

9 February 2018

Dear Stakeholder,

### **Plastic Waste and Recycling Strategy**

Thank you for your contribution to the challenge Paul Vanston and I were given by the Environment Secretary just before Christmas. With your help, we were able to put in a comprehensive set of outline proposals from stakeholders on how the UK could respond and reduce the environmental damage caused by the way we use and dispose of plastic. We focused on plastic packaging as it accounts for around 70% of our plastic waste. In our response to the Environment Secretary we emphasised the positive role that plastic packaging plays in protecting goods and preventing food waste.

The Environment Secretary has asked WRAP to lead and drive this important work forwards. During further discussions with Defra and the Environment Secretary I have built on the proposals Paul and I sent before Christmas. I do intend to continue the collaboration with Paul Vanston as I believe that, through its membership and wider value chain relationships, INCPEN is well placed to help facilitate the progress the Environment Secretary has asked me to lead. I have put forward a programme of four interdependent and mutually supporting areas where action is needed:

- Action by businesses to change how they design and use plastic packaging;
- Action by Government to reform the plastic packaging producer responsibility regulation;
- Action by local authorities and the recycling sector to increase the quantity and quality of plastic packaging collected for recycling; and
- Action by citizens to change how they use and dispose of plastic packaging.

### **Action by Business**

WRAP recently announced a new collaborative plastics initiative (working title Circular Plastics Commitment) that will bring businesses together to take collaborative voluntary action. This sector agreement will be the first national implementation of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastic Economy. It has the full backing of Government and is included in the 25 Year Environment Plan. It provides an opportunity for business to demonstrate to Government and to the public the leadership it is taking to respond to the challenge. It will involve major retailers, brands and plastic packaging suppliers signing up to ambitious targets to:

- Eliminate unnecessary and problematic packaging and plastic products;
- Ensure all plastic packaging is practically recyclable (not just technically possible); and
- Use recycled plastic in their packaging and products where possible.

We already have a number of leading brands and retailers on board. A high-profile launch with the founding signatories is planned for the spring and we would welcome the involvement of more businesses in this. Please get in touch if you would like to know more.

## **Action by Government**

When Paul and I spoke to organisations across the value chain before Christmas, we found widespread support for change to the current packaging producer responsibility regime. We now need to build on this work to secure speedy cross-sector agreement on effective producer responsibility reforms. This would mean proposing fast track changes to the current PRN system to improve packaging environmental outcomes, including for plastics. We would be looking for measures to support the aims of the Circular Plastics Commitment and ensure take-up by the value chain as a whole.

Principles developed to date, including by the packaging supply chain at the Roundtable on 14 December 2017, provide a very helpful starting point but we need to put forward more detail on how we think changes could be implemented. We will certainly have to propose increasing the recycling targets for plastic packaging and also probably have to consider splitting the targets by plastic type - as already happens with metals. We need a common position on what we think are ambitious but achievable targets. There will be a balance to be had here. If we are not radical enough, our proposals will not be acceptable to government or the public.

I am proposing to arrange a series of workshops during February and March followed by a summit in April to bring all stakeholders together to agree the final set of recommendations to be put forward to Government. We will also set up an on-line submission process for those not attending workshops to engage with us. Please let us know if you would like to be invited to these workshops.

## **Action by Local Authorities and the Recycling Sector**

Recycling more plastics and preventing them from leaking into the environment requires consistent collections of material at home, at work and on-the-go. WRAP has already worked with Defra, local authorities, retailers, brands and recyclers to develop a Framework for Greater Consistency in household recycling. This specifies a common set of materials to be collected from all households across England, including plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays. Further work is needed to consider the collection of plastic films from households and recycling away from home. We are helping a number of local authorities to evaluate the Framework for change. We have asked for stronger political support for the Framework to incentivise transition. We expect this to be considered as part of the Resources and Waste Strategy.

There is also a need for development in the sorting and recycling of plastic packaging. Building on previous activities under the Consistency Programme, further engagement with waste management companies will be needed to look into the changes needed at sorting, recycling and waste treatment plants.

## **Action by Citizens**

WRAP research highlights that barriers to recycling include a lack of understanding for some citizens, and a lack of motivation for others. WRAP already runs the UK's national recycling campaign – Recycle Now. We will continue to use this to help people understand why and how to recycle. We will also run a specific plastics campaign linked to the Circular Plastics Commitment. The campaign is currently funded by Defra and supplemented by carrier bag charge donations from some retailers. In the longer term a reformed Producer Responsibility system could provide funding to increase its reach and impact. We would be keen to use the campaign to explain the value of packaging as well

as how to recycle it. We would welcome business support to do this. Please get in touch if you would like to support or collaborate with us through Recycle Now.

We can only make progress if we all work together – plastic producers, packaging manufacturers, food and drink manufacturers, retailers, brands, local authorities, waste companies, recyclers and governments. Paul and I look forward to fruitful, future cooperation with you; and we are keen to have wide involvement in this process.

We gratefully ask leading organisations in the packaging supply chain, local government, waste & resource management, and reprocessing sectors to freely pass this letter on to your members and partner organisations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Gover', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Marcus Gover, Chief Executive, WRAP**