

John Griffiths AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol, Diwylliant an Chwaraeon  
Minister for Natural Resources, Culture and Sport



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-547  
Ein cyf/Our ref JG/00826/14

William Powell AM  
Chair Petitions Committee  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

17 July 2014

Dear W Minister,

Thank you for your letter concerning the petition requesting a ban on polystyrene fast food and drinks packaging, from Friends of Barry Beaches. I am responding as this issue now falls within my portfolio.

Litter, in all its forms, is a problem that the Welsh Government takes very seriously and is committed to tackling. We work with a variety of partners to change public attitudes and behaviour towards littering through education, partnership working and enforcement programmes. Many of these initiatives and programmes are supported by and involve fast food chains and outlets. Our aim is to prevent litter from occurring in the first place.

The Welsh Government provides funding annually to local authorities and to Keep Wales Tidy to help in their delivery of community engagement activities in support of our *Tidy Towns* programme. The aim of the *Tidy Towns* programme is to empower the people of Wales to take responsibility for the quality of their own local environment. This programme is tackling littering through education and specific projects aimed at changing the behaviour of litterers. We provide additional funding to Keep Wales Tidy (KWT) to deliver campaigns aimed at tackling all types of litter and to encourage the people of Wales to bin their litter, rather than drop it onto the street or throw from their vehicles.

The funding that we provide to KWT is also used to carry out annual Local Environment Audit and Management System (LEAMS) surveys to assess the cleanliness of streets in Wales. The most recent results show that the percentage of litter free streets has increased and the percentage of heavily littered streets has decreased in 2013-14. The amount of fast food litter recorded has also dropped and it was the lowest presence of the four types of litter recorded; the others are smoking-related litter, confectionary litter and drink-related litter.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

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Printed on 100% recycled paper

In 2014-15 the Welsh Government is providing further funding to KWT to undertake a 'Coast Care' pilot. This pilot will gather information on coastal littering in Wales to identify priority areas for improvement and to test innovative interventions. The coast care officers will also work with community groups to scope potential coastal litter improvement projects, and will promote good practice in beach management in Wales by helping beaches to achieve more Blue Flag, Green Coast and Seaside Awards.

In addition, I have commissioned KWT to produce a research paper specifically on polystyrene litter and its effect on the environment along with recommendations for further interventions. This paper and the findings from the pilot will inform further practical actions that can be taken.

The Welsh Government is pursuing a range of interventions to help reduce waste packaging and increase its recycling. Reducing food and associated packaging waste is a key focus of Towards Zero Waste, the overarching waste strategy document for Wales. A UK Voluntary Agreement known as the Hospitality and Food Services Agreement is in place with businesses, including restaurants and takeaway food establishments. This includes targets agreed by industry and support for them to reduce and recycle their wastes and optimise food packaging so that its impact on the environment throughout its life, and when it becomes waste, is as low as possible whilst protecting the food that it contains. This Agreement is brokered by the Waste Resources and Action Programme (WRAP), and is funded and supported by the Welsh Government and other UK administrations. Two hundred hospitality businesses in the UK are signed up to the agreement including 28 businesses in Wales. The Welsh Government has also funded WRAP to work with retailers and their suppliers to optimise food packaging, and to manage a fund to provide infrastructure that enables people to recycle when away from home.

The Packaging (Essential Requirements) Regulations sets responsibility on those packing or filling products to meet specific requirements. This includes minimising the volume and weight of packaging to permit reuse or recovery. The trading standards departments of local authorities are responsible for enforcing the Regulations within their areas.

There is little evidence to suggest that polystyrene is a major component of the packaging waste stream. Relatively few of the major fast food chains use polystyrene, which is more associated with independent fast food outlets. Therefore this problem needs to be dealt with at a local level and there is legislation in place to allow local authorities to do this.

Local authorities in Wales have a statutory duty to ensure that the highways, public walkways and recreational areas are kept clear of litter and they are responsible for enforcement. The Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (CNEA) 2005 provide a range of powers to allow local authorities to deal with those who undertake an environmental crime. Amongst these are powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices ranging from £75 to £150 to people who are caught littering.

Under sections 93 & 94 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, local authorities are able to serve Street Litter Control notices requiring businesses, such as fast food outlets, to clean up the litter caused by their activities adjacent (within 100 meters) to their premises. Fixed Penalty Notices can be issued by local authorities where the premises fail to comply.

I can assure you that this is a matter that I take very seriously and that we will continue to tackle with determination.

Yeu,  
John

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