

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-547
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/05833/16

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
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21

August 2016

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 3 August requesting an update on the work the Welsh Government is undertaking to help reduce the environmental impact of polystyrene and coastal littering in Wales (Petition P-04-547 Ban Polystyrene (EPS) Fast Food and Drinks Packaging refers).

Work is progressing on the MSc student project to analyse pressures and trends of marine litter on Welsh coastlines and is due to be submitted at the end of September. Officials will take account of the findings of this project in their future advice on policy decisions. In the meantime, the Welsh Government continues to work closely with stakeholders to help address the issue of marine litter on our coastlines.

A number of projects and initiatives undertaken as part of "Coast Care" pilot have now been extended by Keep Wales Tidy (KWT), with additional community groups and "Coast Champions" being established across coastal areas in Wales. These volunteer groups are supported by KWT officers to help participate in regular beach clean-ups and other environmental improvements. KWT also continue to promote initiatives such as "2 minute beach cleans" and hold annual 'Clean Coast Week' events.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

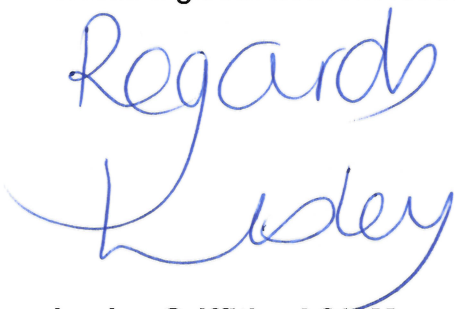
In March KWT published their 2015-16 Local Environment Audit Management System (LEAMS) survey which, for the first time, collected data on the presence of polystyrene on the streets of Wales. The report recorded foam polystyrene litter on an average of 5.2% of the streets surveyed. Fast food items such as “clam shells” and fast food cups were found on almost 2% of streets, however, the majority of polystyrene litter found (3.2%) consisted of “other” types of foam polystyrene (insulation and fragile items packaging). In comparison smoking related litter was found on 82.7% of the streets surveyed. My officials will continue to monitor the data collected by this survey to determine the scale of the problem, which will help direct future policy development.

It should be noted the Welsh Government’s position on polystyrene has not changed since my predecessor last wrote to you (MB/ CS/1351/15 refers). I am not currently considering landfill bans or additional legislation for this material. However, work is being undertaken to address the issue of food waste, as this typically has a higher environmental impact than packaging waste due to the high levels of greenhouse gas generated by producing, storing and transporting food products. When discarded food reaches landfill sites it emits methane, a powerful greenhouse gas 25 times more powerful than Carbon Dioxide.

The Welsh Government recognises packaging plays an important role in preserving food products and minimising damage. Continued innovation around packaging helps to keep food fresher for longer, saves money and reduces waste. The Welsh Government is currently working with WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) to promote the optimisation of packaging and to reduce it where possible regardless of the material.

Through an agreement called Courtauld 2025, WRAP also works closely with retailers, manufacturers and packaging companies to help prevent food and associated waste, including through the optimisation of packaging. This is an ambitious voluntary agreement, which brings together organisations across the food system, from producer to consumer, to make food and drink production and consumption more sustainable. The scheme covers the grocery, manufacturing, hospitality and food service sectors and includes a target to cut waste in the food chain by 20% by 2025, including packaging waste. Current signatories include major supermarkets, takeaway chains and packaging companies.

WRAP is also working with the EU to prevent waste in the food supply chain and to reduce packaging. It is also part of the United Nations *Think.Eat.Save* campaign, which brings together like-minded organisations, such as WWF and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, to create a global network focussed on increasing the sustainability of grocery products.



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