

# **PE2164/A: Ban all non-essential single-use plastics**

## **Scottish Government written submission, 10 June 2025**

**Does the Scottish Government consider the specific ask[s] of the petition to be practical or achievable? If not, please explain why.**

The Scottish Government understands the intention behind the petition and shares the ambition to tackle the environmental impact of problematic single-use plastic products. However, the petition has a very broad scope and raises a number of complex issues. We have already taken, or are taking, action in relation to some of the asks in the petition, and the remaining asks may not be practical or achievable; and further detailed evidence gathering, consultation and impact assessments would be required in order to assess the petition's asks on which action is not yet being taken.

The complexity of issues associated with measures to tackle single-use plastic items was, for example, highlighted by Scottish Government's 2022 call for evidence on tackling consumption of single-use food containers and other commonly littered or problematic single-use items (bowls, trays and platters; incontinence and period products; sachets; tobacco filters; and fruit and vegetable packaging).

A wide range of evidence was presented by respondents about the environmental, economic and social issues associated with single-use plastic items and products.

Key themes that emerged from this call for evidence included: litter and the environmental damage littering of single-use plastics can cause; the large and complex market associated with single-use plastics and the range of industry and business interests at stake; that environmentally-friendly alternative products are available but there are a range of negative impacts and challenges associated with these; that barriers to change include consumer behaviours, business costs and the complexity of policy and regulations.

Responses also pointed to a need to consider inequalities in society and how those who experience socio-economic disadvantage and those with protected characteristics may be impacted by policy development in this area.

The analysis suggested that there may be a lack of data and evidence available across a number of items and topic areas and further analysis was needed.

**What, if any, action the Scottish Government is currently taking to address the issues raised by this petition, and is any further action being considered that will achieve the ask[s] of this petition?**

The Scottish Government is committed to delivering a different approach to our economy, one where we move from a "take, make and dispose" model to one where we value materials and keep them in use. Our Circular Economy and Waste Route Map, published in December 2024, sets out a range of priority and supporting actions to accelerate progress towards a circular economy, including developing further measures to tackle consumption of problematic single-use items and promote uptake of reusable alternatives.

The Scottish Government is taking action on the issues raised in this petition by taking targeted action to combat the environmental impact of some of the most problematic single-use plastic products. Further information on a range of action taken or planned is set out below.

### **Single-use plastics**

The Scottish Government is committed to matching or exceeding the standards set out by the EU Directive 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment where we are able to do so and in a manner that contributes towards maintaining and advancing standards.

For example, the Environmental Protection (Cotton Buds) (Scotland) Regulations 2019 ban the manufacture and/or supply of plastic-stemmed cotton buds. the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 ban the manufacture and/or supply of some of the most problematic single-use plastic products, such as expanded polystyrene beverage containers or cups, expanded polystyrene food containers, plastic stirrers, plastic cutlery and plastic plates, plastic balloon sticks and plastic straws (subject to some limited exemptions).

The Scottish Government has also consulted on the proposal to introduce a minimum 25p charge on single-use beverage cups to tackle the significant environmental impact of these items.

Scotland has one of the highest rates of consumption of single-use cups in Europe – creating around 5,400 tonnes of waste a year. Introducing a minimum charge will encourage reusable alternatives, tackle waste and cut some of the estimated 15 million cups littered each year. We are continuing to work closely with stakeholders to develop a policy that is deliverable and allows businesses and consumers time to prepare.

Plastic pellets (nurdles) are the raw material in the manufacture of all plastic products. They are the second largest source of microplastic pollution (by weight). We are working internationally, and with industry, to minimise plastic pellets being lost to the environment, through a full supply chain approach.

### **Single-use drinks containers**

The Scottish Government is committed to introducing a Deposit and Return Scheme (DRS) for single-use drinks containers in Scotland to help increase recycling, reduce litter and meet our climate change targets. Of the items listed in the petition, DRS will work to reduce littering of single use plastic water bottles.

A DRS works by encouraging people to recycle. When purchasing a drink in a single-use plastic bottle or metal can, a small deposit is paid upfront. The deposit is refunded when the empty bottle or can is returned. The DRS will be managed by an organisation known as the scheme administrator.

