

**P-06-1357 Draw up a new Microplastics Action Plan for Wales –  
Correspondence from the Petitioner, 30 September 2025**

Many thanks for forwarding on the letter from the Cabinet Secretary.

I have a few comments to make on his response:

1. This issue once again just shows that we need a Microplastic Action Plan or Plan of Action or Roadmap. The Cabinet Secretary quite rightly points out that microplastics (and nanoplastics too) originate from a variety of different sources. This consequently also means that the solutions will also need to be varied. As it stands at the moment, we don't have an Action Plan or Roadmap. We have nothing that helps identify all the different sources, all their different impacts (whether they be environmental or to human and animal health) and then all the different solutions. If we don't have an overarching plan we won't ever be able to see concerted action and we will have to resort to trying to flag up single issues such as this turf netting as they come up. That seems unnecessary and too time consuming rather than trying to deal with all the issues in a more joined up way

2. Quite apart from the microplastic issue, this is also an issue that impacts small animals such as hedgehogs. Our recent Open Letter to Welsh Government on this (Open letter – ban plastic netting in grass turf | Friends of the Earth Cymru) was countersigned by a variety of different hedgehog groups as they are the ones who have to deal with the aftermath of hedgehogs becoming tangled up in this sort of netting. The injuries they and other animals are suffering as a result of being tangled in netting are truly awful. The Cabinet Secretary points out that "the principles of good placemaking require housing developers to consider positive biodiversity outcomes when new development is proposed and to promote more sustainable behaviours and outcomes wherever possible.". Unfortunately, however this in itself doesn't actually then mean any action has to be taken. The statement is full of words such as 'consider', 'promote' and 'wherever possible'. This is exactly why we are asking for some stronger action.

3. This is an issue where we do for once have all the levers in Wales that are needed to take stronger action. In a lot of other environmental or climate change related issues, Wales sometimes doesn't have all the necessary levers to try to affect positive change but on this we do. It would be incredibly disappointing therefore if we weren't able to take action on this. It might be viewed as a 'smaller' or somewhat insignificant issue compared to other environmental issues but we would like to make 2 points related to that – because it is a 'smaller' issue, it is actually then easier

to take action on (principle of 'low hanging fruit') and even more importantly, by taking action we could immediately reduce one of the impacts on wildlife. We know that biodiversity in Wales is declining at an alarming rate. Whilst plastic netting in turf isn't one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss, it is still nevertheless one issue that can affect small animals and as such we really should be taking action on it.

4. We also need to remember that the UK Turfgrass Growers Association, the UK wide turfgrass industry body have themselves taken a vote that their members will not supply turf with plastic mesh netting in from next year onwards. If the industry body themselves aren't in favour, why would Welsh Government not then also follow suit?

5. Sometimes, when we propose changes, the argument is made 'but what are the alternatives?'. For this issue the alternatives are clear and obvious. One is to use grass turf that doesn't have plastic netting (this is after all what we have all been doing for decades up to this point) and there are plenty of suppliers of this sort of turf, including suppliers in Wales. The other, even cheaper way of course is to use grass seeds instead of turf. So there are 2 obvious and ready-made alternatives.

To sum up – given the fact that there are well established (and cheaper) alternatives, given that the industry trade body themselves don't like the practice, given that we have the levers to take action in Wales, given the fact that taking action would help reduce hedgehog and other small animal deaths and reduce microplastic pollution and given the fact that plastic netting in turf is actually just really unpopular with affected gardeners, there doesn't really seem to be any good reason not to take some strong action. If 26 years of devolution can't even allow us to say no to grass turf with plastic netting inside it, then we haven't done too well.

Many thanks

Bleddyn