pollution in the marine environment is to tackle it at the source.”³⁵ Under UN Sustainable Development Goal 14, the UK has recognised the threat of pollution to ocean ecosystems, and has committed to protect the marine environment from sources of plastic pollution. One SDG 14 target states:

By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.³⁶

23. Given that we have heard that 80% of plastic pollution in the sea is from land-based activities, we are concerned that the UK will miss this target. In their written evidence to the inquiry, DEFRA stated that their UK Marine Strategy Part 3 (December 2015) sets out a “comprehensive set of measures” for the reduction of marine litter.³⁷ However the Marine Strategy makes no detailed targets for the reduction of marine litter and noted that there “is a limited understanding of current levels, properties and impacts of marine litter.”³⁸ The UN is now exploring more ambitious targets than Sustainable Development Goal 14. UN Oceans Chief Lisa Svensson recently described the rising tide of plastic waste in the ocean as a “planetary crisis.”³⁹ On 6th December 2017, all 193 countries in the UN signed a resolution to eliminate plastic in the sea. The resolution requires all signatories to start monitoring how much plastic they put in the ocean and to explore ways of making it illegal to dump plastic in the ocean.⁴⁰

33 Marine Conservation Society (PGK0074A)

34 Q173

35 Environmental Audit Committee, *Environmental Impact of Microplastics*, HC 179, Fourth Report of the Session 2016–17, August 2016

36 United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal 14 Life Below Water, Target 1

37 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (PKG0110A)

38 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *UK Marine Strategy Part 3: UK Programme of Measures* (December 2015)

39 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-42225915>

40 <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/world-commits-pollution-free-planet-environment-summit>

24. **Following the weak analysis of marine litter made in the UK Marine Strategy Part Three, we recommend that the Government set out a timescale for publishing a more accurate assessment of the current levels, properties and impacts of marine litter and the steps it will take to protect our oceans from plastic pollution. The rising tide of plastic waste in the ocean has been described by UN Oceans Chief as a “planetary crisis” and there is increasing public appetite for urgent action in this area. The Government has committed to protecting the marine environment from all kinds of pollution, including plastic pollution, under UN Sustainable Development Goal 14. However, the Government has only recently begun to address this by exploring the potential of a tax on single-use plastics. We have heard that tackling plastic pollution at source is the most effective way to mitigate the damage caused by larger plastic items, such as plastic bottles, as well as microplastics. The Marine Strategy Part One found that “significant amounts of litter appear in our seas and on our beaches”, bringing environmental and economic damage. At the very least the Government should increase clean-up resources to coastal areas, where, by function of tide or topography there is a large plastic pollution problem. We urge the Government to introduce a ‘Coastal Clean-up’ fund to support the removal of plastic from our beaches and seas.**

3 Preventing Plastic Bottle Use

25. At present, approximately 2.5 billion plastic bottles are landfilled each year in the UK and 3 million are incinerated. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs guidance on the waste hierarchy states:

It gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. When waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then recovery and last of all disposal (e.g. landfill).⁴¹

26. It follows that Government should prioritise minimising creation of plastic bottles in the first instance. We received written and oral evidence from the #OneLess campaign, a project working to reduce the number of plastic bottles that enter the marine environment by encouraging a culture of using a refillable bottle. #OneLess told us:

Significantly reducing our use of single-use plastic water bottles presents a major opportunity, both in London and across the UK, to combat disposable plastic waste. In line with DEFRA's waste hierarchy guidance, efforts should be directed towards preventing plastic bottle waste in the first place, and encouraging re-use.⁴²

Drinking Water Availability

27. We have heard that approximately half of the plastic bottles used by the UK each year are plastic water bottles - approximately 7.7 billion. On average, a person will use 150 plastic water bottles each year, and in London usage is 175 water bottles per person every year. If people instead used a refillable bottle, waste from disposable plastic bottles could be reduced. However, #OneLess has noted two main 'sticking points' to the behavioural shift to using a refillable bottle; a lack of freely available drinking water in public spaces and the perception that tap water is not safe to drink.⁴³ Project Manager of #OneLess, Fiona Llewellyn told us:

We are in a really privileged position here in the UK. We have an alternative, we have safe and clean and healthy drinking water that is available to us out of our taps and from drinking fountains. If we could remove that plastic from the system, that would be a wonderful step forward, if the Government is doing anything to support that.⁴⁴

28. A survey in 2010 found that drinking water facilities were only available in 11% of UK parks.⁴⁵ Local authorities have powers but no responsibility to provide drinking water fountains, and regulations only specify that drinking water has to be provided in certain

41 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69403/pb13530-waste-hierarchy-guidance.pdf

42 #OneLess Campaign (PKG0083A)

43 Q193, #OneLess Campaign (PKG0083A)

44 Q190

45 Sustain and Children's Food Campaign, Thirsty play: a survey of drinking water provision in public parks (May 2010)

public buildings such as schools. Ofwat, the regulator of the water sector in England and Wales, told us that under the Water Industry Act 1991, water companies have no legal obligation, or explicit power to erect or maintain drinking fountains.⁴⁶

29. Research carried out by BRITA UK and Keep Britain Tidy found that 73% of people would like greater availability of free tap water in public spaces.⁴⁷ In a bid to reduce plastic bottle waste, the French Government announced that it would be installing free water fountains in every square in Paris.⁴⁸ Lee Marshall, from the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Service told us about the need for effective communications to ensure people would use drinking water fountains:

[...]the key is going to be communications. You are trying to get people to unlearn their current habits and then instil new habits in them. The provision of water fountains, if the infrastructure is there, would be good. It is then instilling in people that they the need to take bottles with them to use them in the first place and that being seen as a good habit to have.⁴⁹

30. We also heard evidence that the general public often feel uncomfortable asking for bottle refills in licensed restaurants, cafes and bars. BRITA UK's research found that 71% of people feel uncomfortable asking for a glass of tap water when out and about.⁵⁰ In England, Wales and Scotland, licensed premises are legally obliged to provide free drinking water to customers on request. However they are allowed to charge for service or the use of a glass if they wish.⁵¹ The regulation to provide drinking water in licensed premises was introduced to encourage people to drink water while consuming alcoholic beverages. Accordingly there is no obligation for unlicensed premises, such as sports centres, cinemas, shops, cafes, bus and railway stations and tourist centres to provide free drinking water. Fiona Llewellyn from #OneLess told us how businesses can voluntarily get involved in 'community water schemes':

There are some great groups out there at the moment that are looking at developing apps so you can find out where to fill up. There is a group down in Bristol called Refill Bristol and we are doing some work with them here in London as well. There is an app that you can use and if a shop is in agreement to say, "Yes, you can come in and fill up for free. You don't have to buy anything. We are a refill station", they put a sticker in the window and they get put on the app. Things like that are going to start taking away, as you rightly said, the anxiety of people being too scared or embarrassed to go in and ask for it. What we are trying to work towards is having this cultural shift whereby it is the social norm that you can go into a shop, you can go into a Starbucks for example, and fill up there for free without having to buy anything.⁵²

46 Ofwat (PKG0044B)

47 BRITA UK (PKG0008B)

48 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/france/articles/paris-introduces-free-sparkling-water-drinking-taps/>

49 Q387

50 BRITA UK (PKG0008B) In Northern Ireland there is no such obligation for licensed premises to provide drinking water.

51 Section 182, Licensing Act (2003)

52 Q196

However, unlike Wales' 'community toilet schemes' in which participating businesses are offered a grant to allow the public to use their toilets without needing to purchase anything, businesses involved in community water schemes are not offered any financial incentive to provide drinking water for non-customers.

31. BRITA UK and Keep Britain Tidy's research also found that 65% of people would be more likely to use a reusable water bottle if tap water refills were freely available in places such as shops, airports and parks.⁵³ We heard about a number of businesses that have recently committed to stop selling plastic water bottles. Selfridges was the first retailer in the UK to permanently stop the sale of single-use plastic water bottles in store, ending the sale of approximately 400,000 bottles annually. Customers are instead encouraged to purchase, or use their own, refillable bottles and refill in store for free.⁵⁴ London and Whipsnade Zoos have also halted the sale of plastic water bottles. If the use of plastic water bottles was reduced by 65%, this would mean the UK would use 5 billion fewer plastic water bottles annually.

