



Fleur Anderson MP
House of Commons
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sent by email to: fleur.anderson.mp@parliament.uk

3 November 2021

Dear Fleur,

RE: Support for Plastics (Wet Wipes) Bill

On behalf of Anglian Water, I would like to congratulate you on securing a Second Reading debate for your Plastics (Wet Wipes) Bill on 19th November. We fully support the aims of this Bill and would like to offer any help we can.

Anglian Water serves the largest water company region in England, covering 20% of England's landmass, and one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Our purpose as a water company, enshrined in our Articles of Association, is to *bring environmental and social prosperity to the region we serve through our commitment to Love Every Drop*. A ban on wet wipes containing plastic would significantly reduce blockages in our sewerage system which would help minimise flooding in the region as well as protect our rivers and local environment from plastic pollution.

No less than 3000 tonnes of what we call "rag" is raked out of Anglian Water's Water Recycling Centres every year. This rag is made up of mainly wet wipes ([93% according to Water UK](#)), but also other single-use plastics like sanitary products. We therefore warmly welcome the Bill and the benefits it would bring not only in terms of the environment but in reducing unnecessary costs added to customer bills. We spend £19 million of customer's money clearing blockages in our sewers every year. Fatbergs caused by wet wipes and sanitary items combining with fats, oils and grease cause 80% of the 40,000 blockages we clear annually.

We take the problem of wet wipes extremely seriously, for example in [supporting consumer campaigns like 'Unblocktober'](#) and in more targeted interventions such our recent ['Flush to Treatment' project in Southend-on-Sea](#). This investigative work helped us to understand the cause of the repeated blockages in the area. Our specialist team used CCTV cameras to assess the sewer pipes, and then removed 200 tonnes of unflushables and other waste from an area serving just 180,000 people – equivalent to the weight of two blue whales.

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an AWG Company

We sent samples of what we removed to be analysed, and it was no surprise to find that the main culprit was wet wipes containing plastic fibres, accounting for 85% of the material by weight together with sanitary products and other single-use items.

In another study, a [‘skip autopsy’ of unflushable material](#) arriving at our Newmarket Water Recycling Centre found that wet wipes containing plastic fibres accounted for 80% of the items wrongly flushed. The study also estimated that of the 11 billion wipes sold in the UK each year, roughly 2.5 billion are wrongly flushed away.

I hope the Environmental Audit Committee will also be making firm proposals to government on the need to regulate wet wipes as part of their Water Quality in Rivers inquiry. I was pleased to hear you name the EAC’s chair Philip Dunne and several EAC members as amongst those MPs supporting the Bill – I have copied this letter to them all. I gave [evidence to the EAC](#) myself on 26th May as part of the inquiry where I made the same recommendation as your Bill – that wet wipes containing plastic should simply be banned. Now that Water UK has an established [Fine to Flush standard](#) that many products now meet, it is time for the standard to be made mandatory for all toilet and baby wipes, and for plastic to be removed from all single-use wipes and sanitary products. As I said to the committee, you can make small steps with consumer education, but the big strides need to be taken by government.

With all this in mind, you have our full support and wish you every success when the Bill is debated later this month. If there is any further evidence we can provide in advance, or if you would like a briefing from the teams involved in our [‘Keep it clear’ campaigns](#), please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Johns', written in a cursive style.

Daniel Johns FCIWEM
Head of Public Affairs

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