



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE Update on proposals to introduce legislation to ban the supply of wet wipes containing plastics and single-use vapes

DATE 22 April 2024

BY Huw Irranca-Davies, MS, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

Our Circular Economy Strategy, *Beyond Recycling*, published in 2021, sets out our goal to achieve zero waste by 2050. A key commitment in the Strategy is to phase out single-use plastic products, with the longer-term objective of addressing other single-use products regardless of material.

Our 2020 consultation, *Reducing Single Use Plastics*, received overwhelming support for proposals to ban several commonly littered single-use plastic products in Wales, with over 85% of respondents in favour. Respondents to the consultation also urged the Welsh Government to go further with some additional 60 products suggested for future action.

We heeded these calls and introduced the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023. This is a key piece of legislation aimed at turning the tide on plastic pollution. The first phase of bans has already commenced and, subject to the will of the Senedd, a second phase will be completed before the end of this Senedd term.

As the Act passed through the Senedd, my predecessor agreed to prioritise consideration of bans for several other products, this included wet wipes containing plastic. A UK wide approach has been agreed to introduce regulations to prohibit the sale and supply of wet wipes containing plastic to be delivered by each individual Government. Adopting this approach will ensure consistency in how our regulations are implemented and will help provide businesses and manufacturers with a clear understanding of what is required of them.

Between 14 October and 25 November 2023, we jointly consulted with the Scottish Government, the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive on the proposed ban of the manufacture, supply and sale of wet wipes containing plastic. A total of 1461 responses were received, 104 from Wales.

[The four nation Government Response has now been published](#), it sets out the consultation outcomes and the measures the four governments will now take forward. This includes an agreement to:

- **A ban on the supply of wet wipes containing plastic.** We have listened to stakeholders and acknowledge the size of the manufacturing industry in the UK. Therefore, we decided to introduce a ban on the supply of these wipes, in line with scope of the first phase of bans brought under the Act. This is intended to mitigate the economic impact of the ban and reduce the possibility of job losses in the industry.
- An **18-month transition period** will be provided to enable manufacturers to shift production to alternative materials and to reduce the risk that remaining stocks would be sent to landfill or incinerated.
- To provide an **exemption** for the supply and sale of wet wipes containing plastic for industrial and medical purposes. This follows consultation feedback which highlighted that for some uses, plastic free alternatives are either unsuitable or unavailable. The full details of these exemptions will be included in the regulations, however it will allow for businesses such as hospitals and food production sites to buy wet wipes containing plastic from other businesses, such as wholesalers. For those who receive or require medical care in their own home, the exemption will allow for supply and sale by registered pharmacies. Wet wipes containing plastic will not be permitted for sale on the shelves and customers who require these products for medical purposes will need to specifically ask the pharmacist for these. This is a similar model to that implemented for the plastic straws ban.

It is our intention for the ban on wet wipes containing plastic to come into force by June 2026.

Under separate legislation, we are also taking action to ban the supply of single-use vapes. These products have a significant environmental impact and are undermining our drive towards a circular economy. Over 360 million such vapes are bought each year in the UK, with valuable and critical materials such as lithium and copper regularly being binned that could instead be powering nearly 5,000 electric vehicles.

We are in the process of developing these regulations and I confirm our intention is for the bans on single-use (disposable) vapes to come into force in Wales on 1 April 2025. This will be aligned with similar bans in England and Scotland and will provide businesses with the necessary time to prepare, supported by the publication of guidance and communication materials, developed in collaboration with business representative groups.

I am committed to supporting action to reduce waste and maximise resourcing efficiency by following the principles of the waste hierarchy: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. This includes moving away from a take, make, waste model and towards a circular economy.