32. Access to clean drinking water is a basic human right. The Government should prioritise reducing the use of plastic bottles. We believe that small changes can deliver big results. The UK has a ready supply of safe, clean tap water, yet the consumption of bottled water continues to grow. We have heard that providing more free drinking water taps and fountains in public spaces could lead to a 65% reduction in the use of plastic water bottles, but there is no obligation for unlicensed premises to provide free drinking water. We call on the Government to introduce a regulation for all public premises which serve food or drink to provide free drinking water on request, including sports centres and leisure centres. Businesses should volunteer to get involved with community water schemes such as Refill Bristol to advertise their provision of free drinking water.

33. There are very few water fountains in parks and other public spaces. There are none in Manchester or Merseyside, one in West Yorkshire, and four in the West Midlands. We believe that the provision of free water fountains provides an opportunity for water companies to demonstrate their corporate social responsibility. We were disappointed not to receive evidence from water companies given their filtration and sewage systems remove huge amounts of plastic debris from waterways. Yorkshire Water has installed three fountains in Hull, as part of their celebration of being 2017 City of Culture, we urge other water companies to follow suit. The Government should review the health and litter-reducing benefits of providing public water fountains, amend the Water Industry Act 1991 to give water companies formal powers to erect water fountains. Additionally, the Government should run a wide-reaching communications campaign to actively promote the use of refillable bottles to ensure that new water fountains and refill stations within shops and transportation hubs are used.

34. Parliament and Government departments must show leadership and ban the sale of disposable plastic bottles in their buildings—providing water fountains and reusable bottles instead. We would like to see a plastic-free Parliament.

53 BRITA UK (PKG0008B), Centre for Social Innovation, Keep Britain Tidy, Understanding provision, usage and perceptions of free drinking water to the public in the UK (April 2017)

54 #OneLess Campaign (PKG0083A)

4 Shifting the Financial Burden of Packaging Waste

35. The UK produces 600,000 tonnes of plastic bottle waste a year.⁵⁵ The EU Waste Framework Directive provides the legislative framework for the collection, transport, recovery and disposal of waste, and includes a common definition of waste. The Directive requires all Member States to ensure waste is recovered or disposed of without endangering human health or environmental harm. It includes permitting, registration and inspection requirements. The Directive also requires Member States to take appropriate measures to encourage: firstly, the prevention or reduction of waste production and its harmfulness, and secondly the recovery of waste by recycling, re-use or reclamation with a view to extracting secondary raw materials, or the use of waste as a energy.

Producer Responsibility Obligations

36. Within the EU Waste Framework Directive there is a Directive on packaging and packaging waste which is implemented in the UK by the Producer Responsibility Obligations Regulation (PRO). The Regulation places a legal obligation on businesses over a certain size which make or use 50 tonnes of packaging a year to ensure that a proportion of the packaging they place on the market is recovered and recycled. Relevant businesses then discharge their responsibilities by purchasing evidence of packaging recycling in the form of a Packaging Recovery Note (PRN) or Packaging Recovery Export Note (PERN). DEFRA's Deputy Director for Waste and Recycling, Chris Preston, explained how this system applies to producers and users of plastic bottles:

Coffee cup producers and plastic bottle makers, who put things on the market, are required to show that they have recycled through purchasing a PRN, a percentage of the packaging that they have put on the market. It will not necessarily be their plastic bottles, because it is not an individual thing, or their coffee cups, but in terms of the totality of packaging, they will have to show that they have contributed financially, through the PRN system, for some of that to be recovered.⁵⁶

37. The price of PRNs fluctuates according to the market. The average fee charged to producers per tonne of packaging waste in the UK is around €20 per tonne. Other European countries have an average producer responsibility fee of €150 per tonne.⁵⁷ Deloitte's 2014 report on Extended Producer Responsibility shows the average fee charged to packaging producers across Europe⁵⁸

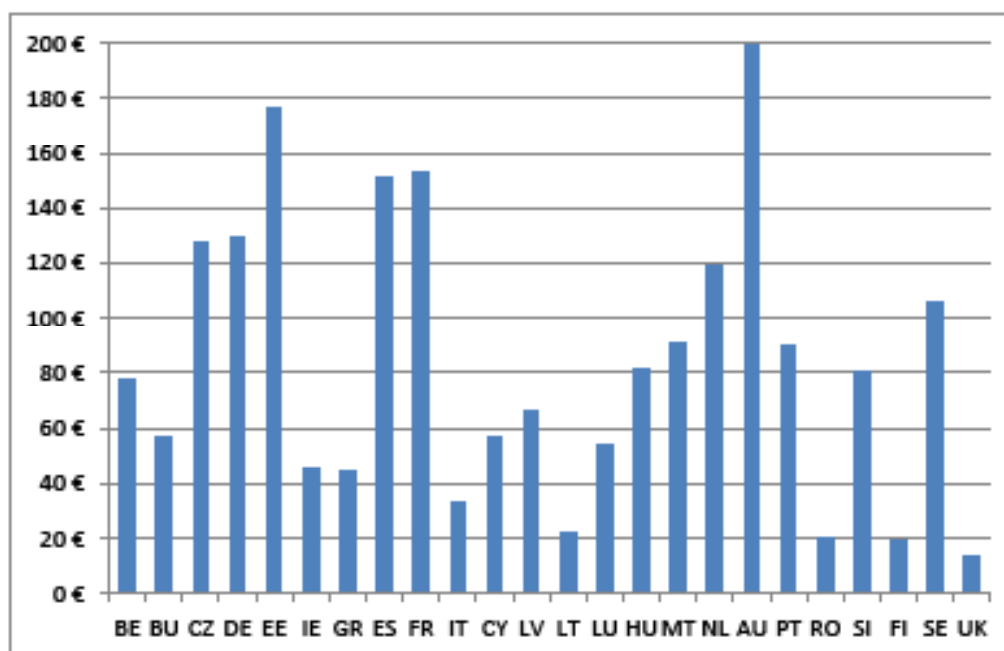
55 Environmental Services Association (PKG0046A)

56 Q451

57 http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/pdf/target_review/Guidance%20on%20EPR%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf

58 As above.

Fig. 1: EU Producer Responsibility Compliance Fees, Deloitte, 2014



38. Throughout this inquiry we have heard evidence from environmental researchers and local authorities that the UK's compliance fee contributes less than 10% of the cost of collecting, sorting and disposing of packaging waste. The Local Government Association noted:

The UK's limited packaging producer compliance scheme generated £111 million of compliance revenue in 2013, only £37 million of which went towards collection. This compares to the £550 million cost to local authorities for collection and sorting of packaging material.⁵⁹

39. Producer Responsibility Obligations are intended to make producers of packaging (the polluters) responsible for the cost of the disposal of their packaging. On this point, Lee Marshall from the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Service told us "I think at the moment in the UK the producer responsibility scheme fails the Ronseal test. Producers are not responsible in terms of a cost point of view."⁶⁰ When asked about raising the UK's packaging producer compliance fee, Dr Coffey told us that it was an option the Government are considering.⁶¹

Reforming Producer Responsibility Obligations

40. The Environmental Services Association have suggested that the PRN system should be reformed to respect the polluter pays principle and to make a system funded to a greater extent by producers.⁶² Industry bodies, such as the Foodservice Packaging Association, the British Plastics Federation and the British Retail Consortium have been calling for

59 Local Government Association (PKG0076A)

60 Q368

61 Q450

62 Environmental Services Association (PKG0046A)

PRN reform for years.⁶³ The Government recently committed to exploring producer responsibility reform to be more resource efficient in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's October 2017 Clean Growth Strategy.⁶⁴

41. We have heard that European countries have more robust producer responsibility schemes that give producers more financial responsibility for the kind of packaging they place on the market. Nick Brown from Coca-Cola explained:

Typically in other countries it is a modulated fee structure. There will be a certain contribution for packaging that meets a certain design criteria; there will be a higher contribution for packaging that does not meet that criteria; the same for recycled material usage.⁶⁵

42. Industry bodies such as the Foodservice Packaging Association, the British Soft Drinks Association and the British Plastics Federation told us that producer responsibility should be reformed to incentivise design for recyclability.⁶⁶ Alice Ellison, Head of Environment at the British Retail Consortium described the current producer responsibility scheme as a "blunt instrument" that does not encourage responsible packaging decisions.⁶⁷ Nick Brown from Coca Cola explained:

A good producer responsibility scheme can encourage people to use eco design, design for recyclability principles that people were talking about before; some kind of credit for people who are using easy to recycle packaging.⁶⁸

