Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru | Wales Environment Link

Julie James MS
Welsh Government
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

08 December | 2023

Dear Julie,

Re: UK-wide consultation on the proposed ban of the manufacture, supply and sale of wet wipes containing plastic

I am writing to provide you with a copy of Wildlife and Countryside Link's response to the recent DEFRA consultation on banning wet wipes containing plastic. As our sister Link, leading on England's environment policy, Wales Environment Link supported and helped to write their submission. We understand the need for this to be done on a UK Government basis, if it is to be truly effective, easily enforced and perhaps most importantly, easily understood by business, people and authorities.

Wet wipes are a huge issue for our sewerage system and we endorse Dwr Cymru's calls for a ban on those that contain plastic. As they have set out themselves: "Wipes containing plastic do not dissolve if flushed away and gather in the sewer pipe to cause blockages which can cause pollution incidents, including from CSOs. Blockages currently account for around 40% of the pollution incidents we deal with each year."

In addition, their data shows that 84% of the public would support such a ban and 94% think that companies should only be making wet wipes with no plastic. They estimate that they spend £5m a year on tackling the 20,000 annual blockages caused by them, which should clearly be spend on other actions or, at the very least, could reduce customers' bills.

Our concerns, however, are focused on the environmental impacts and how we can transition to a truly circular economy. We are currently still languishing in a single-use mindset when it comes to consumer behaviour. Single-use packaging, single-use beauty products and even single-use cotton pads, when a flannel will do perfectly well, are still abundant. Wet wipes are just one product, in one huge problem for our water companies, sewerage systems and knock on impacts on water quality.

The Welsh Government has set out its intentions via the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, and has said repeatedly that it intends to ban as many single-use and problematic plastics as it can (having, indeed, already banned some). We hope that, in your own representations to UK Ministers, we can ensure this policy is carried out as quickly as possible, and doesn't get stuck in inter-government discussions.

Please let us know if there's anything Wales Environment Link can do to assist in the progression and implementation of this policy.

Many thanks,

Jemma Bere
Policy and Research Manager for Keep Wales Tidy

Liz Smith
Advocacy and Policy Lead for Wales Environment Link

Swyddfa Caerdydd
Tramshed Tech
Uned D, Stryd Pendyris Caerdydd CF11 6BH
F: 07498 228066 | E: enquiry@waleslink.org
Trydar: @WalesLink

Cardiff Office
Tramshed Tech
Unit D, Pendyris Street, Cardiff CF11 6BH
T: 07498 228066 | E: enquiry@waleslink.org
Twitter: @WalesLink

www.waleslink.org

Cadeirydd | Chair: Roger Thomas. Cyf-Gyfarwyddwyr | Joint Directors: Susan Evans and Karen Whitfield.
Rhif Elusen Gofrestredig | Registered Charity Number: 1022675