

SECTION 8. CONCLUSION

8.1 How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

Consultation on proposals

A full, 12-week public [consultation](#) began in July 2020 on our proposals to ban nine single-use plastic (SUP) products and products made of oxo-degradable plastic. Over 3,500 responses were received and included views from protected characteristic groups, environmental charities, manufacturing and retailer representatives and waste management organisations. Responses were also received from organised campaigns, including staff and customers of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water.

Following the closure of the initial consultation in October 2020, further targeted engagement and evidence gathering was undertaken in early 2022. These discussions covered both the initial 2020 proposals and sought views on the possible expansion of our proposals to potentially include wet wipes, plastic carrier bags and polystyrene lids for cups and takeaway food containers. To understand the potential impacts of this, engagement was undertaken with the following:

- Disabled people and their representative groups,
- Children and young people, including representative organisations, such as Young Wales climate change special interest group
- Non-government environmental organisations,
- Representatives from the education sector,
- Representative from the health sector (both primary and secondary),
- Representatives from the agriculture sector
- Manufacturing organisations
- Representatives and members of retailer organisations

In developing the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Bill, we have taken account all of the feedback we have been provided, in particular how best to mitigate against any negative impacts in relation to the needs of people with different protected characteristics.

8.2 What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

Positive Impacts

The issue of plastic waste and its impact on our environment is regularly highlighted in the media, online and with Welsh Ministers. SUP makes up a significant proportion

of litter on our streets, parks and seas. It blights our communities and has a devastating impact on our wildlife. Our consultation and targeted engagement have shown there is strong support for action in this area. We identified a number of potential positive benefits:

- ***A resilient Wales:*** By reducing the amount of unnecessary plastic waste being generated and disposed of inappropriately. It will allow us to build upon our global reputation as an exemplar in recycling and contribute towards our response to the climate and nature emergency.
- ***A Prosperous Wales:*** By supporting businesses and enterprises in Wales to be more resource efficient, develop innovative solutions to SUP products and to take advantage of the economic opportunities that result from moving towards a more circular economy.
- ***A more equal Wales and A Wales of cohesive communities:*** By ensuring all parts of society are able to enjoy a clean and safe environment, free from plastic litter.
- ***A globally responsible Wales*** – By reducing our reliance and disposal of SUP we are taking greater responsibility for what our population consumes and ensures we use our fair share of the World’s resources.
- ***A healthier Wales*** – By reducing the negative impact littering, plastic pollution and climate change have on our environment and our health and well-being we will provide the most basic health requirements: clean air and safe water. By improving the quality of green and blue spaces available for people to access and enjoy it will help improve people’s mental and physical wellbeing (through physical activity/ exercise).

Negative Impacts

Evidence gathered during the targeted engagement supports the information received in the initial consultation. In general, respondents considered there were suitable non plastic alternative items already on the market for most of the items proposed in the bans, such as paper or cardboard cotton buds, wooden cutlery and drink stirrers.

Regarding plastic single use carrier bags (SUCBs), the proposed ban captures the thinner “gauge” carrier bags of 49 microns or less, which meet the definitions of size and are not exempt on food or health and safety grounds. This will not include thicker gauge plastic single use bags or those currently used by supermarkets described as “bags for life”. It will also not include plastic bags such as nappy sacks or dog poo bags.

Straws

- Respondents agreed that for most individuals, a ban on SUP straws (including attached straws) would result in a switch to alternative straws such as metal, paper, glass or other materials. However, we recognise for some disabled people, this may prove problematic as flexible plastic drinking straws are often a necessity for people to eat and drink safely and independently. For example, rigid straws could cause injury for some individuals who have impairments that cause tremors or spasms and reusable straws may prove difficult to clean.

Groups representing disabled people felt the removal of flexible plastic straws could also create additional caring and financial burdens for carers of people of all ages. It was noted some reusable straws are more costly than the single use plastic versions. This is set against a backdrop of existing high costs for disabled people with the [Well-being of Wales 2021 report](#) providing data which demonstrates that individuals, who have a long standing illness or impairment, may already be socially and financially disadvantaged. For example, research undertaken by [Scope reports](#) that a disabled person faces, on average, additional monthly costs of £583 and those families with disabled children face extra monthly costs of £581. For almost a quarter (24%) of families with disabled children, extra costs amount to over £1,000 a month.