DRS is expected to reduce littering by a third, and increase recycling of single-use plastic and metal drinks containers to 90%.

Draft regulations have been laid before the Scottish Parliament making amendments to the Deposit and Return Scheme for Scotland Regulations 2020 to align with the

equivalent schemes being introduced in England and Northern Ireland, and to designate an organisation as the scheme administrator. Subject to Parliamentary approval, the scheme will launch in October 2027.

### **Disposable vapes**

Draft regulations were laid before the Scottish Parliament on 10 June 2024 which were subsequently approved by the Scottish Parliament on 3 September 2024, and made by the Scottish Ministers on 1 October 2024 to ban the sale and supply of single-use vapes in Scotland. On 20th February, we laid regulations to amend the current coming into force date from 1 April 2025 to 1 June 2025 to ensure a common date across the four nations. So the single-use disposable vape ban has now come into effect as of 1 June 2025.

We were the first government in the UK to commit to taking action on single-use vapes and have fulfilled our 2023 Programme for Government commitment to consult on measures to tackle the environmental impact of single-use vapes.

The findings from the UK-wide consultation showed a clear majority are in favour of a ban on the sale and supply of single-use vapes in Scotland.

In 2023, the Scottish Government commissioned an urgent review of the environmental impacts of single-use vapes. The review found that up to 26 million disposable vapes were consumed and thrown away in Scotland in just one year, of which an estimated 10% were littered and more than half were incorrectly disposed.

In Scotland, 82.3% of respondents supported restrictions on single-use vapes (79.3% UK-wide), and 73.4% favoured an outright ban (68.1% UK-wide). We continue to engage with COSLA and The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland to consider any support required for enforcement purposes.

### **Silage wrapping**

Farmers and Crofters are encouraged to follow a mantra of Reduce, Reuse & Recycle to minimise the waste plastic use on farms. It can be found here: [Technical note \(TN724\): Minimising Plastic Waste on farms | Information helping farmers in Scotland | Farm Advisory Service](#)

The Scottish Government is developing a Product Stewardship Strategy, focusing initially on high-impact or hard-to-recycle items (e.g. mattresses, textiles, vapes).

Product Stewardship ensures producers take more responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products throughout their lifecycle, including at end-of-life.

The strategy will provide a framework for identifying priority product types for policy intervention, including Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), Deposit and Return Schemes, take-back requirements and eco-design incentives.

Farm plastics (including silage wrapping) were considered during an initial review of potential products for further assessment.

The Product Stewardship Plan, which will set out how we intend to bring this work forward, will be published later this year.

## **Wet Wipes**

The Scottish Government supports a joint UK approach to introducing regulations to ban the sale of wet wipes containing plastic. We are working in alignment across the UK nations on scope and timings of each piece of legislation. The legislation will seek to ban the supply and sale of wet wipes containing plastic. There is intended to be exemptions for medical and industrial wet wipes, and for business-to-business sales, and it is proposed that there will be an 18-month transition period for businesses to adjust. We are now working to bring forth this legislation.

## **Packaging**

The Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging is being implemented this year on a four nations basis across the UK. It will impose an obligation on businesses to pay the full cost of dealing with packaging waste (which would include crisp packets) from households away from taxpayers and local authorities to the producers of that packaging, applying the 'polluter-pays' principle.

Funding will go to local authorities to support efficient and effective collection services for household packaging waste. Based on indicative payment notifications issued by PackUK, we estimate that local authorities in Scotland will see around £160 million per year in funding to support collection for household packaging waste. These payments will start from November 2025.

Packaging EPR will incentivise businesses to reduce excess packaging, to design and use packaging that is easily recyclable, and encourage use of reusable and refillable packaging.

## **Other**

In line with our drive to move to a more circular economy, the Scottish Government is also taking action on other single-use plastic items such as fishing and aquaculture gear. We contributed to the work of the European Committee for Standardisation on the development of a Standard for circular design of fishing and aquaculture gear. This aims to reduce the environmental impact of plastic gear during its entire lifespan, supporting reuse and improving recycling opportunities. The Standard was published in November 2024. We are working across the four nations and with industry towards improving the collection and recycling of end-of-life fishing and aquaculture gear.

## **Waste Prevention: Reduce and Reuse Unit / Circular Economy Division**