43. We asked Dr. Coffey about whether a modulated fee structure will be introduced in the UK. The Minister told us:

I am not saying it is a definite policy, I am just saying that these are some of the ideas that could come through. Then if you have the manufacturers [saying] that they are the only person using a polymer and they have not created a scheme for it to be readily recycled, you might choose to have a higher charge, in effect, to deal with that. These are some of the ideas we are looking at now.⁶⁹

44. We heard from several industry bodies that the current PRN system incentivises the export of recycling waste over domestic reprocessing, and consequently domestic recycling infrastructure is underfunded.⁷⁰ The British Soft Drinks Association wrote:

The current Packaging Waste Recovery Note system contains several abnormalities which can provide disincentives to increased recycling—such as the comparatively favourable position of exporting potential feedstock

63 Q127, Q128, Foodservice Packaging Association (PKG0067A), British Plastics Federation and Plastics Europe (PKG0106A), British Retail Consortium (PKG0109A)

64 Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, Clean Growth Strategy (October 2017)

65 Q244

66 Foodservice Packaging Association (PKG0067A), British Soft Drinks Association (PKG0069A), British Plastics Federation and Plastics Europe (PKG0106A)

67 Q299

68 Q243

69 Q424

70 Foodservice Packaging Association (PKG0067A), British Soft Drinks Association (PKG0069A), British Plastics Federation and Plastics Europe (PKG0106A) Coca-Cola European Partners (PKG0061A and PKG0033B)

through the Packaging Export Recovery Note (PERN), the limited transparency in the compliance system and the lack of incentives to invest in increasing recycling capacity in the UK.

We have significant concerns on the export of plastic feedstock that could be redeveloped into rPET and increase its use in the UK. The current potential volume and the quality is low in significant part due to the export of these materials—reform in this area is sorely needed.⁷¹

45. On 18 July 2017, China notified the World Trade Organization (WTO) Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade that it would be introducing a ban on the import of 24 kinds of solid waste, including plastic, by the end of 2017 citing concerns over contamination. In August, China announced that it would set new standards limiting all imported recycled materials to a maximum contamination level of 0.3 per cent.⁷² China is the UK's biggest export destination for waste products. In 2016, 55% of our exported recovered plastics went to China and Hong Kong.⁷³ There are therefore fears that the ban could lead to a glut of waste materials which we are unable to export. Plastics collected for recycling that are not exported could go to energy recovery (incineration), be stockpiled or even end up going to landfill. When asked about the impact of the imminent Chinese ban on waste imports and the preparations that DEFRA is making, the Secretary of State Michael Gove said:

I do not know what impact it will have. It is a very good question and something to which—I will be completely honest—I have not given sufficient thought.⁷⁴

It has subsequently emerged that DEFRA officials held meetings with the waste industry in September.⁷⁵ We are alarmed by the Secretary of State's lack of awareness of this impending threat.

46. Evidence from the regulatory body of the producer responsibility scheme, the Environment Agency, revealed that almost twice as much money is invested in funding collection for plastic waste to be exported abroad than for plastic waste to be reprocessed domestically. Furthermore, over £7 million was invested in “reduction in price and developing end markets” for exported plastic waste, whereas just over £1 million was invested in the same areas for domestic reprocessing of plastic waste.⁷⁶ This demonstrates that the current incentive to export packaging waste, diverts funding from the UK plastics reprocessing market. Industry bodies and local authorities have called for a greater degree of transparency around how PRN/PERN revenue is spent.⁷⁷

47. *Currently, taxpayers cover around 90% of the costs of packaging waste disposal, indicating that the producer responsibility scheme is not working as it should. The Government's commitment to explore potential reforms to the UK's current producer responsibility schemes is long overdue. Industry has been calling for reform for years.*

71 British Soft Drinks Association (PKG0069A)

72 <http://www.wrap.org.uk/blog/2017/10/open-letter-chinas-waste-import-restrictions>

73 <https://www.mrw.co.uk/latest/gove-admits-ignorance-over-impact-of-china-import-ban/10024976.article>

74 The Government's Environmental Policy Inquiry, Environmental Audit Committee, Q114

75 <https://www.mrw.co.uk/latest/frustrations-with-defras-response-to-china-ban-revealed/10026265.article>

76 Environment Agency (PKG0043B)

77 Foodservice Packaging Association (PKG0067A), British Soft Drinks Association (PKG0069A), British Plastics Federation and Plastics Europe (PKG0106A) Coca-Cola European Partners (PKG0061A and PKG0033B)

In order to make packaging producers more responsible for the type of products they are putting on the market, we recommend that the Government adapts a producer responsibility compliance fee structure that stimulates the use of recycled plastic, rewards design for recyclability, and increases costs for packaging that is difficult to recycle or reuse. This would incentivise producers to use more sustainable packaging, whilst reducing the costs on taxpayers. Additionally we recommend that the Government lower the de minimis packaging handling threshold from 50 tonnes to 1 tonne. This would ensure that all businesses who handle a significant amount of packaging are obligated to recycle.

48. *The Environment Agency, which regulates Packaging Recovery Notes, told us they have no regulatory control over how the revenue from Packaging Recovery Notes is spent. Figures show that there is low investment in UK reprocessing facilities compared with waste exportation. This is grossly inefficient. We support industry calls for greater transparency over how recovery note revenue is spent and recommend the Government to require all waste reprocessors to report detailed information on actions funded by recovery notes. Waste reprocessors should be held accountable to the Environment Agency for exactly how they spend packaging recovery revenue, especially if they fund export considerably more than domestic reprocessing. This would provide sustainable investment to boost the UK's domestic recycling capabilities, as well as greater financial assistance to local authorities. Given the recent Chinese ban on mixed plastic waste from the UK, this investment is both urgent, to avoid a huge increase in landfill, and will save money and create jobs in the long run.*

Improving Design for Recyclability

49. The European Commission has adopted the Circular Economy Package, which includes legislative proposals on the design of packaging to stimulate Europe's transition towards a circular economy. The proposals include "Economic incentives for producers to put greener products on the market and support recovery and recycling schemes."⁷⁸ A leaked European Commission Strategy for Plastic in a Circular Economy suggests that the Commission may seek to revise the requirements for packaging, to ensure that by 2030, all plastics packaging placed on the EU market is reusable or easily recyclable. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, told us that the Government intended to adopt elements of the EU Circular Economy Package even after leaving the European Union:

Kerry McCarthy: Can I ask quickly about the EU Circular Economy package? Obviously that is close to being finalised. We will be leaving the EU. Is it the UK Government's intention to adopt elements of that package or to continue with that sort of work?

Michael Gove: Yes.⁷⁹

50. Producers of plastic packaging in the UK have no incentive to consider recycling when they design their products as they do not bear the full costs of waste management. Major packaging industry stakeholders, including producers, brands and retailers, have

78 European Commission, Circular Economy Package

79 Environmental Audit Committee, The Government's Environmental Policy, Oral Evidence Session (1st November 2017, Q119 – 122)

nonetheless signed a voluntary commitment to reduce waste and improve packaging design. The voluntary Courtauld Commitment supports the UK Government's policy goal of a 'zero waste economy' and is managed by resource efficiency charity WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme). The third and most recent phase of the Courtauld Commitment includes the following target:

Improve packaging design through the supply chain to maximise recycled content as appropriate, improve recyclability and deliver product protection to reduce food waste, while ensuring there is no increase in the carbon impact of packaging by 2015, from a 2012 baseline.⁸⁰

51. We heard that manufacturers of plastic bottles have focused on reducing the tonnage of plastic used in their products, rather than on improving design for recyclability. Greenpeace conducted a survey of the top six global soft drinks companies, to examine industry plastic production rates and use of recycled PET. Greenpeace told us that the companies surveyed have focused their efforts on 'lightweighting'—i.e. making PET bottles thinner to reduce costs, plastic use and carbon emissions—or developing bioplastics which use alternatives to oil as a source material. Greenpeace told us that lightweight bottles still pose a threat to marine environments:

Lighter or bioplastic bottles still pose ingestion and choking hazards to marine life. They also still slowly break down into tiny pieces of plastic which can absorb toxic chemicals and contaminate the ocean food chain. Furthermore, lightweighting efforts have fallen far short of compensating for the huge growth in plastic production.⁸¹

52. The Courtauld Commitment makes a specific reference to maximising the use of recycled content. Producing a bottle from recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET) uses 75% less energy than producing a bottle from virgin plastic.⁸² We heard that Coca-Cola have committed to using 50% rPET by 2025, and that Ribena bottles are made only using rPET.⁸³ However, there is a lack of consistency across plastic bottle manufacturers, with no shared target on the use of rPET. When asked about a target, Gavin Partington from the British Soft Drinks Association said:

As soon as absolutely possible. We do not have a date set in mind but it is a very urgent ambition for us as a sector because we want to reuse as much of the materials that we have as possible.⁸⁴

53. We challenged Barry Turner, Director of Plastics and Flexible Packaging at the British Plastics Federation on whether legislation is required to halt the industry's continuing use of mixed polymer plastics which make a circular economy more difficult:

Chair: We have wrappings on plastic bottles of unrecyclable polymers, the Lucozade wrapping for example. Why do we need a plastic film wrapping around a plastic bottle?

