

Petitioner submission of 5 July 2023

PE1997/E: Introduce mandatory braille labelling for food products sold in Scotland

We want to thank Food Standards Scotland for their letter dated the 12 May 2023, updating us on the progress of adding braille labels to food packaging in Scotland. We appreciate their response and perspective, and understand that significant progress is unlikely to be made in the short term. We understand that the issue needs to be considered on a UK-wide basis with the UK Government, and want to thank them for taking the petition to the attention of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in Wales and Northern Ireland. We also understand that they need to prioritise which different parts of food labelling to develop.

We would, however, like to reiterate the importance of food products being accessible and safe for blind and partially sighted people, as well as the difference that having braille labelling on food products would make. Our campaign group met recently to discuss the response and in order to develop our campaign further, we are soon to be putting out a poll to our various audiences to get feedback from individuals on the general accessibility of food packaging, including braille. We hope to gather a bank of real-life experiences to help support the call going forward. We will continue to campaign to ensure that braille labels do one day, hopefully soon, exist on food products across the UK. There is a need for this to happen and we know that the need can be met, we also know that it is not expensive. The pharmaceutical industry, one or two food manufacturers and at least one cosmetic company that we are aware of, have provided braille labelling on their products which demonstrates that it is possible.

We would also like take this opportunity to raise our wider work regarding accessible packaging, issues which sit alongside braille labelling. As a campaign group, we repeatedly hear from people with visual impairment about inaccessible packaging which makes it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to identify and use food products. We find small inaccessible print, busy packaging with lots of text, and the absence of colour contrast to repeatedly come up as issues. The use of NaviLens, as well as QR codes which can be scanned to access information, are helpful but need to be used in combination with

techniques such as large print, simple designs, colour contrast and clear fonts to ensure packaging is truly accessible for all.

We would be very happy to meet Food Standards Scotland, preferably online, to discuss the importance of accessible packaging further.

It would be great if Food Standards Scotland could keep us up to date with any developments that occur regarding braille labelling and accessible packaging, and we hope to speak to them soon.