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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-05-773  
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/01906/17

David John Rowlands AM  
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Dear David

Thank you for your letter of 10 August, regarding the petition P-05-773 'Don't Fill Landfill'.

It is encouraging that a teacher and her class have given so much thought to the issues of recycling and how it can be encouraged.

There is a role for either stickers or printing on wheeled bins. Several Welsh Local Authorities have placed stickers on wheeled bins advising food waste should not be deposited in them and it has been shown this has helped to increase the amount of separate collection of food waste in associated premises. Too much information being placed on bins risks confusing residents with too much information. In most Local Authority areas across Wales, most residents are aware the residual bin or sack should not be used to deposit recyclable materials or food wastes.

This is borne out by the very high recycling rate achieved by the residents of Wales, enabled by the excellent collection services provided by Local Authorities. Wales has the highest recycling rate in the UK, the second highest in Europe and the third highest in the world and I am determined Wales will soon become number one in the world for recycling.

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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 2015-16 more than 300,000 tonnes of municipal waste were sent for incineration with energy recovery and fewer than 290,000 tonnes were sent to landfill. This demonstrates the limitation of an approach based on labelling bins as being for 'landfill'. Wales is rapidly reducing its reliance on landfill. In 2002-03 just 61 tonnes of municipal waste were sent to incineration with energy recovery and almost 155,000 tonnes were sent to landfill, illustrating how far we have come. Use of landfill will fall in future years, especially when a new energy from waste plant is commissioned on Deeside.

The petition as drafted is therefore inherently flawed. That said, the motives behind the petition are laudable and I share them. Half of the material in the residual bin or sack is easily recycled material, including food waste. We need to do more to persuade people to better separate their wastes.

A Task & Finish Group of Welsh Government officials and representatives of Local Government has agreed that there should be a new behaviour change initiative with the purpose of diverting as much recyclable material as possible out of residual waste and into the recycling containers, including food waste caddies. The initiative is being designed at the moment and I hope it will start in 2018.

There are many aspects to promoting behaviour change and these include:

- Providing the right collection infrastructure for residents to effectively separate recyclables and food waste from non-recyclable wastes.
- Providing advice on how these services should be used and raising public awareness about the need to use them.
- Providing effective enforcement against those who persistently fail to perform their civic duty to separate materials for recycling. It should become socially unacceptable for people not to recycle.

It may be that placing stickers on bins will have a role as part of future initiatives, however, there is so much more to persuading people to recycle effectively.

I am very ambitious about the future of recycling, waste prevention and resource efficiency in Wales. I want us to meet and exceed the 70% recycling target set for 2024-25 several years early and we are on course to do that. I will consult next year on when an 80% target should be set. At the same time I will consult on an aspirational target to halve the amount of food waste produced from a baseline in the year 2006-07. There will be new measures to ensure that industrial and commercial waste producers follow the same path as residents and separate their wastes for recycling.

Recycling and resource efficiency are already huge successes for Wales and are contributing to economic growth, new jobs and opportunities for individuals and communities across Wales. I hope the Petitions Committee will agree that whilst the intentions behind the petition P-05-773 are very worthy the proposals themselves are not well suited to the clear strategy for the future.

Regards  
Lesley

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