

13 July 2023**Update on the Implementation of New
Environmental Legislation.**

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Purpose of the report**Single Use Plastics**

1. In January 2023 the Government announced that a range of polluting single-use plastics will be banned in England. The ban will include single-use plastic plates, trays, bowls, cutlery, balloon sticks, and certain types of polystyrene cups and food containers. This ban will be introduced from the 1 October 2023, allowing businesses time to prepare.
2. According to estimates, England uses 2.7 billion items of single-use cutlery — most of which are plastic — and 721 million single-use plates per year, but only 10% are recycled. If 2.7 billion pieces of cutlery were lined up they would go round the world over eight and a half times (based on a 15cm piece of cutlery).
3. From October 2023, people won't be able to buy these products from any business - this includes retailers, takeaways, food vendors and the hospitality industry.
4. Plastic pollution takes hundreds of years to break down and inflicts serious damage to our oceans, rivers and land. It is also a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, from the production and manufacture of the plastic itself to the way it is disposed.
5. Previous bans, such as banning straws, stirrers and cotton buds, have reduced the damage from these plastics. Before the products were banned, it was estimated straws, stirrers and cotton buds collectively contributed to around 5.7% of marine litter. After the ban, the Great British Beach Clean 2021 reported cotton bud sticks had moved out of the UK's top ten most common beach litter items.
6. The Government is also carefully considering further measures around other commonly littered and problematic plastic items, including wet wipes, tobacco filters and sachets, following the call for evidence on this issue.
7. Future steps that could be explored include banning plastic in these items, and mandatory labelling on packaging to help consumers dispose of these items correctly. A new research project will also look into the impact of wet wipes on blockages in the sewage system and will inform any future policy actions.

8. The ban will not apply to plates, trays, and bowls that are used as packaging in shelf-ready pre-packaged food items, as these will be included in our plans for an Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme – which will incentivise producers to use packaging that can be recycled and meet higher recycling targets. For example, this would include pre-packaged salad bowls and bowls filled with food at the counter of a takeaway.
9. Compliance monitoring of the scheme with retailers will lie with Trading Standards services.

Deposit Return Scheme

10. Recycling plastic bottles and drink cans is set to be easier for tens of millions of people thanks to a new deposit return scheme, the Government announced in January 2023.
11. New plans set out in a consultation response detail that, through small cash deposits placed on single-use drinks containers, people will likely be incentivised to recycle their drinks bottles and cans, reducing litter and plastic pollution.
12. The scheme would include special machines, known as reverse vending machines, and designated sites where people can return their bottles and receive their cash back. In most cases it would be the retailers who sell drinks covered by the scheme who would host a return point.
13. Every year UK consumers go through an estimated around 14 billion plastic drinks bottles and nine billion drinks cans, many of which are littered or condemned to landfill.
14. The new scheme, covering England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, is set to be introduced in 2025, following extensive work with industry to prepare for the necessary changes – including setting up infrastructure and amending labelling. It aims to ensure 85% fewer drinks containers are discarded as litter after three years of its launch.

Recommendation

15. The Committee is asked to note the information.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/single-use-plastics-ban-plates-bowls-trays-containers-cutlery-and-balloon-sticks#:~:text=Guidance-,Single%2Duse%20plastics%20ban%3A%20plates%2C%20bowls%2C%20trays%2C,use%20plastic%20items%20in%20England>.

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