



‘The True Solutions to Plastic Pollution: Listening to the Next Generation’

18th November 2020
Virtual Meeting: Zoom
9am – 10am

ATTENDEES

MPs

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State, DEFRA

Steve Double MP, Chair of Ocean Conservation APPG

Kevin Hollinrake MP, Chair of Tidy Britain APPG

Cherilyn Mackrory MP, Vice Chair Ocean Conservation APPG

Liz Twist MP (representative)

Selaine Saxby MP (representative)

Stephen Crabb MP

Theresa Villiers MP

Tony Lloyd MP



Expert Panel Chaired by Alison Ogden-Newton, CEO of Keep Britain Tidy

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State, DEFRA

Lucy Siegle, broadcaster and writer

Professor Richard Thompson, Director of the Marine Institute, University of Plymouth

Michelle Norman, Director of External Affairs and Sustainability at Suntory Beverage and Food Europe

Yuyun Ismawati, Senior Advisor and co-founder of BALIFOKUS Foundation

Youth Panel, Chaired by Hugo Tagholm, CEO of Surfers Against Sewage (SAS)

Abi Tang, British Youth Council and Emergency Climate Change Team representative of North Tyneside

Eilidh Robb, Youth Climate Coalition rep and COP Working Group Coordinator.

Noorulanne Younis, Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School and a KBT Eco-Schools rep.

Megan Abrahams, SAS Youth Rep, Exeter

Matilda Hedge, Burton Borough School Eco Committee

MINUTES

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Steve Double MP, Chair of the APPG welcomed attendees to the first ever joint Ocean Conservation and Tidy Britain APPG. Steve stated that environmental issues have never been higher on the agenda. He stressed how the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the issues of plastic pollution and expressed his regret that progress has been put on hold as a result. He highlighted the fact that the government has already taken progressive steps in tackling plastic pollution but that there still remains much work to be done.

Expert Panel Discussion

Lucy Siegle highlighted the fact that plastic volumes are actually increasing. She discussed how we are currently in a linear economy where products are discarded too early. She stated that the antidote to this is the circular economy, not a fake form of this or the semi-circular economy. She provided examples of some of the benefits of a circular economy including decarbonisation and green jobs. Finally, she urged the need for 'earth logic' when scaling down plastics instead of finding solutions which allow us to carry on as normal, as well as the need for a global treaty on plastic pollution.

Michelle Norman expressed her disappointment at Lucozade being one of the key items discarded, according to SAS. Michelle stated that her company is focused on sustainable growth and reducing carbon emissions and water use. She stated that her company is also investing in UK biodiversity by supporting farmers associated with Ribena. She also stated that they are committed to the real circular economy. Finally, she outlined what her company is doing to reduce plastic such as removing all plastic from the outside of Ribena bottles and plans to do the same for the rest of their plastic bottles.

Yuyun Ismawati detailed her observations following two decades of work in Indonesia and highlighted the importance of government, community and business to work together in multi-stakeholder projects to reduce the impact of plastic waste on the environment. Yuyun also outlined that the increased use of plastic packaging coupled with the outsourcing of recycling from countries like to the UK too developing countries over the last ten years has seen an increased amount of waste entering into the environment. Yuyun called for both the adoption of a circular economy to reduce the amount of waste that is exported as well as increased transparency about how waste is recycled in the UK.

Professor Richard Thompson outlined that there is clear evidence of the harm plastic pollution does to the planet, but more evidence is needed to be understand the potential effectiveness of solutions.

He highlighted the importance of thinking of solutions alongside the consideration of the problem in order for action to be taken sooner rather than later. Finally, he stated the need for funding models to allow scientists to work together to move the science towards the solutions we need.

Youth Panel questions and discussion

Question 01: **Abi Tang** asked the panel ‘who do you think the responsibility lies with to clean up plastic pollution?’

Reply:

Lucy Siegel responded saying the responsibility does not lie with consumers and citizens as they are trapped in the linear economy. She stated that the responsibility lies with brands and retailers.

Rt Hon George Eustice MP stated that we all have a role to play. The government plays a role in cleaning up plastic pollution by banning items on sale, introducing levies on single-use plastic bags etc. He also stated that there is a role for producers and consumers who need reduce the plastic they use and make sure what they do use is recycled.

The Secretary of State also set out some of the actions the government has already taken to tackle plastic pollution including a ban microbeads and ban plastic straws, cotton buds and stirrers and the introduction of the plastic bag charge.

He then highlighted the action the government is considering taking in the future including the extension of the single use plastic ban to include plastic plates and cutlery, as well as using the powers of the Environment Bill to disincentivise the use of plastic packaging through an Extended Producer Responsibility. However, he also highlighted that plastic does have a role in society.

Question 02: **Eilidh Robb** asked the panel ‘what is going to be done about big plastic producers who drive the plastic crisis and are also contributing to the Climate crisis by producing these plastics?’

Reply:

Rt Hon George Eustice MP replied that with the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, the demand for plastic falls and the manufacturers will have to diversify into something else. He stated that the government is working hard to decarbonise the economy with targets on industrial emissions. He concluded that there is a two-pronged approach to tackling plastic pollution and climate crisis, that is reducing demand and then also requiring producers to reduce their carbon emissions.

Question 03: Noorulanne Younis asked ‘if the government was to introduce fiscal measures such as a plastic tax, how do we get manufactures to competitively price non-plastic alternatives?’

Reply:

Rt Hon George Eustice MP stated that higher taxes have been successful in some areas such as the sugar tax and that the government is trying to do something similar with the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme to drive behaviour change and get businesses to reformulate how they use packaging and take ownership of recycling materials.

Question 04: Matilda Hedge asked the panel ‘Do you think we should start capping the plastics being used in schools?’

Reply:

Professor Richard Thompson stated that we need to make changes at the design stage of products. If we designed better products then we could gain the benefits of using plastics without the unintended consequences.

Question 05: Megan Abrahams asked the panel ‘What is your favourite technological solution which has impacted plastic pollution in recent years and where do you think it will take us?’

Reply:

Rt Hon George Eustice MP replied that in terms of technological advancement, compostable materials have been the most interesting for him.

Closing Remarks

Kevin Hollinrake MP, concluded by revealing the results of the poll which showed 71% of attendees felt government intervention was key to tackling plastic pollution. He highlighted there is no silver bullet solution to the plastic pollution problem but it was clear that prevention is better than a cure. It's therefore crucial to tackle plastic pollution at source to stop plastics entering into the environment

Meeting closed 10:00