

Leonie Cooper AM
Chair of the Environment Committee
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Dear Leonie,

Thank you for your letter of 1 October about plastic waste. I am sorry for the delay in responding.

As you know, my overall approach to cutting waste is set out in my London Environment Strategy. Significantly cutting food waste and single-use plastics, boosting household waste recycling performance, and taking a circular economy approach to avoid materials becoming waste in the first place all form a key part of the Strategy. Plastics are also part of this strategy, and I would like to thank you for your continued work to raise awareness and action on this important issue.

I have answered each of the points raised in your letter below:

Household waste recycling performance

As part of the London Environment Strategy, local authorities are expected to produce a waste reduction and recycling plan by 2020, which should include local targets that contribute to my London-wide targets. Resources are made available through the London Waste and Recycling Board to support boroughs in producing these plans.

Once waste reduction and reuse opportunities have been exhausted, giving residents straight forward and easy recycling collection services will be key to driving up recycling rates through greater consistency and harmonising waste and recycling services. Waste authorities are required to provide a minimum level of recycling service, offering collections for the six main dry recycling materials and separate food waste enabling greater certainty of how to correctly dispose of materials. Furthermore, I continue to support the Recycle for London behaviour change campaign, which provides information to Londoners on how to recycle properly. Through these measures, my aim is for London to significantly improve on its current poor recycling levels.

Single-use plastics

I want London to lead the way on reducing single-use plastics. As you know, earlier this year, I launched a programme of work to focus on reducing the impact of single-use plastic bottles. This includes:

- A pilot water refill scheme in five areas in London;

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- 20 new drinking water fountains across the city through a pilot with Zoological Society of London's #Oneless campaign; and
- A new £5 million partnership with Thames Water to install over 100 more drinking water fountains over the next three years.

Since I launched the five pilot water refill schemes in London, momentum has continued, resulting in over 2,000 water refill stations in London offering free tap water refills to the public. The pilot drinking water fountain project partnership with #Oneless, to install up to 20 drinking water fountains by the end of this year, has also shown some fantastic results. Just two fountains installed at Liverpool Street Station have dispensed the equivalent of 30,000 half litre plastic bottles from Mid-July to October, demonstrating the demand for improving drinking water infrastructure and the potential impact this has on reducing single-use plastic water bottles. I have already phased out single-use plastic bottles, cups and straws in City Hall and I will work with the rest of the Greater London Authority (GLA) group to reduce single-use plastics by 2019.

Producer and government responsibility and the Plastic Pact

With regards to your point about producer responsibility, the Government is expected to consult on new Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations later this year. This will involve the whole supply chain that manufactures, processes, distributes and sells products that contain plastic, including supermarkets. From the proposed government approach, we will get a better understanding of the link between the EPR regulations and the Plastic Pact. I will then take a view on whether signing up to the Pact will be effective in helping deliver my targets. My officers will be responding to the EPR consultation and will make a strong case to the Government to reduce plastic waste through increased producer responsibility. We will highlight the importance that new materials and alternatives to plastic must also be environmentally friendly and not cause further impacts to our environment, and the requirement for better and consistent labelling so people know to dispose of waste correctly.

In the London Environment Strategy, I also set out a host of measures that are required by the Government and manufacturers to drive resource efficiency and increase recycling performance. They include new funding for recycling services and measures to ensure packaging material is easily recyclable. Specifically, these involve:

- setting minimum standards of design for reuse and recyclability and strengthening the Extended Producer Responsibility requirements for packaging materials, specifically plastics.
- introducing tax relief, such as variable rates of VAT, on materials innovation that reduces waste and reliance on virgin materials, and increases materials reuse, repair and remanufacture.
- establishing other performance metrics and targets, including materials productivity and carbon, such as my Emissions Performance Standard.
- requiring businesses to separate materials for recycling to help drive up recycling performance.

In addition, I recently wrote to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Michael Gove, on a wide range of waste matters including the need for robust markets and demand side measures on plastic packaging and designing out waste.

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You will have heard the recent announcement in the Autumn Budget 2018 with regards to plastics. I am pleased to see that the Government has responded to our calls to introduce tougher measures and requirements on manufacturers to drive out single-use and hard to recycle plastics from the supply chain, but I would still like to go further.

Waste infrastructure and the circular economy

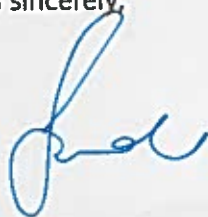
I am ensuring that London continues to lead on circular economy activities by embedding circular economy policies and principles through the London Environment Strategy, as well as through my other strategic plans: the London Plan, Economic Development Strategy, and the GLA Group Responsible Procurement policy.

I also want to see London's waste sites optimised to support circular economy activities like reuse and repair, providing environmental and social benefits by creating new products, jobs and apprentices. My London Plan sets a 100% net waste self-sufficiency target by 2026, whereby local authorities must identify and safeguard suitable sites to meet this target. My officers have developed an interactive online map of all London's permitted waste facilities. This tool will help boroughs and the waste industry to identify suitable sites for new waste infrastructure, and importantly help identify opportunities to intensify existing sites to maximise their operational capacity and avoid building surplus facilities.

Chinese restrictions on processing poor quality materials for recycling from the UK will only reinforce the need to ensure products, especially plastics, are designed for reuse and recyclability. These need to be supported by high-quality collection services to ensure they get recycled, and not rejected to landfill or incineration. The Government's recent announcement of a new tax on the manufacture and import of plastic packaging containing less than 30% recycled plastic will also help drive out single-use poor quality plastics.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London