



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

# Section 1: What action is the Welsh Government considering and why?

How we are planning to implement the The Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Bill.

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# What action is the Welsh Government considering and why?

Plastic products can play an important role in our society due to their versatility, durability and inexpensive production costs. Conversely this has also meant there is often very little incentive or value in recycling or reusing the product. As a result, the growth of the plastics market has come in tandem with an explosion of single-use culture and single-use plastic (SUP) products. This linear model of produce, use and discard is an environmental hazard and unsustainable for the planet.

Annual surveys by the [Marine Conservation Society](#) and [Keep Wales Tidy](#) often identify plastic as a key component of litter. This litter is often associated with general consumption of food and drink whilst “on the move” or from products flushed down the toilet. Tackling the negative impacts from plastic pollution on our environment, wildlife and wellbeing is a key priority for Welsh Ministers and a Programme for Government commitment.

Introducing legislation to make it an offence for a person to supply or offer to supply (including for free), the following commonly littered and unnecessary disposable SUP products to a consumer in Wales, is a key step in achieving this:

- plates
- cutlery
- drinks stirrers
- drinking straws (including attached straws)
- cups made of polystyrene
- takeaway food containers made of polystyrene
- cup and takeaway food container lids made of polystyrene
- plastic-stemmed cotton buds

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- sticks for balloons
- oxo-degradable products
- plastic single-use carrier bags (SUCBs)

## Long term

The amount of plastic in our soils, seas and rivers is growing, much to the detriment of ecosystems, biodiversity and potentially human health, causing widespread concern. Some plastics will take hundreds of years to degrade in the environment. During this time the plastics can break down into smaller microplastics, leach toxic chemicals, be ingested and damage or kill wildlife, disrupting ecosystem function. Our legislation will help reduce the SUP products which continue to be added to this existing accumulation.

We want Wales to become a nation where resource efficiency is part of our culture, in which we recognise the value of our resources, and reduce the quantity of waste that arises. We believe everyone has a role to play in tackling litter and the single-use culture. Our legislation will shift behaviours among both retailers and consumers towards alternative materials or reusable products.

This legislation will contribute to our long-term ambitions of phasing out unnecessary single-use products, especially plastic, and sending zero plastic to landfill. While we recognise some uses of disposable plastic are essential – such as those in medical settings – we want to see more produced from recycled content and a Wales free from unnecessary single-use products.

## Prevention

While we welcome the voluntary measures taken by communities and

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businesses to move away from unnecessary SUPs, we believe further progress is needed. Without our intervention to remove low cost, low value but highly damaging plastics from the market we will not effectively tackle the issue of litter and plastic pollution. Our legislation intends to build on these initiatives and help accelerate the shift away from such products by limiting their presence on the market. This will prevent their environmental impact from occurring in the first place.

We will work with businesses, manufacturers and those enforcing the legislation to ensure adequate guidance is made available to prevent any unnecessary burdens. We will raise awareness of the legislation to ensure everyone is aware of which products will no longer be available and the alternatives available.

## The Welsh Government's Commitment

Introducing this legislation delivers the commitment in our [Programme for Government](#), published June 2021, to abolish the use of more commonly littered SUP products in Wales. It is also an important step in delivering the commitments in our [Circular Economy Strategy, Beyond Recycling](#) and our draft [Litter & Fly-tipping Prevention Plan](#) to address single-use products in Wales.

This legislation is firmly grounded in the seven wellbeing goals in the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#). Banning commonly littered SUP products aims to reduce the harm these products cause to the environment, thereby enhancing biodiversity and the natural environment. All those who live in and visit Wales can benefit from less plastic pollution, no matter what their background or circumstances are. Tackling plastic pollution protects and enhances local areas, thereby improving health and wellbeing, especially where improvements coincide with deprived areas with high incidence of littered plastic (**a resilient Wales, a more equal Wales, and a Wales of cohesive communities**).

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Littered plastic is often broken down into microplastics, which can enter the animal and human food chain. Reducing the amount of plastic in our environment, therefore, contributes to **a healthier Wales**. Wales is already a world leader on recycling and this legislation is a further step in addressing the global challenges of the climate and nature emergency (**a globally responsible Wales**). Protecting natural ecosystems and biodiversity enhances the cultural capital of Wales and supports outdoor activities. As we implement the legislation, we will ensure equal standards in both Welsh and English guidance (**a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**).

As Wales moves away from disposable, SUP products, opportunities arise for Welsh businesses to innovate and develop sustainable alternatives to the plastic products we use today (**a prosperous Wales**).

## Collaboration and Involvement

Throughout the development of our proposals, we have engaged with a range of stakeholders including disabled people and their representatives, children and young people, non-government environmental organisations, the education and health sectors, agricultural representatives, manufacturing, production and retail sectors. A range of key partners have been involved in further shaping and informing the bans, including relevant Welsh Government departments and the Welsh Local Government Association, especially in relation to issues regarding equality and enforcement.

We are very grateful for the detailed, valuable information provided by stakeholders which has been instrumental in enabling us to ensure our bans, when they are in place, will be effective and proportionate. We acknowledge our engagement on the products originally proposed for action in the 2020 consultation “**Reducing Single-Use Plastics in Wales**” was more extensive than for some of the additional products proposed for bans in the Bill.

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Engagement on these latter products was undertaken rapidly and we remain committed to continuing to work with all those affected by the legislation (manufacturers, retailers and consumers) as we produce our guidance to support the implementation of the bans.

## Impact

As noted above, the evidential case to reduce the volume of littered SUPs in the environment is strong. While some voluntary action has already been taken, we believe we need to go further by removing certain products from the market.

There has been overwhelming support for our proposals to ban the most littered SUP products. The majority of **responses** to our consultation urged Government to take action to reduce negative impacts of littering on our environment. They considered the potential positive environmental and social benefits of legislation would outweigh any negative impacts on people in Wales.

We recognise there may be possible negative impacts on groups with protected characteristic resulting from banning some of the products in the legislation, specifically in relation to plastic straws. We have sought to mitigate this in the legislation by providing suitable limited exemptions for appropriate circumstances.

## Costs, Savings and Mechanism

The financial implications of this legislation are set out in our Regulatory Impact Assessment, published as part of the legislation documentation.

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