80 <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/courtauld-commitment-3>

81 Greenpeace UK (PKG0064A)

82 British Plastics Federation & PlasticsEurope (PKG0106A)

83 Coca-Cola European Partners (PKG0061A and PKG0033B) and British Soft Drinks Association (PKG0069A)

84 Q277

Barry Turner: The industry does not really dictate what label a manufacturer puts on a bottle.

Q267 Chair: So it is not your problem?

Barry Turner: No, I am not saying it is not our problem. We advocate that they use the right material but we cannot—

Chair: Why aren't you?

Barry Turner: We cannot dictate to a brand what they choose to use.

Q268 Chair: You just give them anything they want and if it is unrecyclable that is fine?

Barry Turner: With all due respect, it is a commercial world. If we didn't someone else would.⁸⁵

54. Following this evidence session, The Times reported that the Lucozade Ribena Suntory bottles had committed to remove plastic films and sleeves on their bottles.⁸⁶

55. Lucozade Ribena Suntory's actions indicate that industry can take quick action when pressed in public to do so. The British Plastics Federation's research shows the need for good regulation to set international standards for sustainable materials. This would ensure that all companies adopt an ever-increasing percentage of recycled and recyclable plastic.

56. *We recommend that as part of its reform of PRO the Government phases in a mandated minimum 50% rPET content for the production of new plastic bottles by 2023 at the latest. This would create a UK market for recycled plastic, which struggles against low oil prices which make new plastic cheaper. Introducing this legislation would help create a circular economy by ensuring that plastics are reprocessed. The legislative requirement would be a minimum standard. We expect that the reformed producer responsibility regime set out in the previous section would drive further design innovation.*

85 Q266, Q267, Q268, See also Q285

86 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/lucozade-sport-to-ditch-unrecyclable-bottles-v0z8vlnlm>

5 Increasing Plastic Bottle Recycling

57. Waste management and litter collection are devolved matters in the United Kingdom. The devolved nations have responsibility to set their own recycling targets. Local authorities in England are responsible for waste collection, management and disposal.

Household Recycling

58. Since 2001, local councils have been responsible for running kerbside household recycling collections. These household collections are currently provided by over 99% of local authorities and have significantly increased household plastic bottle recycling levels, from 1% in 2001 to 57% today.⁸⁷ At present there are 326 waste collection authorities across England of which only 3 do not provide collection for plastic bottles.⁸⁸ The Local Government Association told us that the collection and disposal of waste is the third highest cost service for English local authorities. English councils spend £3.3 billion a year on recycling, collecting and disposing of waste.⁸⁹

59. In order to part-fund household collection, local authorities generate revenue by selling valuable materials to reprocessing facilities. The price is determined by the market value of the material, which is sensitive to demand for that material. We heard that local authorities throughout the UK achieve different recycling rates due to market-based constraints on what material they can sell to local waste re-processors. Lee Marshall explained:

On the consistency front, the local authority collections are a function of the products that are placed on the market in the first place and then the treatment processes and the end markets that are available. We can only collect what is there and we can only take it to what is there.⁹⁰

60. The Welsh Government has recently rationalised its local authority recycling system to increase collaboration among waste managers. Welsh local authorities have the opportunity to participate in a Collaborative Change Programme (CCP) to help ensure that Wales meets its recycling targets set out in Welsh waste strategy document, Towards Zero Waste. Towards Zero Waste sets statutory local authority recycling target of 70% by 2025.⁹¹ Wales now recycles 75% of plastic bottles through household collection.

61. By contrast, the UK recycling rate for plastic bottles has plateaued at around 57–58% since 2012. This means that every year 5.5 billion plastic bottles are not collected through the household recycling system. Councillor David Simmonds from the Local Government Association explained why:

Plastic is not heavy and the way in which we measure recyclables is by doing it on tonnage. It does not make a huge difference if a person puts a lot more plastic bottles in their household waste or a lot less... The other big factor

87 REcycling of Used Plastics Limited, 2017 RECOUP Household Collection Survey (June 2017)

88 As above and Q406

89 Local Government Association (PKG0076A)

90 Q374

91 Welsh Assembly Government, Towards Zero Waste One Wales: One Planet (June 2010)

we are seeing is local authorities having, quite reasonably, realised that the weight of plastic was not going to have a significant impact and have then moved on to those areas that do have a bigger impact.⁹²

62. The pressure to meet recycling targets, which are measured by weight rather than volume or financial value, creates a disincentive for local authorities to focus resources on the collection of plastic bottles. The recycling rate set by the EU is 50% by 2020, but the UK may miss that target. A lack of targets after 2020 also has a detrimental effect on investment in new reprocessing facilities as there is no long-term strategic signal being sent to the market by Government.

63. Under UN Sustainable Development Goal 12, the UK has committed to improving resource efficiency through sustainable and more responsible consumption and production.⁹³ The Goal includes 12 targets, of which two are particularly relevant to the issue of plastic bottle waste:

- a) By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.
- b) Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle.

64. The Government does not yet publish a comprehensive assessment of the UK's progress against the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In the meantime, the National Well-being Indicators provide a useful proxy for progress on sustainable development, as they cover environmental, social and economic issues. Of the 41 indicators measured by the Office for National Statistics, the National Audit Office (NAO) found that the amount of household waste collected for recycling was the only deteriorating indicator.⁹⁴ This suggests that the UK is not on track to meeting its target to substantially reduce waste generation by 2030 under SDG12. When asked about how the UK will ensure it reaches this target, Dr. Coffey told us that the Government was focusing on improving recycling rates in cities, as well as introducing food waste for every household.⁹⁵

65. Although nearly every local authority in the UK now provides household collection for recycling, the recycling rate for plastic bottles has plateaued in the last five years and the ONS found that household recycling rates are deteriorating. We have heard that plastic bottle recycling is stalling partly because recycling rates are measured by tonnage, which creates a disincentive for local authorities to focus on collection of lightweight, high-volume materials. We recommend that the Government sets a post-2020 recycling rate of 65%. Encouraging recycling of products which use high levels of energy when produced from virgin materials should be a priority. The British Plastics Federation told us that it takes 75% less energy to make a plastic bottle from recycled material than virgin materials. The Government should set out a timeline for this review process in the upcoming Waste and Resources Strategy.

92 Q369

93 United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal 12, 'Responsible Consumption and Production', Targets 5 and 6

94 National Audit Office, A Short Guide to Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development (September 2017)

95 Q416

On-the-Go Recycling

66. Although the UK provides recycling infrastructure for plastic bottles through household collection, we have heard that around 15% of the 13 billion plastic bottles used each year are used out of the home. Dr Coffey, told us that the UK has a particularly high on-the-go consumption pattern.⁹⁶ We have heard evidence that this is a significant factor in the stalling plastic bottle recycling rate. Hugo Tagholm from Surfers Against Sewage explained:

It seems there is no incentive for people to recycle these beverage containers when they are out and about and there certainly is not the infrastructure to capture them cleanly on our city streets.⁹⁷

67. The provision of on-street recycling bins is at the discretion of local councils, and their availability throughout the UK is low and inconsistent. RECOUP have found that only 46% of all UK local authorities provide on-the-go recycling infrastructure.⁹⁸ Lee Marshall, Chief Executive of the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee, explained the challenges of on-the-go recycling:

On-the-go recycling is difficult generally. There are not many local authorities that have on-the-go recycling schemes and in the ones that do, the quality of material they get is very poor. People are interested in recycling and have got recycling to a point but not necessarily enough that they are prepared to take the time and effort, on the go when we are all busy and rushing, to put the things in the right places, which then causes problems down the line at the sorting facilities and reprocessors.⁹⁹

