PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY ON PLASTIC BAGS (SCOTLAND) BILL

STATEMENT OF REASONS BY MIKE PRINGLE MSP ON WHY CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT PROPOSAL IS NOT REQUIRED

Background to proposal
1. In line with Rule 9.14.3 of Standing Orders, this statement of reasons is lodged in conjunction with my draft proposal for an Environmental Levy on Plastic Bags (Scotland) Bill. The Bill aims to reduce the number of plastic bags in circulation, to reuse them wherever possible and to recycle them after use. The Bill does not seek to eradicate plastic bags or to promote any particular alternatives, for example paper bags, although it is accepted that alternatives may be sought. Under this proposal plastic bags will still be available for those customers who wish to pay the levy for them.

Session 2
2. The original draft proposal for this bill was lodged in the last session on 15 December 2004. A consultation was held between February and May 2004 which generated 126 responses from organisations and individuals. Responses to the consultation showed support for the principle of a levy. Copies of the consultation document and a summary of the responses can be viewed at the scottish parliament: - bills - proposals for members' bills - session 2 - 2004 - 2007 . Copies of all responses received (excluding any marked in confidence) have been placed in SPICe.

3. The original final proposal was lodged on 9 March 2005 and supported by 31 members from the Liberal Democrat, SNP Scottish Socialist, Green and Independent groups. The Bill was introduced in Parliament on 17 June 2005.

4. Stage 1 consideration was carried out by the then Environment and Rural Development Committee. The Committee initiated a further call for evidence between 1 July and 16 September 2005, to which they received responses from 96 organisations or individuals, some providing more than one submission. The Committee considered evidence over a total of 8 meetings, taking oral evidence from approximately 30 witnesses along with further written evidence from a range of people. These included consumers, business both those who provide plastic bags to customers and those who are involved in the manufacture, sale and distribution of them along with environment experts, wildlife and marine conservationists, Scottish Ministers and myself as Member in Charge of the Bill.

5. The Committee also considered the report of research commissioned by the Scottish Executive and published in August 2005, on the Extended Impact Assessment of and Environmental Levy on Plastic Bags1

6. The Committee published its Stage 1 report on 6 December 2005. It requested additional time to consider the Bill and requested further information from both myself and the Scottish Executive on matters contained in the report. The

Committee resumed consideration on 6 September 2006 and held 3 meetings to consider the further written information provided. It published its supplementary report on 27 September 2006.

Present session
7. The issue of plastic bag use continues to maintain a high level of public awareness.
8. On 7 February 2008 Selkirk began a campaign to become the first plastic bag free town in Scotland within 6 weeks\(^2\), many other towns nationwide are planning to follow suit. On 11 February 2008 a Petition\(^3\) was lodged with the Parliament calling for the re-introduction of the Bill.
9. In March 2008 Marks and Spencer announced they are to begin charging customers for plastic bags, they join other retailers such as Ikea, Aldi, Lidl, B&Q in doing so.
10. There has been extensive media coverage of the issue all of which has focussed on aspects which have been extensively covered throughout the prior consultations and evidence taking sessions.

Statement of reasons
11. Therefore, in relation to my new draft proposal for this Bill, I do not consider that further consultation is required for the following reasons:
12. I carried out an extensive consultation in early 2004 which received 117 responses from a range of individuals and organisations with an interest in the use of plastic bags.
13. The Environment and Rural Development Committee’s call for evidence generated a high response rate; it took further evidence from 30 witnesses and considered the Bill over a total of 11 committee meetings. It published its Stage 1 report on the Bill in December 2005 and a supplementary Stage 1 report in September 2006.
14. An Extended Impact Assessment report was commissioned and published by the Scottish Executive.
15. Public and press awareness around the issue of plastic bag use has continued to remain high in the intervening period as demonstrated by actions of consumers and retailers.
16. I believe that to undertake a further consultation exercise on the same proposal would duplicate effort, incur unnecessary cost and could create an impression of ‘over consultation’.

\(^3\) Petition PE1121 [The Scottish Parliament - Public Petitions - Open Petitions - Petition PE1121](The Scottish Parliament - Public Petitions - Open Petitions - Petition PE1121)
17. In conclusion I believe that further consultation is not required due to the extensive work that has already taken place by myself, the previous Environment and Rural Development Committee and the previous Scottish Executive. This view is further supported by the fact that recent campaigns have ensured awareness of the issue remains high.

18. I therefore request the Committee consider this statement of reasons and confirm that it is satisfied with the reasons for not consulting further on my proposal.

Mike Pringle MSP
12 March 2008