



Department
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Food & Rural Affairs

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Dear James and Jane,

Thank you for your joint letter of 10 December to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) about climate change. I am replying as the Defra Minister responsible for the policy areas you raised. I apologise for the delay in responding. Defra is currently dealing with high volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. Thank you for your understanding during this challenging time.

BEIS leads across Government on climate change mitigation and net zero and Defra is the Government lead for climate change adaptation. Defra is also responsible for efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the following sectors: agriculture, waste, land-use and fluorinated gases (F-gases).

The Government is seeking to make the UK a world leader in using resources efficiently and reducing the amount of waste we create as a society. We want to prolong the lives of the materials and goods that we use and move society away from the inefficient linear economic model of 'take, make, use, throw' to a more circular one. Material resource efficiency can contribute significantly to a reduction in carbon emissions from extraction, processing and manufacture in this country. This will help achieve net zero through industrial decarbonisation whilst also reducing emissions abroad.

Action to achieve this needs to be driven at the national level and we are doing this through our Resources and Waste Strategy (2018) which sets a clear longer-term policy direction in line with our 25 Year Environment Plan. We are working with Departments across Whitehall, and with stakeholders, to ensure we can deliver on our commitments. We recognise the vital role local authorities must play in ensuring a circular economy and we are working with them on a range of actions including a major reform of household and business recycling collections.

The Strategy announced, alongside other measures, proposals for three significant reforms to the waste system in England. These are the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers; Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging; and consistency in household and business recycling collections.

The Strategy also set out a number of other policy commitments including a review of the WEEE Regulations; action to improve product design; waste prevention measures; and consultations on a number of producer responsibility schemes. This ambitious approach will significantly change the way that we manage our resources and waste will help us reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions.

On 18 March, we launched a consultation on a new 'Waste Prevention Programme for England: Towards a Resource Efficient Economy'. This builds on the 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy and seeks to agree a programme which helps with our strategic goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving net zero, protecting our natural capital, addressing our resource security, and creating jobs and growth, as well as increasing our resource productivity and minimising waste. You can find out more about this consultation at:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/waste-prevention-programme-for-england-2021/>

To support the achievement of these objectives, we are in full agreement that electronic and electrical equipment should be designed to last and we also agree that there is no place on the market for planned or built-in obsolescence of any sort. We have a range of policy measures in place and forthcoming which aim to increase product lifetimes and renew consumer confidence in the reliability and longevity of their purchases, thereby directly tackling built-in obsolescence.

As an example, from this Summer manufacturers will be legally obliged to make spare parts for products available to consumers for the first time – a new legal right which supports repairs – so that certain electrical appliances can be fixed more easily. Beyond electricals, the UK is leading the way in legislating for powers through our new Environment Bill that will enable us to set product design requirements for a broad range of products that relate to durability, repairability and recyclability, as well as the product's environmental footprint.

We are also seeking powers in the Environment Bill that will facilitate the introduction of new information requirements for products, to enable consumers to make informed choices about what they buy and use. Amongst the options we are considering are rating schemes based on labels which list electrical products' durability, repairability, recyclability and recycled content.

Thank you once again for taking the time to write about this important issue. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance with this or any other matters in the future.



REBECCA POW MP