

Tuesday, 29th October 2024

Dear John Swinney MSP, First Minister and Gillian Martin MSP, Acting Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy,

SUPPORT THE GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY AND TAKE ACTION FOR SCOTLAND

We, a group of civil society organisations, are writing to you to urge that Scotland does all it can to end plastic pollution, as the world comes together to finalise the global plastics treaty in Busan, Republic of Korea. Scotland must play its part, both in demonstrating its unwavering support to securing a legally binding international treaty, and in acting urgently and ambitiously at home.

The science is clear: the plastics crisis is damaging the planet and our health, and these impacts will worsen if production continues to increase. 99% of plastics are made from fossil fuels and plastic production is fueling the climate crisis. If left uncontrolled, it will consume [up to one-third](#) of the remaining Paris Agreement carbon budget by 2050, surpassing the energy and transportation sectors.

Exposure to plastics is harming our health. [The quantity of microplastics found in brain samples](#) from 2024 is nearly double that of samples from 2016. More than [16,000 chemicals are associated with plastic production](#), with 4,200 of them identified as a hazard for the environment and human health.

Plastic pollution impacts some people, especially marginalised groups such as women and ethnic minority groups, more than others, reinforcing social inequalities. [Millions of tonnes of plastic waste have been exported](#) from rich countries to be dumped in the global south. [60% of all recycled plastics are managed by waste pickers](#).

In Scotland, much of the plastic we use is unnecessary, designed for single use and often not even recyclable. People see the impact of plastic litter and throw away products in their daily lives and support for change is high, with [88% of Scottish adults concerned about plastic pollution](#).

Measures in place today, such as recycling and selective product bans, have proven insufficient in addressing the plastic crisis. Solutions must address the root cause of the crisis – how plastics are produced and sold. Only policy makers can hold producers and retailers to account for the harm created in their plastic products. Many of the actions required to achieve this must be taken at a devolved level.

On this day in 2018, the [Scottish Government](#) signed the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment. Just eight years later, the [2025 targets are expected to be missed](#). It is time for the Scottish Government to make good on these promises and take action to end plastic pollution, both as part of the global effort and here in Scotland.

We call on the Scottish Government to support the global plastics treaty by:

- Joining over 50 countries in signing the [Bridge to Busan](#) declaration and committing to sustainable levels of primary plastic production.
- Publicly call for the UK Government to support the initiative of Peru and Rwanda in proposing a target to reduce plastic production by 40% by 2040 in the negotiations.
- Support the UK Government in their engagement in the plastics treaty negotiations, ensuring that the UK remains an active member of the High Ambition Coalition.

We are also calling on Scottish Government to take the following actions to reduce plastic in Scotland:

- In its forthcoming Circular Economy Strategy, include targets which reduce plastic production and waste. Transparently measure and report Scotland's plastic production, consumption and waste.
- Develop and invest in a reuse programme to improve access to reuse and repair services. The goal should be that reuse is as easy as buying new for everyone in Scotland.
- Create an extensive Extended Producer Responsibility Programme to ensure producers and retailers pay for the cleanup of their products. Planning must begin immediately.
- Ban the burning of plastic in incinerators, building on the recommendation in the independent review on incineration conducted for the Scottish Government in 2022.
- Properly support local authorities to enforce existing and future legislative changes, such as the Single Use Plastics ban.
- Ensure these transitions are socially just by putting communities and workers at the heart of plastic reduction plans at every stage.

We have one final chance to ensure the Global Plastics Treaty reflects the ambition that [most people want to see](#). The world is watching, and we are ready to collaborate with you in these efforts. We look forward to your response,

Yours faithfully,

Friends of the Earth Scotland
Action to Protect Rural Scotland (APRS)
United Kingdom Without Incineration Network (UKWIN)
Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
Plastic Free Helensburgh
Reloop
Plastic-Free Dalgety Bay
Nourish Scotland
Dovesdale Action Group
Zero Waste Europe
Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland
Surfers Against Sewage
Global Justice Now
Circular Communities Scotland
Circular Design Synergy
Plastic-Free Scotland Communities
Common Weal
SCIAF
Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland (WEAll Scotland)
Coastal Communities Network Marine Litter Forum
Environmental Investigation Agency
Marine Conservation Society
Glasgow Quakers Climate Cafe
People's Health Movement Scotland
Keep Scotland Beautiful
Friends of the Earth Tayside
Think About Plastic-Arran
Blairgowrie Climate Cafe
Scottish Environment Link, Sustainable Economy Group