



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

# **Call for Evidence**

## **Plan to Eliminate Plastic Pollution in Northern Ireland**

**Issued: 28 June 2021**

**Respond by: 1 October 2021**

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
How to Respond.....	3
Confidentiality.....	4
Data Protection .....	4
Background .....	5
Purpose & Scope .....	7
What You Can Contribute to this Call for Evidence .....	8
Next Steps.....	9
Annex A.....	10
Key Questions for Response.....	10

## Introduction

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is developing a plan to eliminate plastic pollution in Northern Ireland, as committed to by the Northern Ireland Executive in the New Decade, New Approach document, published in January 2020. This public Call for Evidence sets out the purpose and scope of the plan to eliminate plastic pollution and its responses will help inform the development of plan to eliminate plastic pollution in Northern Ireland.

## How to Respond

You are invited to submit your views in response to this Call for Evidence by 5pm on 1 October 2021. If you are unable to meet this deadline, please contact the Department on the email address below to make arrangements for late submission. We would encourage respondents to complete the online response form which can be found here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/ek31MgR746>

Responses to the key questions in Annex A will also be accepted by email to the Department at the following address:

[wastepolicyteam@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:wastepolicyteam@daera-ni.gov.uk).

The same email address should be used for any related enquiries.

Or by post to;

**Single Use Plastic, Waste Prevention and Recycling Policy**

**Ballykelly House**

**111 Ballykelly Road**

**Ballykelly**

**Limavady**

**BT49 9HP**

## **Confidentiality**

Please note that your response may be made public by the Department. For example, information people provide in response to this targeted engagement exercise, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential please tell us, but be aware that we cannot guarantee confidentiality.

## **Data Protection**

Section 8(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 permits the processing of personal data when necessary for an activity that supports or promotes democratic engagement. Information provided by respondents to this call for evidence exercise will be held and used for the purposes of the administration of this current exercise and subsequently disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation.

## Background

1. We must not demonise all plastic as it has many beneficial properties, for example, its uses in healthcare and for prolonging the life of food thus reducing food waste and the harmful carbon emissions that it causes.
2. Rather, we need to address the throwaway culture around plastic and the pollution caused by this. Plastic should be valued as a resource by society and is key to developing a circular economy in Northern Ireland, where in contrast to the current linear system of “make, take, dispose”, a circular economy puts resources back into the economy where they are reused, repurposed or recycled, keeping them in use for as long as possible extracting the maximum value from them and minimising the generation of waste.
3. The New Decade, New Approach document set out a commitment by the Executive to create a plan to eliminate plastic pollution in Northern Ireland. This plan will aim to address and eliminate the problem of plastic pollution. DAERA will lead on the development of this plan, but cross-Departmental work and wider stakeholder engagement will be required to fully address the problem and establish mitigations to help eliminate it.
4. Best available data will be used to establish trends in pollution and determine the scale of the problem. This will provide pathways to action, allowing decisions to be made on future projects to aid in the development of the plan to eliminate plastic pollution.
5. In addition, forthcoming legislation aimed at tackling some of our most problematic plastics will feature and will provide quantitative data to illustrate reductions in plastic pollution. These drivers, for example Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) and legislation restricting the sale of certain single use plastic items for which there are more sustainable alternatives are all aimed at keeping plastic in our economy and out of our environment.

6. In Northern Ireland, 78% of all marine litter found on our beaches is made up of discarded plastics and around 80% of this originates from land based sources. Actions to tackle marine litter will be incorporated into the wider plan to eliminate plastic pollution, which includes capital funding to develop initiatives to help achieve this.
7. DAERA have already been involved in a range of actions aimed at eliminating plastic pollution which will form part of the plan such as continuing to provide support to Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful through the Tackling Plastics project. This project aims to help businesses, schools and councils to tackle single-use plastics and to reduce pollution. This plan will bring together all of these actions in a coordinated way, as well as providing scope for the development and implementation of new actions.
8. DAERA is a signatory to the UK Plastics Pact which enables us to work with industry partners to focus on issues around eliminating problematic and unnecessary plastic packaging. The overall aim of the pact is to support the delivery of UK Government's target of achieving zero avoidable plastic waste by 2042.
9. In October 2020, the Executive approved a Plastic Reduction Action Plan for the government estate. This plan seeks to remove unnecessary items of single use plastic from contracts and officials are working with supplier to find more sustainable, environmentally friendly alternatives. A campaign is also well underway to raise awareness and educate NICS staff on the problem of single use plastic.