68. Dr. Coffey told us that she was aware of the public demand for greater provision of on-the-go recycling facilities:

People do want to be able to recycle anywhere and everywhere. So that is where some of the litter strategy comes in. I recognise it is not that but it is about working with councils and businesses about improving ‘binfrastructure’ in order to make it as easy as possible for people to do these things.¹⁰⁰

69. The Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) which is partly funded by DEFRA, provides guidance for local councils on the provision of on-the-go and on-street recycling facilities.¹⁰¹ However, we have heard that providing on-the-go recycling is a financial and logistical burden for councils, as it is difficult to capture a clean stream of material due to contamination. Dr Sue Kinsey from the Marine Conservation Society explained that it is often more financially viable for local authorities to landfill waste from

96 Q397

97 Q164

98 RECYcling of Used Plastics Limited, 2017 RECOUP Household Collection Survey (June 2017)

99 Q391

100 Q478

101 www.wrap.org.uk/content/recycle-go-guidance-england

on-the-go recycling bins due to the levels of contamination.¹⁰² In 2013–14, a Freedom of Information request from the BBC found that 97% of contaminated recyclable waste was sent to landfill or incineration instead of being sorted for recycling.¹⁰³

Deposit Return Scheme

70. The flat-lining rate of plastic bottle recycling indicates that the UK requires an effective system to capture all plastic bottles, including those used on-the-go. Better prevention and recycling measures would complement one another.¹⁰⁴

71. Throughout this inquiry we have heard a considerable amount of evidence about the potential of a Deposit Return Scheme as a solution to plastic bottle waste. DEFRA has recently established the Voluntary and Economic Incentives Working group to look at measures that can reduce littered and improve recycling and reuse of packaging.¹⁰⁵ The working group has begun by looking at measures for drinks containers, such as deposit return schemes, and will publish its findings shortly.

72. Deposit return schemes (DRS) encourage the return of plastic bottles into an organised recycling process. A DRS involves adding a small deposit on top of the price of a drink, which is then refunded to the consumer when the bottle is returned to an in-store collection point or reverse vending machine system. These bottles are then collected and taken for sorting and reprocessing. This creates resource efficiency for plastic bottles, as the recycled content can be reprocessed into new plastic bottles.

73. The UK has an opportunity to consult widely on the types of bottle to include in a Deposit Return Scheme. Additionally, there may be scope to include other beverage containers such as aluminium cans in the scheme, as happens in many other countries.

74. Deposit Return Schemes are currently in operation in around 40 countries worldwide as well as 21 US States. Typically, countries with Deposit Return schemes for plastic bottles achieve recycling rates of approximately 80 – 95%. Eunomia Research & Consulting and Coca-Cola European Partners have estimated that a similarly strong recycling rate could be expected if a Deposit Return Scheme was introduced in the UK.¹⁰⁶ In September 2017, the Scottish Government announced that it intends to introduce a deposit return scheme for drinks cans and bottles. We have heard that, while it is not essential that the nations of the UK have identical Deposit Return Schemes, it would be beneficial if they had Schemes that were compatible with one another.¹⁰⁷

75. A recent YouGov poll found that 73% of people are in favour of introducing a Deposit Return Scheme in the UK. An e-petition calling for a UK-wide Deposit Return Scheme started by Surfers Against Sewage currently has over 230,000 signatories.¹⁰⁸ There is also significant support from the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Marine Conservation Society and Coca-Cola, amongst others.

102 Q190

103 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37159581>

104 Q193, Q194

105 <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/call-for-evidence-drinks-containers/>

106 Eunomia Research and Consulting (PKG0086A), Coca-Cola European Partners (PKG0061A), Q235

107 Q230, Q231, Q234

108 <https://www.sas.org.uk/messageinabottle/>

76. We have heard that providing a small financial incentive to return plastic bottles helps people understand their true economic value.¹⁰⁹ The success of the plastic carrier bag charge which saw an 83% reduction in the use of plastic bags in the first year suggests that financial incentives do cause a rapid behavioural change.¹¹⁰ Derek Robertson, CEO of Keep Scotland Beautiful, explained:

One of the things that we see as an organisation is we have a social norm where it is now generally accepted that people can throw away and I think we need to shift that social norm. I don't think people understand the value in the product. A plastic bottle is quite a valuable thing. It has a structure to it and it can be reused, but I don't think the public realise the value in the product. We lack a consistency and a national message.¹¹¹

77. Taxpayers currently fund most of the cost of recycling and disposal of 13 billion plastic bottles each year.¹¹² A Deposit Return Scheme seeks to provide an alternative funding mechanism for the collection and reprocessing of plastic bottles based on the polluter pays principle. Dr Chris Sherrington from Eunomia Research and Consulting explained:

Typically in a well-designed deposit scheme, the unredeemed deposits, along with the value of the high quality materials that are collected, are two of the key sources of funding to the scheme. Then the top-up is provided by the producers. The producer fees pretty much make up the difference between the revenue for the materials and the unredeemed deposits.¹¹³

78. We heard that the deposit on a plastic bottle should be around 10 – 20 pence as, at this level, an optimum percentage of people would redeem the deposit, ensuring a high return rate while preserving some funding for the system through unredeemed deposits.¹¹⁴ We also heard that it is vital to maintain an element of flexibility in the size of the deposit to enable it to be modified with inflation.¹¹⁵

Legislated vs Voluntary Deposit Return Schemes

79. We heard that management of the revenue generated by a Deposit Return Scheme should be the responsibility of a dedicated not-for-profit organisation.¹¹⁶ However, we heard differing views about whether a Deposit Return Scheme should be legislated or voluntary. For example, Norway's Deposit Return Scheme was voluntarily created by plastic bottle producers to avoid tax on plastic bottle packaging. In Norway, non-refillable beverage packaging carries both a basic levy and an environmental levy that falls on the producer. The size of the environmental levy falls as the rate of packaging recycling increases, and once the recycling rate reaches 95% it ceases to be applied at all. The Norwegian beverage

109 Q189, Marine Conservation Society (PKG0030A)

110 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carrier-bag-charge-summary-of-data-in-england/single-use-plastic-carrier-bags-charge-data-in-england-for-2016-to-2017>

111 Q166

112 Q361, Eunomia Research & Consulting (PKG0086A) Local Government Association (PKG0076A)

113 Q229

114 Q237

115 Q237

116 Q220, Q256

industry currently recycles 95% of plastic drinks bottles, removing the environmental levy.¹¹⁷ We heard support for this kind of voluntary system from Eunomia Research and Consulting and the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

80. However, Nick Brown, Head of Sustainability at Coca-Cola European Partners stressed the importance of legislated system to “level the playing field to make sure that everyone plays a role, plays their part.”¹¹⁸ Nick Brown claimed that, from experience of participating in Deposit Return Schemes in other countries, plastic bottle producers benefit in a number of ways:

Improved recovery rates of packaging, improved quality of the packaging so more of it can be reused and they do make a contribution towards littering, which is something we feel very passionately and very strongly about.¹¹⁹

81. As the UK would be layering a Deposit Return Scheme on top of a pre-existing local authority recycling system, it might be more suitable to have a legislated Deposit Return Scheme here in the UK to ensure that the concerns of local authorities are adequately accounted for in the design of the scheme..

