

# Green Party writes to Michael Gove calling for more ambitious policy on plastics



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Deputy Leader of the Green Party Amelia Womack has today written to the Environment Secretary Michael Gove urging him to be much more ambitious in his pledge to reduce plastic waste.

Plastic hit the headlines when the BBC show Blue Planet II exposed the amount of waste that has entered our oceans. In the last few weeks Michael Gove has been unveiling the government's plan to reduce plastic waste including consulting on a scheme for cutting single use plastics and creating bottle return schemes.

But the Green Party says that these "piecemeal" changes do not go nearly far enough and has urged the Environment Secretary to use the public concern created by Blue Planet to introduce a much more wide-ranging set of policies.

In her letter to Mr Gove, Womack, who recently tried living plastic free for a week [1], says [2]:

"To fix a problem as systemic as this [plastic waste] requires an holistic approach – one that I urge you to adopt.

"We need to design out waste from the very start of the consumer chain. That means ending the production of single-use plastics while providing the infrastructure necessary to enable large corporations and individuals to recycle close to 100% of the items they use.

"Second, we need to invest in alternatives to plastic. There is a slowly rising network of zero-waste shops across the UK and companies like Splosh and Lush create products designed to have a limited or no impact on the environment. Through government investment, grants, and rewards we can upscale the use of these products so that they are available to everyone and every business.

"Third, we need to discourage bad behaviour. The tax on plastic bags has already brought enormous benefits: since the tax was introduced in England, the use of plastic bags has reduced 85%. That same model should be applied to plastic bottles, single use plastics, and microplastics."

## Notes

[1] <https://theecologist.org/2017/dec/19/my-week-without-plastic-ameliawomack>

[2]

Full text of letter below:

Dear Michael,

I have been greatly heartened by your increased interest in and desire to do something about the toll that plastic is having on our environment.

I do worry, however, that at present your goals are not ambitious enough.

The last few months have represented an awakening in the nation's consciousness about the problems caused by plastic to our ecosystem: Blue Planet has given a very visual representation to an issue long overlooked. If ever there was an opportunity to be bold about how we tackle the problem, it is now.

Recently I tried going plastic free for a single week. I was amazed at the extent to which plastic has infected our lives. It's in our tea bags. It covers nearly any grocery item we might buy. Make-up is impossible to buy without plastic. Having lived for a week without it, I can now fully understand why plastic litters our countryside and infects our oceans.

To fix a problem as systemic as this requires an holistic approach – one that I urge you to adopt.

Reducing plastic and waste will only be achieved through a strategy devised and implemented by government and industry. We need to design out waste from the very start of the consumer chain. That means ending the production of single-use plastics while providing the infrastructure necessary to enable large corporations and individuals to recycle close to 100% of the items they use.

Second, we need to invest in alternatives to plastic. There is a slowly rising network of zero-waste shops across the UK and companies like Splosh and Lush create products designed to have a limited or no impact on the environment. Through government investment, grants, and rewards we can upscale the use of these products so that they are available to everyone and every business.

Third, we need to discourage bad behaviour. The tax on plastic bags has already brought enormous benefits: since the tax was introduced in England, the use of plastic bags has reduced 85%. That same model should be applied to plastic bottles, single use plastics, and microplastics.

I would welcome the opportunity to share with you in person my experiences of living without plastic for a week or to talk about the policies we desperately need to preserve our blue planet.

Yours sincerely,

Amelia Womack, Deputy Leader of the Green Party of England and Wales

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