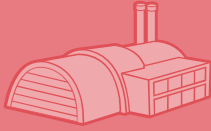




HM Government



OUR WASTE, OUR RESOURCES: A STRATEGY FOR ENGLAND





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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

Dame Ellen MacArthur broke the solo record for sailing round the world and is now dedicated to an even tougher challenge – completely rethinking how we use resources, and designing out waste and pollution.

This superb advocate for a circular economy speaks of the vital lesson she learned on her lengthy voyages, about the true value of resources which are so often taken for granted: from fuel, food and water, to wood, metals and plastics.

Because in a boat, thousands of miles from land, ‘What you have is all you have,’ as Dame Ellen observes. And that means valuing finite resources by keeping them in the economy and out of the environment.

The same should be true of the planet’s raw materials – the source of all that we eat, drink, wear, drive, use and breathe. We rely upon these valuable assets, the Earth’s ‘natural capital’, for energy to fuel homes, businesses and transport; the materials to build shelter; the seeds, soil and water we use to grow food.

And our consumption of them places greater strain on our planet as the global population grows. More people are migrating from rural areas to cities. Greater prosperity and higher living standards are driving demand for nutritious food, comfortable housing, reliable energy and consumer goods. With everything humans do, we inevitably create waste. However we manage it, there is an impact on the environment.

The Government’s ambitious new Resources and Waste Strategy seeks to redress the balance in favour of the natural world. Our goal is to move to a more circular economy which keeps resources in use for longer – for that to happen, we must all reduce, reuse and recycle more than we do now.

Our Strategy focuses on known problems with effective solutions that, among other benefits, will reduce our reliance on single-use plastics, cut confusion over household recycling, tackle the problems of packaging and end the economic, environmental and moral scandal that is food waste.

We also tackle the problem of waste crime, which cost the English economy around £600 million in 2016, harms local communities and which pays no heed to the value of scarce resources.

Our goal is to maximise the value of the resources we use, minimise the waste we create, cut emissions and help create a cleaner, greener, healthier planet.

Turning the tide on pollution

By making sure that manufacturers and producers bear a heavier financial burden for the pollution they cause, the Strategy fully upholds the ‘polluter pays’ principle.

By introducing new incentives – regulatory and economic, along with better infrastructure and information, our measures help people do the right thing.

And by protecting the natural world, and leaving it in a healthier state for the next generation, it will help us uphold a core pledge of our 25 Year Environment Plan.

This Strategy reflects that ambition. Leaving the European Union is an opportunity to refresh and renew our environmental policy, and show domestic and international leadership.

Secondly, these new measures support our commitments, in the Industrial and Clean Growth Strategies, to double resource productivity and eliminate avoidable waste, both by 2050.

Thirdly, and as importantly, we know there is an urgent need for new thinking to tackle avoidable waste, particularly plastic. An estimated eight million tonnes of plastic waste enter the sea each year. Devastating evidence of the damage to wildlife and habitats has been shown in programmes such as Blue Planet II on the BBC, and Sky's Ocean Rescue campaign.

We will consult on increasing our successful 5p plastic bag charge to 10p, and extending the scheme to small retailers. We will consult on introducing a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, to reward people for bringing back bottles and encourage them not to litter their empties. We have also consulted on banning plastic straws (except for medical use), stirrers and cotton buds.

Plastic pollution is, however, far from the only threat to the environment. Radical action is necessary to improve our use of resources and our handling of waste. Government moves to cut consumption of single-use plastics have both paved the way for the fundamental reforms set out here, and put the sector on notice that we expect lasting, long-term change.

The consequences of every country's behaviour are seen and felt across the world. Pollution knows no national boundaries - it damages the global environment as well as our own landscapes, rivers and seas. And countries are responding to the threat they face. Nations such as China are no longer prepared to accept lower quality waste materials; nor indeed should this nation be offshoring its waste for others to deal with.

In recent decades, this country has been making progress on how it manages waste and resources. Recycling rates are up, and carbon emissions are holding steady. But we are ambitious for more. The planet needs us to do more. And with this Strategy we will go further, faster.

Michael Gove
**Secretary of State for
Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs**