Impact on Local Authorities

82. We heard concern from local authorities that a Deposit Return Scheme divert valuable materials away from household recycling.¹²⁰ Local authorities sell the materials they collect from households to generate the necessary revenue to fund collection. On average, a tonne of PET is worth £127. However, Dr. Chris Sherrington from Eunomia explained this loss of material revenue would be balanced out through other gains from a Deposit Return scheme:

Material revenues will be lost. The aluminium is high value and the plastic and glass. There is no question of material value revenues will decline. But we looked at the efficiencies in the collection. Collections can be strained by volume or by weight and we looked at a number of different situations. We have savings on the sorting. You have, importantly, savings on the beverage containers that end up in the residual waste stream. That will go for incineration or landfill. This is much more expensive, so stuff that is littered or in litter bins would typically end up in those routes. So you save money there.¹²¹

83. However, local authorities are concerned that Eunomia’s research did not effectively take into account the impact of layering a Deposit Return Scheme over the UK’s existing household recycling system. Lee Marshall from the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Service explained:

The trouble you have with this is that it will vary local authority to local authority depending on their circumstances. If you have a local authority that has low disposal costs and access to good recycling then the impact on

117 Q320, Q231

118 Q216

119 Q211, Q222

120 Q381 – Q385

121 Q255

them will be far greater than if you have a local authority that has very high disposal costs. It is difficult to draw a conclusion by aggregating a model over, say for argument's sake, 10 local authorities and saying, "This is what would happen in the UK".¹²²

84. To account for this, Eunomia have suggested that revised working practices be put in place to ensure that savings are shared appropriately in the UK's two tier waste management system.¹²³ For instance, this could involve councils responsible for waste disposal - who would reap the benefits of reduced landfill tax and litter clearing - to share their profits with local authorities who are responsible for waste collection, to ensure the financial rewards of a Deposit Return Scheme reach local authorities. Local Authority Waste Partnerships also have potential to create a simpler system whereby a single client takes responsibility for organising waste collection and treatment/disposal.¹²⁴ Additionally, if producer responsibility schemes were adapted to make producers more financially responsible for packaging disposal, local authorities would bear less of the cost than they currently do.¹²⁵

85. We have heard that reduced litter clearing costs would be one of the biggest financial savings for local authorities created by the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme.¹²⁶ Eunomia have estimated that a Deposit Return Scheme could reduce littering of plastic bottles by 80%, resulting in 600,000 fewer plastic bottles being littered every day.¹²⁷ Eunomia calculated that overall, this would save English local authorities £35 million per year.¹²⁸

86. The beverage industry and some NGO representatives were concerned that a Deposit Return Scheme would only address a small proportion of the UK's litter problem.¹²⁹ However, in line with the theory that plastic bottles disproportionately encourage further littering, Dr. Sue Kinsey from the Marine Conservation Society emphasised that a Deposit Return Scheme for beverage containers could lead to positive gains:

Something that is specifically targeted at bottles and cans is only going to solve that part of the littering problem but that is quite a significant part of the littering problem. As we can see from the carrier bag charge, that kind of mindset, people thinking about environmental matters and litter, does carry over into further behaviour in their normal lives. I believe that targeting the beverage containers will make people think further about other types of littering as well.¹³⁰

87. Environmental Psychologist, Professor Wouter Poortinga from Cardiff University explained that environmental policies often produce a 'spill-over effect'. Professor

122 Q381

123 Eunomia Research & Consulting, Impacts of a Deposit Refund System on Local Authority Waste Services (October 2017)

124 Q255

125 Q358, Q374

126 Have You Got the Bottle? (PKG0078A)

127 Eunomia Research and Consulting (PKG0086A)

128 Q255, Eunomia Research & Consulting, Impacts of a Deposit Refund System on Local Authority Waste Services (October 2017)

129 Q170, Q309, British Plastics Federation (PKG0058A)

130 Q170

Poortinga noted that following the introduction of the plastic bag charge, people “became more supportive of other charges to reduce waste” indicating that UK consumers are likely to be receptive to the concept of a Deposit Return Scheme.¹³¹

Impact on Retailers

88. Several retail bodies have expressed concern that a Deposit Return Scheme would cause significant operational and financial burdens for smaller shops and stores. Based on data from Zero Waste Scotland, the Association of Convenience Stores has calculated that on average, 180 drinks containers would be returned to each convenience store each day.¹³² Chief Executive of Association of Convenience Stores, James Lowman told us:

In our sector, there would be very significant costs to our small stores in terms of the proportion of space taken up by a reverse vending solution and manual returns. Every member I speak to says that the idea of taking back dirty containers over a counter where you are selling food is just not feasible.¹³³

89. The Association of Convenience Stores told us that to accommodate an RVS, supermarkets would lose approximately £62,000 worth of retail space every year. There is no estimate for similar costs to small convenience stores.¹³⁴

90. However, as in other countries with Deposit Return Schemes such as Norway, it would be feasible to provide participating shops with a handling fee to cover the costs of operating a Deposit Return Scheme. Additionally, many other schemes include an exemption for small convenience stores within the design of their Deposit Return Scheme. Dr. Sue Kinsey from the Marine Conservation Society explained:

In most of the systems that are in operation around the world, there is a size limitation for shops. They do not have to take part if they are below a certain square footage but they can if they want to. I know in certain countries, even though small businesses are below that limit, they choose to take part because it is beneficial for them. They get a handling fee for the products that they take back and also they have footfall through their shop that may encourage people to spend more in their shop.¹³⁵

91. When we asked James Lowman from the Association of Convenience stores if they would be in favour of a Deposit Return Scheme if small stores were exempted, he responded:

I am concerned about any exemption. It is not a case it would take people - rather than coming to our store it would give them a reason to go to a larger store, so that is our concern[...] I think that working on a system where there are incentives for smaller stores to opt in might lead to some sort of network that we would need to make a scheme effective.¹³⁶

131 Professor Wouter Poortinga (PKG0026A), Robert Hickman (PKG0108A)

132 Association of Convenience Stores (PKG0014A)

133 Q309

134 Association of Convenience Stores (PKG0014A)

135 Q206

136 Q350

92. Dr. Chris Sherrington from Eunomia also discussed the possibility of small retailers working together:

One thing they can do in many places is if you have a lot of small stores nearby they can set up a communal return point, which can be a reverse vending machine in a shopping centre, that kind of thing. But just putting a blanket exemption for their participation on principle is not a sensible approach.¹³⁷

93. **We have heard that Deposit Return Schemes for plastic bottles and cans achieve very high recycling rates. They help to facilitate a circular economy, as well as cutting down on the third most common litter type in the UK. A Deposit Return Scheme presents the opportunity to create a cohesive recycling mechanism for plastic bottles and other beverage containers throughout the UK. This could help boost the current stalling rate from 57% to around 80 – 90%. In particular, Deposit Return Schemes would capture the plastic bottles that are used on-the-go that currently escape household recycling. Deposit Return Schemes introduce a financial incentive for consumers to return their plastic bottles thereby reducing litter. We have also heard that a Scheme may encourage people to think twice about littering other items, due to the ‘spill-over’ effect. We have heard serious and legitimate concerns about the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme from local authorities, plastic bottle producers and retailers, however we heard that a well-designed Deposit Return Scheme can overcome these concerns.**

94. *We recommend that the Government introduces a legislated Deposit Return Scheme for all PET plastic drinks bottles. The upcoming Waste Strategy should also examine whether to introduce a Deposit Return Scheme for other beverage containers, such as aluminium cans, to foster a culture of recycling packaging used on-the-go. It is vital that a Deposit Return Scheme is well-designed. It should be created after a consultation with stakeholders such as manufacturers, retailers and local authorities. Consultation should build upon the working group already in place and examine the innovations suggested to improve the functioning of a Deposit Return Scheme, such as local authority collaboration and retailer partnerships. We particularly encourage collaboration with Zero Waste Scotland, who are responsible for planning Scotland’s Deposit Return Scheme. Based on research, the scheme should place a 10 – 20p deposit on top of the price of product that will be refunded to the consumer upon return of the bottle or can. We believe a Deposit Return Scheme will create a source of good quality recycled plastic for manufacturers, therefore ensuring that fewer plastic bottles are incinerated, landfilled or littered in land or at sea.*

Conclusions and recommendations

Preventing Plastic Bottle Waste

1. The UK uses 38.5 million plastic bottles every day, of which 15 million are not recycled. 700,000 plastic bottles are littered every day, encouraging more littering and causing damage to natural habitats and human well-being. Plastic bottle waste is not simply a recycling or environmental issue; it is a social issue with considerable direct and indirect costs for taxpayers through litter picking and healthcare. (Paragraph 17)
2. Following the weak analysis of marine litter made in the UK Marine Strategy Part Three, we recommend that the Government set out a timescale for publishing a more accurate assessment of the current levels, properties and impacts of marine litter and the steps it will take to protect our oceans from plastic pollution. The rising tide of plastic waste in the ocean has been described by UN Oceans Chief as a “planetary crisis” and there is increasing public appetite for urgent action in this area. The Government has committed to protecting the marine environment from all kinds of pollution, including plastic pollution, under UN Sustainable Development Goal 14. However, the Government has only recently begun to address this by exploring the potential of a tax on single-use plastics. We have heard that tackling plastic pollution at source is the most effective way to mitigate the damage caused by larger plastic items, such as plastic bottles, as well as microplastics. The Marine Strategy Part One found that “significant amounts of litter appear in our seas and on our beaches”, bringing environmental and economic damage. At the very least the Government should increase clean-up resources to coastal areas, where, by function of tide or topography there is a large plastic pollution problem. We urge the Government to introduce a ‘Coastal Clean-up’ fund to support the removal of plastic from our beaches and seas. (Paragraph 24)

