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Thank you for your letter of 29 October regarding the Global Plastics Treaty and action by the Scottish Government to tackle plastic pollution.

Firstly, let me set out that the Scottish Government fully supports the Global Plastics Treaty. We are working closely with the UK Government as their negotiation team pushes to deliver for the High Ambition Coalition and the Bridge to Busan Declaration, of which we are a signatory as part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

It is my expectation that the finalisation of a Treaty will improve plastics management internationally. However, we have long recognised the need to take bold action to tackle plastic pollution and have introduced important policies and legislation, with more planned, to further protect our land and oceans.

The Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 was unanimously passed by the Scottish Parliament in June and received Royal Assent in August, marking a significant milestone in Scotland's journey towards a circular economy. The Act establishes the legislative framework to support Scotland's transition to a zero waste and circular economy, significantly increase reuse and recycling rates, and modernise and improve waste and recycling services.

The provisions in the Act are complemented by our circular economy and waste route map to 2030, which is due to be published by the end of the year. Together they will help us to achieve our sustainable resource and climate goals. The Act requires that Scottish Ministers publish a circular economy strategy and make regulations to set circular economy targets. In the development of targets, we will consider the inclusion of material-specific targets (which may include plastics), as recently recommended by the Climate Change Committee.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot


We are also working with the UK Government to introduce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging from 2025, moving the full net cost of handling waste packaging, including plastic, from local authorities to producers. This will incentivise businesses to reduce excess packaging, to design and use packaging that is easily recyclable, and encourage use of reusable and refillable packaging.

In addition, we have accepted, in full or in principle, all recommendations of the review on waste incineration and have set out the work we are undertaking to decarbonise the waste sector and end the unnecessary incineration of plastics. Our primary focus will continue to be on measures that limit plastics from entering the waste stream through, for example, improved product design, incentives to limit the volume of low-quality plastics produced and strengthening source segregation.

Enforcement is key to ensure these policy measures are as effective as possible. That is why we continue to undertake extensive engagement with businesses and enforcement bodies, in line with the New Deal for Business and Verity House Agreement principles.

While this letter provides an overview of measures we are taking to address plastic pollution beyond those detailed in our Marine Litter and National Litter and Fly-Tipping strategies, successful delivery depends upon collaboration with a wide variety of delivery partners, including Non-Governmental Organisations, businesses and charities, and most importantly people and communities, particularly where our ambitions for tackling plastic pollution require behaviour change in people and consumers. The Scottish Government is fully committed to embedding the vital principles of Just Transition across policy areas.

Our relationship with plastics must change to prevent further pollution. I thank your many members for their clear support to end plastic pollution, continued collaboration and encourage all future efforts to protect our environment from harm.

JA

JOHN SWINNEY