## Purpose & Scope

10. The Northern Ireland Executive has laid down its commitment to eliminate plastic pollution and, by extension, to address climate change. The development of this plan and its associated actions will assist Northern Ireland's contribution to the UK's net zero target.
11. The purpose of this Call for Evidence is to help ensure the Department is capturing all the actions that are taking place across Northern Ireland which are aimed at tackling and eliminating plastic pollution. We want to hear examples of actions across all stakeholders. Actions submitted may be brought forward for inclusion in the plan to showcase Northern Ireland's achievements in addressing the problem.
12. We would like to hear about any key questions or issues the plan should consider, for example, are there areas that you would like to see a greater focus on in the future?
13. We are also interested to hear about potential solutions to the problem of plastic pollution, this could be new technology, ideas for behaviour change, ways to move resources up the waste hierarchy or new innovations that are in development.
14. We would be keen to hear from experts in the field who can provide up to date evidence and data on plastic pollution and help inform the wider plastic pollution plan.

## What You Can Contribute to this Call for Evidence

15. We are seeking input from the full range of interested parties on;
  - a) What the plan should consider and what are the key issues that need to be addressed;
  - b) Examples and evidence of actions taken to reduce or eliminate plastic pollution that can be used as exemplars in our plastic pollution plan and which can be used to show what can be done;
  - c) Relevant sources of evidence and expertise that can be used to inform and develop a Northern Ireland plan which have;
    - i. Benefited action on plastic pollution.
    - ii. Discouraged action on plastic pollution.
  - d) It is important to learn from local, national and international sources and consider good practice and examples used elsewhere which have helped reduce plastic pollution.
16. Responses should consider;
  - Any actions you are involved with which have or will contribute to the elimination of plastic pollution in Northern Ireland;
  - Challenges and opportunities we face on plastic pollution that have not been addressed by government or any other scheme; and
  - Potential solutions, whether sector specific or cross cutting.
17. Your contributions will help us to frame the plan more effectively and to develop better proposals for tackling plastic pollution in the long term.



## Next Steps

We welcome contributions from stakeholders who wish to inform the Northern Ireland plastic pollution plan. Responses to this Call for Evidence will be used to inform and develop the plan. Responses should be succinct and if further information is required from you officials may contact you to investigate your input further. Also, some of the input you provide may be used as a specific case study, in which case officials may contact you for more information. Please ensure the details you provide on your response are correct.

We expect to consult on the Northern Ireland plastic pollution plan in early 2022. This Call for Evidence is only one aspect of the wider conversation on eliminating unnecessary plastic from our environment. We are already engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including industry and experts, to draw on evidence and insights and we will continue to do so throughout the process of developing the plan.

## **Annex A**

# **Call for Evidence: Plan to Eliminate Plastic Pollution in Northern Ireland**

## **Key Questions for Response**

We would encourage respondents to complete the online response form which can be found here: <https://forms.office.com/r/ek31MgR746>

Please review the section on Confidentiality and Data Protection on page 3 of the Call for Evidence prior to submitting a response.

Responses submitted via email should be sent, along with any relevant accompanying evidence by 1 October 2021 at 5pm to [wastepolicyteam@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:wastepolicyteam@daera-ni.gov.uk) or by post to;

### **Single Use Plastic, Waste Prevention and Recycling Policy**

**Ballykelly House**

**111 Ballykelly Road**

**Ballykelly**

**Limavady**

**BT49 9HP**

If you have any questions regarding the Call for Evidence or completion of your response, please email [wastepolicyteam@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:wastepolicyteam@daera-ni.gov.uk) or call 028 7744 2087.

## Call for Evidence Key Questions

Please provide us with your succinct responses to the key questions below. Please be as concise as possible and where appropriate provide evidence to support your comment. If we believe your response needs further clarification or information we will respond to you directly to obtain this additional information. You can respond to all or some of the key questions.

1. Detail any actions that you or your organisation has been involved in with the aim of tackling plastic pollution in Northern Ireland and which could be used as an exemplar in the Northern Ireland plastic pollution plan. Please provide supporting evidence where possible. These actions could range from large scale operations such as implementing a policy or removing single use plastic from an organisation, to smaller grassroots actions, such as organised litter picks. **(Max. 500 words)**
2. Have you any plastic pollution suggestions that you would like to include in the Northern Ireland plan which you feel have not been addressed by government or by another scheme? Please provide supporting evidence where relevant. **(Max. 500 words)**
3. Have you, or your organisation, any solutions or sources of evidence and expertise that could be used to help eliminate the problem of plastic pollution in Northern Ireland? These could include examples from elsewhere that have benefited or discouraged action on plastic pollution, or any challenges or opportunities you have identified. **(Max. 500 words)**
4. Any other comments or contributions that will help inform the plan and the commitment by the NI Executive to eliminate plastic pollution. **(Max. 500 words)**

# Submission Document for the Call for Evidence on Plan to Eliminate Plastic Pollution in Northern Ireland

Please provide us with your succinct responses to the key questions below. Please be as concise as possible and where appropriate provide evidence to support your comment. If we believe your response needs further clarification or information we will respond to you directly to obtain this additional information. You can respond to all or some of the key questions.