Preventing Plastic Bottle Use

3. *Access to clean drinking water is a basic human right. The Government should prioritise reducing the use of plastic bottles. We believe that small changes can deliver big results. The UK has a ready supply of safe, clean tap water, yet the consumption of bottled water continues to grow. We have heard that providing more free drinking water taps and fountains in public spaces could lead to a 65% reduction in the use of plastic water bottles, but there is no obligation for unlicensed premises to provide free drinking water. We call on the Government to introduce a regulation for all public premises which serve food or drink to provide free drinking water on request, including sports centres and leisure centres. Businesses should volunteer to get involved with community water schemes such as Refill Bristol to advertise their provision of free drinking water. (Paragraph 32)*
4. *There are very few water fountains in parks and other public spaces. There are none in Manchester or Merseyside, one in West Yorkshire, and four in the West Midlands. We believe that the provision of free water fountains provides an opportunity for water companies to demonstrate their corporate social responsibility. We were disappointed*

not to receive evidence from water companies given their filtration and sewage systems remove huge amounts of plastic debris from waterways. Yorkshire Water has installed three fountains in Hull, as part of their celebration of being 2017 City of Culture, we urge other water companies to follow suit. The Government should review the health and litter-reducing benefits of providing public water fountains, amend the Water Industry Act 1991 to give water companies formal powers to erect water fountains. Additionally, the Government should run a wide-reaching communications campaign to actively promote the use of refillable bottles to ensure that new water fountains and refill stations within shops and transportation hubs are used. (Paragraph 33)

5. *Parliament and Government departments must show leadership and ban the sale of disposable plastic bottles in their buildings—providing water fountains and reusable bottles instead. We would like to see a plastic-free Parliament. (Paragraph 34)*

Shifting the Financial Burden of Packaging Waste

6. *Currently, taxpayers cover around 90% of the costs of packaging waste disposal, indicating that the producer responsibility scheme is not working as it should. The Government's commitment to explore potential reforms to the UK's current producer responsibility schemes is long overdue. Industry has been calling for reform for years. In order to make packaging producers more responsible for the type of products they are putting on the market, we recommend that the Government adapts a producer responsibility compliance fee structure that stimulates the use of recycled plastic, rewards design for recyclability, and increases costs for packaging that is difficult to recycle or reuse. This would incentivise producers to use more sustainable packaging, whilst reducing the costs on taxpayers. Additionally we recommend that the Government lower the de minimis packaging handling threshold from 50 tonnes to 1 tonne. This would ensure that all businesses who handle a significant amount of packaging are obligated to recycle. (Paragraph 47)*
7. *The Environment Agency, which regulates Packaging Recovery Notes, told us they have no regulatory control over how the revenue from Packaging Recovery Notes is spent. Figures show that there is low investment in UK reprocessing facilities compared with waste exportation. This is grossly inefficient. We support industry calls for greater transparency over how recovery note revenue is spent and recommend the Government to require all waste reprocessors to report detailed information on actions funded by recovery notes. Waste reprocessors should be held accountable to the Environment Agency for exactly how they spend packaging recovery revenue, especially if they fund export considerably more than domestic reprocessing. This would provide sustainable investment to boost the UK's domestic recycling capabilities, as well as greater financial assistance to local authorities. Given the recent Chinese ban on mixed plastic waste from the UK, this investment is both urgent, to avoid a huge increase in landfill, and will save money and create jobs in the long run. (Paragraph 48)*
8. *We recommend that as part of its reform of PRO the Government phases in a mandated minimum 50% rPET content for the production of new plastic bottles by 2023 at the latest. This would create a UK market for recycled plastic, which struggles against low oil prices which make new plastic cheaper. Introducing this legislation would help create a circular economy by ensuring that plastics are reprocessed. The*

legislative requirement would be a minimum standard. We expect that the reformed producer responsibility regime set out in the previous section would drive further design innovation. (Paragraph 56)

Improving Plastic Bottle Recycling

9. *Although nearly every local authority in the UK now provides household collection for recycling, the recycling rate for plastic bottles has plateaued in the last five years and the ONS found that household recycling rates are deteriorating. We have heard that plastic bottle recycling is stalling partly because recycling rates are measured by tonnage, which creates a disincentive for local authorities to focus on collection of lightweight, high-volume materials. We recommend that the Government sets a post-2020 recycling rate of 65%. Encouraging recycling of products which use high levels of energy when produced from virgin materials should be a priority. The British Plastics Federation told us that it takes 75% less energy to make a plastic bottle from recycled material than virgin materials. The Government should set out a timeline for this review process in the upcoming Waste and Resources Strategy. (Paragraph 65)*
10. *We have heard that Deposit Return Schemes for plastic bottles and cans achieve very high recycling rates. They help to facilitate a circular economy, as well as cutting down on the third most common litter type in the UK. A Deposit Return Scheme presents the opportunity to create a cohesive recycling mechanism for plastic bottles and other beverage containers throughout the UK. This could help boost the current stalling rate from 57% to around 80 – 90%. In particular, Deposit Return Schemes would capture the plastic bottles that are used on-the-go that currently escape household recycling. Deposit Return Schemes introduce a financial incentive for consumers to return their plastic bottles thereby reducing litter. We have also heard that a Scheme may encourage people to think twice about littering other items, due to the ‘spill-over’ effect. We have heard serious and legitimate concerns about the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme from local authorities, plastic bottle producers and retailers, however we heard that a well-designed Deposit Return Scheme can overcome these concerns. (Paragraph 93)*
11. *We recommend that the Government introduces a legislated Deposit Return Scheme for all PET plastic drinks bottles. The upcoming Waste Strategy should also examine whether to introduce a Deposit Return Scheme for other beverage containers, such as aluminium cans, to foster a culture of recycling packaging used on-the-go. It is vital that a Deposit Return Scheme is well-designed. It should be created after a consultation with stakeholders such as manufacturers, retailers and local authorities. Consultation should build upon the working group already in place and examine the innovations suggested to improve the functioning of a Deposit Return Scheme, such as local authority collaboration and retailer partnerships. We particularly encourage collaboration with Zero Waste Scotland, who are responsible for planning Scotland’s Deposit Return Scheme. Based on research, the scheme should place a 10 – 20p deposit on top of the price of product that will be refunded to the consumer upon return of the bottle or can. We believe a Deposit Return Scheme will create a source of good quality recycled plastic for manufacturers, therefore ensuring that fewer plastic bottles are incinerated, landfilled or littered in land or at sea. (Paragraph 94)*

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 19 December 2017

Members present:

Mary Creagh, in the Chair

Colin Clark	Anna McMorris
Caroline Lucas	John McNally
Kerry McCarthy	

Draft Report (*Plastic bottles: Turning Back the Plastic Tide*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Paragraphs 1 to 94 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[The Committee adjourned

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 10 October 2017

Question number

Richard McIlwain, Deputy Chief Executive, Keep Britain Tidy, **Gavin Ellis**, Co-founder, Hubbub Foundation UK, and **Professor Wouter Poortinga**, Professor of Environmental Psychology, Welsh School of Architecture

[Q1–57](#)

Oliver Rosevear, Energy and Environment Manager, Costa Coffee, **Martin Kersh**, Executive Director, Foodservice Packaging Association, **Neil Whittall**, Chair, the Paper Cup Recovery and Recycling Group, and **Martin Myerscough**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Frugalpac

[Q58–161](#)

Tuesday 17 October 2017

Fiona Llewellyn, Project Manager, One Less Campaign, **Dr Sue Kinsey**, Senior Pollution Officer, Marine Conservative Society, **Hugo Tagholm**, Chief Executive, Surfers Against Sewage, and **Derek Robertson**, CEO, Keep Scotland Beautiful

[Q162–207](#)

Dr Chris Sherrington, Head of Environmental Policy and Economics, Eunomia Research & Consulting, **Nick Brown**, Head of Sustainability, Coca-Cola European Partners, **John Mayhew**, Director of the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (charity that spearheads Have You Got the Bottle?), and **Sam Harding**, Head of Litter Programme, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England

[Q208–259](#)

Tuesday 24 October 2017

James Lowman, Chief Executive, Association of Convenience Stores, **Alice Ellison**, Head of Environment, British Retail Consortium, **Barry Turner**, Director of Plastics and Flexible Packaging, British Plastics Federation, and **Gavin Partington**, Director General, British Soft Drinks Association