Many unpaid carer's also report that caring results in a negative and often lasting impact on their physical and mental health, however as with the rest of the population, many people with impairments or long-term conditions also take on caring responsibilities for others.

8.3 In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal: avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?

To mitigate any negative impact our proposal to ban SUP straws may have, we have included exemptions to protect access for individuals who need them to eat and drink safely or independently. Once the ban is in force, SUP straws will be available for purchase at pharmacies, given on request, for example, at hospitality or catering premises, or provided for medical reasons as follows:

- **Pharmacies** (including on-line) - are able to buy SUP straws from manufacturers or wholesalers so individuals who need them, or someone on their behalf, can purchase them for use at home or elsewhere.
- **Premises providing food or drink** - will still be able to buy SUP straws from manufacturers or wholesalers to give to someone who requires them to eat and drink independently, or someone requesting a straw on their behalf. It is important to note that customers do not need to provide proof of need when requesting straws.

- **Medical purposes** - health professionals are able to purchase SUP straws to supply where required, this includes for use in hospitals and other medical settings.

By taking an approach that is consistent with other parts of the UK, the exemption provides clarity for individuals on how to access SUP straws wherever they are located. It also provides clarity and consistency for businesses.

Customers who need a SUP straw or a packet of straws, or when someone requests them on their behalf, will not be required to provide any evidence of that need.

Although businesses must not offer straws to customers, let them help themselves to straws or have them on display, they should continue to follow the duty to make reasonable adjustments under the [Equality Act 2010](#) - reasonable adjustments are changes businesses must make to treat disabled people fairly and give them the same choices and chances.

While exemptions for straws will ensure they remain available on request to those individuals who require them, the change in how they are accessed, has the potential to impact on disabled people in a variety of ways, including:

- Loss of independence associated with reduced availability of straws as hospitality environments become less inclusive and accessible to individuals who require straws.
- Stigmatisation and unnecessary medicalisation attached to potential routes to accessing straws under an exemption.

Feedback from disabled people and representative groups stress they care about the environment and want to do their part. They do not want to suffer discrimination and negative attitudes for continuing to use items they rely on for caring for themselves or to stay safe.

We will work closely with businesses, retailers, those enforcing the bans and groups representing those with protected characteristics to develop comprehensive guidance to support the implementation of the bans. The intention is to provide information, published in a number of formats, which will ensure there is clarity for enforcing officers, suppliers, retailers and members of the public.

The delivery of these bans and publication of guidance will be further supported by awareness raising to ensure everyone is aware of the need for some products to remain available to individuals who rely on them. It will also explain how we expect these products to be accessible and provide retailers specific guidance on this.

8.4 How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

Our policy objective is to reduce the use of commonly littered and unnecessary SUP products, to prevent the negative impact from plastic pollution on our environment, wildlife, health, and wellbeing and to respond to the climate and nature emergency.

Our communications and guidance will be developed for and in collaboration with relevant organisations, to provide information on products being banned or restricted, exemptions and timescales for phasing out the products.

The guidance will be supported by awareness raising to ensure everyone is aware of the need for some products to remain available to individuals who rely on them. It will also explain how we expect these products to be accessible and provide retailers specific guidance on this.

A post implementation review of the legislation, no later than five years after it has come into force, will assess the effectiveness of the policy objectives, including tackling the climate and nature emergency, reducing SUP littering, behaviour change to more sustainable alternatives. We anticipate this would include:

- Identifying and evaluating the impact the legislation has had on the use of SUP products and the associated behaviour of consumers in Wales.
- Identifying and evaluating the impacts the legislation has had on protected characteristic groups.
- Identifying and evaluating what impacts the legislation has had on businesses in Wales.
- Identifying and evaluating the extent to which the legislation has succeeded in encouraging a shift to reusable products.
- Identifying, where possible, and evaluating, the extent the legislation has had on reducing littering of SUPs following its implementation.