1. Detail any actions that you or your organisation has been involved in with the aim of tackling plastic pollution in Northern Ireland and which could be used as an exemplar in the Northern Ireland plastic pollution plan. Please provide supporting evidence where possible. These actions could range from large scale operations such as implementing a policy or removing single use plastic from an organisation, to smaller grassroots actions, such as organised litter picks. (Max. 500 words)

Mid Ulster District Council has worked towards minimising plastic pollution by promoting recycling throughout the district and moving the handling of waste plastics up the waste hierarchy by minimising the use of Landfill, recycling waste plastics where possible and recovering energy from lower grade plastics. In the latest Local Authority Waste Management Statistics Report by the NIEA (January – March 2021) Mid Ulster District Council achieved the highest recycling rate of 54.8%, the second highest energy recovery rate of 42.2% and the lowest landfill rate of 3.8%.

The Councils integrated marketing and communications activity has contributed to on-going improvements in recycling rates and reductions in contamination levels. The use of single use plastics and plastic pollution have increasingly been at the centre of the waste and recycling communications message. Recent campaigns included the Be Plastic Fantastic campaign, the annual Eco-Speak competition and the Refillution campaign in conjunction with NIWater.

The NI Water 'Refillution' campaign began in June 2019 as part of National Refill Day and encouraged people to stop using single use plastic water bottles and to switch to reusable bottles which can be filled from the tap. The Council pledged, as an organisation, to reuse and refill whenever possible, and by undertaking our own activity in support of the wider campaign and distributed approx. 1,000 branded bottles internally and externally.

The Council is a frontline service in reducing plastic pollution in the countryside through its extensive street cleansing and litter picking operations and by supporting Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. It has also helped support community clean ups over the past year, loaning out over 4,500 litter pickers and donating almost 12,000 bags to be used in community clean ups at 60 different locations throughout the district.

The Council has endeavoured to exclusively source recycled plastic products for distribution through the Councils schools educational programme and where possible for equipment in parks such as seats, picnic benches and bins. Also, by promoting the reduction of single use plastics by selling reusable green waste sacks, giving out promotional Jute bags-for-life and sourcing approx. 1,000 water bottles through the aforementioned Refillution campaign.

The Council operates a reusable nappy scheme to encourage the use of reusable cloth nappies. Each child wearing disposable nappies over a 2.5 year period will require 4000-6000 of these which is enough to fill approximately 160 black bags, equalling approximately 1.5-2 tonnes of black bin waste, costing parents/carers approx. £900 during that time. By swapping to reusable nappies, Mid Ulster residents with small children in their household can dramatically reduce the amount of plastic waste as well as saving money. Through Mid Ulster Councils Reusable Nappy Scheme, users are reimbursed £30 when they spend £50 or more on the purchase of reusable cloth nappies.

2. Have you any plastic pollution suggestions that you would like to include in the Northern Ireland plan which you feel have not been addressed by government or by another scheme? Please provide supporting evidence where relevant. (Max. 500 words)

DAERA could make use of single use plastic bans to prevent the sale of certain problematic plastics. Potential products could be takeaway Styrofoam cups and plates / containers, plastic bags and plastic straws. This would encourage the use of more environmentally friendly products that are either easily / fully recyclable or compostable. For example, options in food stores could be a paper bag with a 10p charge or a £1 charge for a bag-for-life made of heavy woven plastic, jute etc....

Taxes could also be levied on packaging producers with a sliding scale based on their environmental impact. The less recyclable and compostable the product the higher the tax levy. Levies such as these would encourage packaging users such as supermarkets, takeaways and food manufacturers to choose less damaging packaging while also raising revenue for environmental purposes. This would work similar to the way the Landfill Tax disincentivised using landfill while also raising significant money for environmental causes.

The levies introduced could be collected and sent to a fund managed by DEARA. The monies raised could then be used specifically for plastic pollution focused schemes like ocean and river clean-ups, illegal landfill removal, community litter picks etc...

DAERA could also provide funding towards companies as grants for the development of local recycling facilities. This could be done in conjunction with the local universities through existing knowledge transfer programmes.

3. Have you, or your organisation, any solutions or sources of evidence and expertise that could be used to help eliminate the problem of plastic pollution in Northern Ireland? These could include examples from elsewhere that have benefited or discouraged action on plastic pollution, or any challenges or opportunities you have identified. (Max. 500 words)

6 of the 11 Councils have now signed up to the Plastic Promise, a scheme promoted by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, where organisations make a pledge to reduce their plastic footprint. Schemes developed by other Councils include bring your own reusable coffee cup / water bottle schemes, reduction of single use plastics and promotion of compostable packaging to shops and takeaways. It is hoped that Mid Ulster District Council will also sign up to the Plastic Promise and Recycling Officers are currently investigating potential projects to run alongside the next communications and marketing strategy.

4. Any other comments or contributions that will help inform the plan and the commitment by the NI Executive to eliminate plastic pollution. (Max. 500 words)

None.