

NEW ENVIRONMENT CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY PLASTICS INDUSTRY

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Pledge to double plastic packaging recycling rate by 2020

Survey reports 'high risk' of council tax rises if government targets missed

A ground-breaking campaign is launched today by the plastics industry to challenge itself, government and consumers to step up recycling and to stop sending plastic to landfill.

The Plastics 2020 Challenge, backed by MPs from across the political divide, is the first time plastics manufacturers and processors themselves have called for a widespread and open debate and set their own targets for helping make the country greener.

The plastics industry is pledging several commitments on the "four R's" – reduce, reuse, recycle and recover, including doubling the recycling rate of plastic packaging by the year 2020.

The campaign also challenges the government, MPs, environmental groups and consumers to join forces with the industry to get more out of the resources we all use.

MPs and council leaders will gather today for the launch at Westminster where new research will be published showing only half of the responsible councillors confident they will meet the government's waste strategy targets for 2010, 2015 and 2020, suggesting large and unnecessary hikes in council tax bills unless action is taken.

The campaign website www.plastics2020challenge.com is also launched today, urging members of the public and interest groups to join the debate on the benefits, use and disposal of plastic products and packaging.

In a radical move other environmental campaigners, such as Friends of the Earth, will be encouraged to take part in regular web debates – on subjects such as marine littering and bio plastics. The sponsors of the Plastics 2020 Challenge believe that only an honest, open and rational debate on controversial issues will lead to a consensus about how to move forward.

The Plastics 2020 Challenge has been welcomed by WRAP, the government-sponsored waste reduction and recycling agency, and the Local Government Association.

Underpinning the scale of the Challenge are the findings of research by ComRes which showed that almost a third of councillors do not expect to meet the government's targets for recycling, composting and energy recovery next year while a third did not know if they would meet the targets for 2015 and 2020. Almost a fifth of councillors reported a high or very high risk of council tax bills having to rise in 2020 because the target would not be met. Asked about the scale of potential council tax increases if the target was missed 18% said it would be above 5%, with half of those respondents saying it would be

over 10%.

Calum Forsyth from the Plastics 2020 Challenge said: "There are plastics businesses in virtually every parliamentary constituency in the land. The industry is worth £19bn to UK Plc and employs 186,000 people. Plastics have become indispensable to our daily lives, and yet debate surrounding their use and disposal has become unhelpfully polarised. The urgent challenge is to confront head on these issues which surround one of modern life's essential materials, as time is running out about the options for efficient disposal of plastics."

Councillor Paul Bettison of the Local Government Association commented: "It is very welcome to see the plastics industry come to the table with proposals to drive up plastic recycling rates as well as wider initiatives for resource efficiency. Consumers have shown high levels of support for recycling, and with the industry's engagement I hope we see the challenge being met."

Lindsay Hoyle, Labour MP for Chorley said: "It is welcome to see the plastics industry taking on this important Challenge. I and my colleagues will be supporting them and watching progress closely over the coming years on this vital environmental issue."

Nigel Evans, Conservative MP for Ribble Valley commented: "The industry has set a challenging target to doubling plastic packaging recycling and I hope we will see others responding to the Challenge so that the 2020 target can be met."

- ENDS -

Editor's Notes:

1. The launch event takes place in Committee Room E at 7 Millbank, London SW1 between 3.30 pm and 5 pm.
2. The Plastics 2020 Challenge founding members are the British Plastics Federation, PlasticsEurope and the Packaging & Films Association. Together they represent 5,000 small, medium and large enterprises that employ approximately 186,000 people across the UK. The industry's exports are worth £4.6 billion a year and the UK remains dominant in worldwide markets.
3. The founding commitments of the Plastics 2020 Challenge published on 7 July are as follows:

OUR MISSION

To lead the UK in diverting plastics from landfill by 2020 in order to reduce climate change impact, address the energy deficit, and achieve a step change in efficient use of resources.

FOUNDING COMMITMENTS

1. REDUCE

Reduce wastage and environmental impact by continuous innovation of lightweight, high performance plastic materials and products.

2. REUSE

Develop new solutions and designs to increase the reuse of plastic products.

3. RECYCLE

Double plastic packaging recycling rate by 2020 through working in partnership with the whole value chain and all levels of government to facilitate and promote effective markets, technologies and infrastructure.

4. RECOVER

Support high efficiency energy from waste techniques for end-of-life plastics where recycling is not an option.

Full details can be viewed at www.plastics2020challenge.com

4. Copies of the ComRes report are available on request.

5. For further information please contact Plastics 2020 Challenge press office

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