

Dyddiad /Date:
Gofynnwch am/Please ask for:
Llinell uniongyrchol/Direct line:
Ebost/Email:

28th February 2019
Tim Peppin
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David J Rowlands AM
Chair – Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Dear Mr. Rowlands

Petition P-05-822 Ban plastic straws (when drinking milk) in our schools

Thank-you for your letter to our former Chief Executive, dated 27th July 2018, which was re-sent on 18th February by your Deputy Clerk, Ross Davies. Please accept apologies from WLGA that you did not receive a reply to the original letter. For some reason, of which we are not sure, no-one was assigned to pull together a response.

On a general note, WLGA is fully supportive of efforts to improve the environment for future generations and we were actively involved in promoting the Well-being Act to local authorities as it came into force. We have also encouraged local authorities to get involved in efforts to reduce marine litter, working with Keep Wales Tidy and the Marine Conservation Society.

In relation to the specific petition, milk is subsidised for schools by the UK Government, with payment administered by Welsh Government. The milk is packaged uniquely for schools in third of a pint containers. These used to be glass but now tend to be PET or in cartons (although glass is making something of a comeback). The unique packaging is available only through LA contractors and therefore 100% of milk is bought using LA contracts.

In terms of who orders the milk, though, it could be the schools themselves or the local authority depending on what is agreed. Alternatively, it could be a third party that organises the milk delivery as a value-added service to schools and reclaims administration costs from central government for a fee.

The straws in use for school milk may come attached to the containers. If the straws are purchased separately, again it could be the school, the LA, or possibly the third party that buys them. Consumables are low value, so will tend to be bought by whatever means is convenient at the time. It can therefore be very difficult for local authorities to control what is and isn't bought.

Dr Chris Llewelyn
Prif Weithredwr
Chief Executive

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**Croesawn ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg a byddwn yn ymateb i ohebiaeth yn yr un iaith.
Ni fydd defnyddio'r naill iaith na'r llall yn arwain at oedi.**

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English and will respond to correspondence in the same language.
Use of either language will not lead to a delay.

Having said that, many schools are actively involved in the Eco Schools initiative which encourages pupils to think positively about the environmental implications of the way their schools operate. It is good to see Ysgol y Wern County Primary School taking this matter seriously.

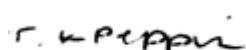
It is important to note that straws may be required for children with complex medical conditions. An outright ban on plastic straws could therefore have unintended consequences unless suitable alternatives are identified, available and affordable. Paper straws may be an option where glass bottles are used. However, for hygiene reasons these would have to be single use.

Several authorities have undertaken specific initiatives to try and eliminate plastic catering consumables. Examples include attempts to substitute plastics out of the catering disposables contract and to get single use plastic out of council main buildings. This has included working with suppliers to find alternatives. However, some of these initiatives have struggled to progress, given the limited availability of procurement resources.

The use and disposal of plastic products generally will continue to present a challenge. Efforts will continue to find ways of reducing use, encouraging recycling where appropriate and finding environmentally-friendly substitutes. WLGA will continue to offer advice and support to LAs wherever we can to help address the issue. The current Defra/Welsh Government consultations on Extended Producer Responsibility (see <https://beta.gov.wales/extended-producer-responsibility-packaging>) and plastic packaging (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plastic-packaging-tax>) may present new opportunities in this respect.

I hope this response is of some use to your committee in its ongoing consideration of the matter

Yours sincerely



Tim Peppin
Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development

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