

Sustainability Committee

SC(3)-08-08 (p1) Annex B: 24 April 2008

Petition P-03-63, calling for a ban on plastic bags

My Reasons for Wanting a Plastic Bag Ban in Wales

Effect on Wildlife

Whilst it goes without saying that plastic bags are detrimental to wildlife, few of us are aware of the actual extent of the problem. Just go to www.google.co.uk and do an image search using the parameters ' "plastic bags" AND "wildlife" '. You may be shocked by what you see.

Effect on Our Landscape

It is now impossible to travel anywhere without seeing some form of litter in our countryside. Whilst you expect to see this on the high street, the sight of a Mc Donald's bag hanging from an oak miles from the nearest town seems particularly perverse.

By-Product of the Oil Industry

Plastic bags are generally manufactured from polyethylene which is a by-product of oil refining. Our use of, and reliance upon fossil fuels, initially coal and latterly oil, has had a huge impact on the environment. In the interests of sustainability should we not be moving away from products that are derived from oil? Especially as the cost of that oil will become increasingly high as remaining stocks diminish.

Landfill Directive

Local authorities will have to significantly increase the amount that is currently recycled if they are to reduce the amount of matter being land-filled and thereby avoid significant fines. The banning of plastic bags will not only reduce the amount of waste being dumped but it will also provide new uses and new markets for the increased paper and card being recycled.

Political Reasons

This is a golden opportunity for Wales to use its extended legal powers to set itself apart from the other countries of the British Isles and the world. Ireland has introduced a tax on plastic bags which has resulted in their reduced use (although there is now some evidence that this trend is beginning to reverse). Scotland seems to have fudged the issue, with some MSPs arguing that a tax on plastic bags would be unfair on the poor and that a ban would add additional bureaucracy.

Let us act decisively! I want to see Wales leading the way. I want us to be recognised as a country that has wholeheartedly embraced sustainability - not one that simply talks about it and then disregards the future for the more immediate economic interest. Let's do something to put us on the map!

D. Neil Evans

Press Release (Carmarthenshire County Council)

Thursday, September 27

Neil's plastic bag ban goes before Assembly

A Council worker from Carmarthen will travel to Cardiff Bay next week to persuade AMs to ban plastic bags.

Corporate energy officer Neil Evans entered a BBC Wales project encouraging suggestions for new laws for the Welsh Assembly to create.

Neil's ban on plastic bags made a shortlist of three selected by a panel from 350 entries.

And his suggestion won the public vote - beating a ban on smacking children and an idea creating a body to co-ordinate search and rescue.

Neil's suggestion will now be discussed by the Assembly's Petitions Committee on Thursday, October 4.

The 38-year-old from Abergwili will attend the meeting at the Senedd to present his case to members.

He said: "I think the supermarkets in Britain would love to give up selling and using plastic bags. It's a cost to them.

"They would like a little bit of an incentive to become greener and I think if we lead the way in Wales, it may just happen in Britain and eventually, all over Europe."

Under new legislation, anyone in Wales is entitled to put forward their ideas directly to the Assembly.

The ideas can come from anyone, of any age, as long as 10 people back the proposal.

Suggestions for new laws flooded in when the BBC Wales project began, with some suggestions coming from overseas.

The ideas were selected by an expert panel which included Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, constitutional expert David Lambert, Dylan Iorwerth, managing editor of the magazine Golwg, and Glyn Mathias from the Electoral Commission.

Some of the suggestions which did not make it past the panel included making St David's Day a bank holiday and "making every day the first day of spring" an idea first put forward decades ago in If I Ruled The World, a song made famous by the Swansea-born tenor Sir Harry Secombe.

Caption: Council officer Neil Evans from Carmarthen will be presenting a petition to the Welsh Assembly to ban plastic bags.

Press note: For further information contact Carmarthenshire County Council