

DEFRA CONSULTATION: ON PROPOSALS TO BAN COMMONLY LITTERED SINGLE-USE PLASTIC ITEMS IN ENGLAND

Response from Humanist Climate Action,
February, 2022



ABOUT HUMANIST CLIMATE ACTION

Humanist Climate Action is a volunteer-led network of Humanists UK members and supporters committed to redefining lifestyles and campaigning for policies that promote low-carbon, ethical, and sustainable living in the light of the degeneration of the Earth's climate and biodiversity. We bring humanists together to facilitate individual and collective action on these issues. Humanists are guided by reason and science and recognise a moral duty towards the welfare of our fellow beings and the natural world. Humanists seek to engage in dialogue and debate rationally, intelligently, and with evidence, and promote the belief that humans are part of a wider natural world which must be treated sustainably for the sake of current and future generations .

ABOUT HUMANISTS UK

At Humanists UK, we want a tolerant world where rational thinking and kindness prevail. We work to support lasting change for a better society, championing ideas for the one life we have. Our work helps people be happier and more fulfilled, and by bringing non-religious people together we help them develop their own views and an understanding of the world around them. Founded in 1896, we are trusted to promote humanism by 100,000 members and supporters and over 100 members of the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group.

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed definition of plastic?

Agree.

2. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to introduce a ban on the supply of the following single-use items in England?

Agree all.

3. We propose the ban should cover all single-use bio-based, compostable, and biodegradable plastic (such as PLA). Please tick in the table those plastics you support the ban including.

Agree all should be banned.

4. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to exclude from the ban a) single-use plates used as packaging or b) single-use plates used as packaging except those used in eat-in settings?

Disagree that either should be excluded from the ban.

Packaging should not be single-use, as the UK Plastics Pact argues where plastic packaging is used it should be designed so, at a minimum, it can be easily recycled. Single-use packaging should be eliminated through redesign or moving to alternative materials so that 100% of plastic packaging is reusable.

5. Do you currently supply customers with any of the items we are proposing to ban?

No (go to question 7).



7. Are there any risks that alternatives to single-use plastic plates, plastic cutlery, plastic balloon sticks, EPS food containers, and EPS beverage containers will themselves have significant environmental impacts?

There may be some risks to using alternatives to single-use plastic items depending on the material used as a replacement. For example, the use of trees for wood-based packaging should be monitored carefully. While wood is a renewable resource that can (in some instances) help reduce carbon footprint of products and be recycled, over-use still has the potential to result in deforestation as forests cannot meet the demand.¹ Additionally, wood packaging should be properly recycled. Other materials may also be appropriate alternatives but again, these should not be single-use or non-recyclable.

8. Will any of the proposed item bans have a negative impact on certain people? If yes, why. Please tick all boxes that apply.

As with the previous ban on plastic straws potential negative impacts on disabled people should be considered. In particular making sure that alternatives such as hard reusable plastic utensils are available.

9. Should there be any exemptions from any ban for the following items e.g., in certain locations or for particular purposes?

No.

10. Our proposed date for the ban on single-use plastic plates, plastic cutlery, plastic balloon sticks, EPS food containers, and EPS beverage containers is April 2023. We think this will allow sufficient time for industry to use up existing stock and source alternatives where needed. Do you agree or disagree that this date will give industry sufficient time to prepare for the ban?

Agree all.

Questions 11 to 34

We have chosen not to answer these questions as they fall outside of our area of expertise.

35. Do you anticipate any additional costs and/or constraints to a) industry and b) consumers from this proposed ban on single-use plastic plates, plastic cutlery, plastic balloon sticks, EPS food containers, and EPS beverage containers?

Possibly increased cost to businesses depending on the price of alternative materials and processes and therefore consumers (assuming the cost is passed on).

36. Apart from a ban, are there any other approaches that the government should consider?

- A Plastics Pollution Act that would mandate the phasing out of all non-essential plastics should be introduced.
- A deposit return scheme is currently being trialled in some areas and depending on the success of this could also work for other items such as takeaway food boxes.

¹ World Wildlife Fund. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/timber>



37. Is there anything else you would like to tell us relating to the proposed ban on the supply of single-use plastic plates, cutlery, balloon sticks and food and beverage containers made out of EPS?

The packaging industry should now be well aware of the impact of plastic packaging and of incoming proposals and policies to phase out single-use plastics. However, at the current rate of consultation it will be many years before every single-use plastic item can be considered. It would therefore be beneficial and expedient to see greater speed, or at least a greater number of items considered in each proposed ban.

For more details, information, and evidence, contact Humanist Climate Action:

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