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By email to: [Plastics.Consultation@defra.gov.uk](mailto:Plastics.Consultation@defra.gov.uk)

10.02.2022

Dear Defra,

**Re: Single-use plastic: banning the supply of commonly littered single-use plastic items**

Thank you for inviting us to respond to this consultation. Whilst we support the ambition to ban the single use plastics listed, we don't have the in-depth expertise needed to respond to the individual questions outlined in the document. We have therefore taken the opportunity to write to you outlining the impact single use plastic has to our water and sewer networks and the local environments in which we operate.

We support the banning of all the items listed in the consultation and would only like to see exemptions used when there is a wholly justifiable set of circumstances, if at all. We would also like to see the ban on single use plastics be broadened wider than the items listed in this consultation.

***Litter in local waterways and environment***

The changes described in the consultation would affect Anglian Water because commonly littered items often get washed away into combined sewers and end up at our water recycling centres (wastewater treatment centres). Where storm drains are not connected to the sewerage network they are discharged straight into the environment without any type of screening or treatment. Litter could also end up in rivers in the rare case of extreme rainfall events where combined sewer overflow valves are used and diluted sewerage water is discharged directly into a water course. In these cases, litter will end up polluting our waterways and environment.

***Litter causing blockages to the water network***

Our recent 'Flush to Treatment' project in Southend-on-Sea 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 460 tonnes (the same weight as 4.5 blue whales) of unflushables and other waste from an area serving just 180,000 people—equivalent to the weight of four and a half blue whales. We sent samples of what we removed to be analysed,



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an AWG Company

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.

Before the pipes were cleared in Southend-on-Sea the area would normally suffer from hydraulic overload, leading to flooding. Following the cleansing of the pipes we observed a 72% drop in reactive work in the area and (during the monitoring period) no pollutions or flooding was recorded. Since the cleansing the system has handled 12 heavy wet weather events and has operated as it was designed to, without issue. Litter and unflushables in the sewerage network led to repeat blockages and increase the likelihood of flooding.


***We would like to see the consultation go further and include other plastics***

We support the direction the government are taking on single use items in this consultation, along with the previous banning of plastic straws and the commitments set out in the Environment Act. However, we would, like to see other single use plastic items included for consideration.

Anglian Water established and currently funds the East of England Plastics Coalition, consisting of 24 partners. In 2019 a prioritisation exercise was carried out to identify the plastic pollution considered to cause the most harm at a regional level and the top six (in order of most prevalent) were: Clothing fibres, wet wipes, drinks bottles, caps and lids, food containers, fishing gear. We would like to see consideration of the pervence and impact of these and other forms of plastics on the environment and work towards reducing or banning their use and incorrect disposal. Therefore, we also support MP Alberto Costa's Microplastic Filters (Washing Machines) Bill currently on its second reading in the House of Commons.

Thank you for considering our comments and feedback on this important subject.

**Yours faithfully,**

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey background. The signature consists of a large, stylized 'LD' monogram followed by the name 'Dareheath' written in a cursive script.

**Lydia Dareheath**  
**Public Policy Advisor**  
**Anglian Water**