



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

From the Secretary of State for Environment, Food
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Students
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Dear Students,

It is fantastic to know that young people like yourselves are aware of the problems facing the environment and are keen to look after our planet. Like you, I am concerned about plastic pollution and I agree that it is a very serious problem.

I am grateful to you for the work you have done picking up litter at your local beach. We welcome local community action and it is encouraging to see that there are a growing number of passionate people and community groups tackling litter all over the country. We support and endorse national clean-up days such as the Great British Spring Clean and the Great British Beach Clean, and we will continue to use our influence to encourage as many people and businesses as possible to participate. The government also encourages Fishing for Litter, a scheme which provides fishermen with large bags to collect litter from the sea.

Whilst it is important to clean up marine litter on our beaches and in our oceans, it is just as important to make sure we stop litter getting there in the first place: we need to change what we use and how we dispose of it. The government's 25 Year Environment Plan outlines how we will reduce the use of plastics and encourage recycling and the thoughtful use of resources. Over the next 25 years, we want to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. We have set out further steps in our Resources and Waste Strategy which was published on 18 December.

In 2018, we banned cosmetic and personal care products like toothpaste and face wash which have plastic microbeads in them. This will help to stop billions of tiny pieces of plastic from entering the ocean and being eaten by animals such as fish, whales and birds. We have also reduced the number of plastic bags reaching our oceans by introducing a 5p charge. We think it is very important to reduce the use of single use plastic items like plastic straws, plastic drinks stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds. We recently asked the public for their thoughts and ideas about this and we have taken the decision to ban these items based on their responses.

Plastics and litter in the ocean is a problem around the world, so we need to work together with other countries to address it. We make laws and work closely with the European Union and United Nations, to come up with the best ways to beat plastic. We also work with the Global Ghost Gear Initiative, a group of scientists, governments and companies working together to tackle lost fishing gear, which can strangle and hurt marine life.

Thank you again writing to me about this important issue. I hope you continue to keep up your interest in protecting the environment.

With every good wish,

Yours,

Michael

Michael Gove