[Q260–353](#)

Councillor David Simmonds CBE, Vice-Chairman, Local Government Association, **Lee Marshall**, Chief Executive Officer, Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee, and **Jakob Rindegren**, Recycling Policy Adviser, Environmental Services Association

[Q354–396](#)

Tuesday 31 October 2017

Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and **Chris Preston**, Deputy Director, Waste and Recycling, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

[Q397–544](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

PKG numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete

- 1 #OneLess campaign ([PKG0031](#))
- 2 38 Degrees ([PKG0037](#))
- 3 Andrew Brooks ([PKG0041](#))
- 4 Ask the Q ([PKG0004](#))
- 5 Ask the Q ([PKG0007](#))
- 6 Association of Convenience Stores ([PKG0014](#))
- 7 Axion Recycling ([PKG0021](#))
- 8 Bio-Based and Biodegradable Industries Association (BBIA) ([PKG0010](#))
- 9 BRITA UK ([PKG0008](#))
- 10 Chris Hesketh ([PKG0002](#))
- 11 Coca-Cola European Partners and Coca-Cola Great Britain ([PKG0033](#))
- 12 Confederation of Paper Industries ([PKG0042](#))
- 13 Costa ([PKG0040](#))
- 14 Defra ([PKG0017](#))
- 15 DEFRA ([PKG0045](#))
- 16 Delipac Ltd ([PKG0011](#))
- 17 Environment Agency ([PKG0043](#))
- 18 Eunomia Research & Consulting Ltd ([PKG0025](#))
- 19 Fidra ([PKG0019](#))
- 20 Field Studies Council ([PKG0013](#))
- 21 Green Alliance ([PKG0026](#))
- 22 Hildegard Hill ([PKG0029](#))
- 23 Marine Conservation Society ([PKG0030](#))
- 24 Mr Andy Ward ([PKG0034](#))
- 25 Mr Brendan Thomas ([PKG0003](#))
- 26 Mr James Marsden ([PKG0009](#))
- 27 Natural Hydration Council ([PKG0032](#))
- 28 Ofwat ([PKG0044](#))
- 29 Professor ERIC GOODYER ([PKG0001](#))
- 30 Recycle Waste International ([PKG0035](#))
- 31 Sue Duerdoth ([PKG0038](#))
- 32 Surfers Against Sewage ([PKG0027](#))
- 33 The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland ([PKG0015](#))

- 34 The Printed Cup Company ([PKG0005](#))
- 35 U.W.T.S.D. Lampeter ([PKG0023](#))
- 36 UWTSD ([PKG0006](#))
- 37 Valpak Limited ([PKG0012](#))
- 38 Vegware ([PKG0016](#))
- 39 Whale and Dolphin Conservation ([PKG0018](#))
- 40 Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PKG0020](#))
- 41 Wimborne War on Waste ([PKG0024](#))
- 42 Wine and Spirit Trade Association ([PKG0039](#))
- 43 WRAP ([PKG0036](#)).

The following written evidence was received in the last Parliament by the previous Committee for this inquiry and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

- 1 #OneLess Campaign ([PKG0083](#))
- 2 Alison Finn ([PKG0025](#))
- 3 Alliance for Beverage Cartons and the Environment (ACE UK) ([PKG0043](#))
- 4 Andrew Ward ([PKG0041](#))
- 5 Anonymous submission ([PKG0001](#))
- 6 Association of Convenience Stores ([PKG0068](#))
- 7 Axion Recycling ([PKG0062](#))
- 8 Bericap UK Ltd ([PKG0060](#))
- 9 BIO BASED AND BIODEGRADABLE INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION ([PKG0052](#))
- 10 British Beer and Pub Association ([PKG0080](#))
- 11 British Plastics Federation & PlasticsEurope ([PKG0058](#))
- 12 British Retail Consortium ([PKG0109](#))
- 13 British Soft Drinks Association ([PKG0069](#))
- 14 Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) ([PKG0081](#))
- 15 Coca-Cola European Partners ([PKG0061](#))
- 16 Confederation of Paper Industries ([PKG0037](#))
- 17 Cornish Plastic Pollution Coalition ([PKG0028](#))
- 18 Costa Coffee ([PKG0107](#))
- 19 David Orr ([PKG0014](#))
- 20 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ([PKG0110](#))
- 21 Dr Jennifer Ferreira ([PKG0009](#))
- 22 DS Smith ([PKG0059](#))
- 23 Ecosurety Ltd ([PKG0075](#))
- 24 Ellon@Heart ([PKG0055](#))
- 25 Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) ([PKG0066](#))

- 26 Environmental Services Association (ESA) ([PKG0046](#))
- 27 Eunomia Research & Consulting Ltd ([PKG0086](#))
- 28 Federation of Wholesale Distributors ([PKG0073](#))
- 29 Fidra ([PKG0044](#))
- 30 Floreon- Transforming Packaging Ltd ([PKG0071](#))
- 31 Foodservice Packaging Association ([PKG0067](#))
- 32 Frugalpac ([PKG0050](#))
- 33 Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures ([PKG0088](#))
- 34 Green Zone Community Climate Action ([PKG0002](#))
- 35 Greenpeace UK ([PKG0064](#))
- 36 GreenTech Corporation Ltd ([PKG0005](#))
- 37 Guy Hodgson ([PKG0113](#))
- 38 Have You Got The Bottle? ([PKG0078](#))
- 39 Hubbub Foundation UK ([PKG0079](#))
- 40 Hugh Counsell ([PKG0012](#))
- 41 Ian Nendick ([PKG0031](#))
- 42 INCPEN ([PKG0040](#))
- 43 Keep Britain Tidy ([PKG0084](#))
- 44 Keep Scotland Beautiful ([PKG0072](#))
- 45 LARAC ([PKG0054](#))
- 46 LINPAC GROUP ([PKG0039](#))
- 47 Local Government Association ([PKG0076](#))
- 48 London Councils ([PKG0045](#))
- 49 Marine Conservation Society ([PKG0074](#))
- 50 Michael M Armstrong-MacDonnell ([PKG0011](#))
- 51 Miss Harriet Cherry ([PKG0023](#))
- 52 Mr alexander melman ([PKG0020](#))
- 53 Mr David Perrow ([PKG0007](#))
- 54 Mr Ian Barr ([PKG0015](#))
- 55 Mr Michael Baker ([PKG0016](#))
- 56 Mr Robert Hickman ([PKG0108](#))
- 57 Mr Robert Shacklock ([PKG0019](#))
- 58 Mr Sam Elgar ([PKG0008](#))
- 59 Mr Thomas Cribb ([PKG0022](#))
- 60 Mrs Dawn Haig-Thomas ([PKG0013](#))
- 61 Mrs Marie Power ([PKG0034](#))
- 62 Ms Susan Hedley ([PKG0033](#))
- 63 Natural History Museum ([PKG0027](#))

- 64 Nicholas Cater ([PKG0032](#))
- 65 Penryn Town Council ([PKG0063](#))
- 66 Port of London Authority ([PKG0077](#))
- 67 Project Integra ([PKG0057](#))
- 68 Public & Commercial Services Union ([PKG0042](#))
- 69 RECOUP ([PKG0085](#))
- 70 Royal Holloway ([PKG0030](#))
- 71 RPC-BPI Group ([PKG0106](#))
- 72 Smart Planet Technologies ([PKG0049](#))
- 73 Starbucks Coffee Company ([PKG0089](#))
- 74 Surfers Against Sewage ([PKG0047](#))
- 75 Thames21 ([PKG0087](#))
- 76 The Big Green Pellet Co Ltd ([PKG0004](#))
- 77 The Independent Packaging Environment and Safety Forum ([PKG0029](#))
- 78 The Paper Cup Recovery and Recycling Group ([PKG0070](#))
- 79 The Renewable Energy Association ([PKG0048](#))
- 80 Transition Falmouth ([PKG0035](#))
- 81 Valpak Limited ([PKG0038](#))
- 82 Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University Wouter Poortinga ([PKG0026](#))
- 83 Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PKG0082](#))
- 84 Wilson Bio-Chemical ([PKG0065](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2017–19

First Special Report	The Future of Chemicals Regulation after the EU Referendum: Government Response to the Committee's Eleventh Report of Session 2016–17	HC 313
Second Special Report	Marine Protected Areas Revisited: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 314
Third Special Report	Sustainable Development Goals in the UK: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 616