

Hannah Blythyn AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd
Minister for Environment



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref HB/00670/18

Year 6 Pupils
Glyncollen Primary School
Ysgol Gynradd Glyncollen
Heol Dolfain
Parc Gwernfadog
Morrison
Swansea
SA6 6QF

July 2018

Dear Year 6 Students,

Thank you for your letter about the amount of plastic waste and pollution in our environment and oceans.

I agree with you there is too much plastic and other waste and that this is causing terrible damage to our seas and the creatures that live in them. I am very pleased to see, like me, you care deeply about the environment and are looking at what you can do to help with recycling at your school.

We have put a lot of money into our recycling infrastructure and have quite tough statutory targets for local authorities, with fines if they are not met. I am proud of our record and the level of commitment to reducing, reusing and recycling right across the country that has got us where we are today. But there is still much more to do.

Some plastic and litter washes down from the land when it rains and ends up in the sea. It can harm plants and nature on the land as well as fish and sea mammals if it reaches the sea. That is why it is very important we do not drop litter or throw rubbish about. Reducing the plastic we use is very important.

One way is to make sure all packaging can easily be used again. We will have less plastic waste to throw away if we all recycle more. People in Wales are very good at recycling, but I want to help everyone to do it even more. I hope you all know how to recycle at home as well as in your classroom.

Wales leads the United Kingdom (UK) on household recycling and we recently became third best in the World.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We were the first UK nation to introduce a 5p charge on plastic bags, which has greatly reduced plastic bag waste. I have also met with the British Plastics Federation to discuss how they can help us increase recycling and reduce plastic litter. They are very keen to help us.

A microbeads ban in Wales came into force on 30 June. Microbeads are tiny pieces of plastic that are in some types of soaps and bathroom products. Because they are very small, they wash down plug holes and end up in the sea. The ban will be on both the manufacture and sale of products containing microbeads.

It is also my ambition for Wales to become the first 'Refill Nation' in the World. I recently announced at the Volvo Ocean Race Ocean Summit held in Cardiff in June that we will be delivering a Refill scheme into every community along the Wales Coast Path within a year. We want to make it easy for people to get fresh drinking water in more places, without having to use too much plastic.

One of the things we are looking at is how we can have a plastic bottle deposit scheme. We are working very closely with the UK Government, the Scottish and Northern Ireland governments on this. This would mean some money back when you return an empty plastic bottle. This is another way of stopping plastic being thrown away and the returned bottle can then be recycled.

We are also working with the UK Government on a new plastics tax which would also help to reduce plastic pollution and to increase recycling. I am keen to do as much as possible to reduce plastics in Wales and I am pleased that HM Treasury is also looking at this issue and is asking people what they think. We in Wales will be fully involved in this process. We also hope to work with the UK Government on any action on banning plastic straws.

We also give money to organisations such as Keep Wales Tidy and Groundwork Wales, who help local communities maintain and improve their local environment.

These are just some of the actions that we are taking here in Wales to reduce waste, tackle plastic pollution and increase recycling.

Your local council buys the milk and the straws you use to drink it. We are working with many of the councils in Wales to find other ways of buying them. Your school and council could ask the people who make the milk and the drinking straws to think about other ways of making them. I hope your council will look at your ideas and talk to their suppliers about them. This would really help to reduce the many millions of plastic straws used every year.

The Welsh Government helps people who work for local councils to buy things and we are very interested in helping councils who want to reduce plastics. We want to encourage them to buy recyclable plastics and to dispose of it properly in plastic recycling bins. This should help your council reduce the amount of plastic it buys. The Welsh Government is happy to work with councils and companies to help suppliers think about different ways of providing milk and other products. This way, they might stop using non-recyclable plastic straws and packaging as well as consider other ways that help the environment.

Another way plastic gets into the sea is people flushing things down the toilet instead of putting them in the bin. This happens with things like wet wipes and cotton buds.

Dwr Cymru is the company that looks after water and reservoirs in Wales as well as the pipes that bring water to our homes. Dwr Cymru has a campaign called "Stop the Block" to teach us all good habits. They have made an amusing video that you might like to watch. It is on You Tube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7GQHW_aEYc.

I hope you continue to play your part in helping your school become more sustainable and eco-friendly.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hannah Blythyn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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