

Members' Library Service Request Form

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Document Title	Scottish Government Consultation on Proposal to Ban the Manufacture and Sale of Plastic-stemmed Cotton Buds in Scotland

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Designation	Head of Development
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REPORT TO: Members' Library Service

MEETING DATE:

BY: Head of Service (Development)

SUBJECT: Scottish Government Consultation on Proposal to Ban the Manufacture and Sale of Plastic-stemmed Cotton Buds in Scotland

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise members of the proposals being consulted on by the Scottish Government to introduce a ban on the manufacture and sale of plastic-stemmed cotton buds in Scotland by the addition of secondary legislation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Plastic-stemmed cotton buds contribute towards plastic pollution in our seas and on our beaches. Biodegradable, non-plastic alternative cotton bud stems are available.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and the Council's response to the proposals set out in the Consultation Paper. A link to the response can be accessed at 7.1 of this report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Government published a consultation on 27 April 2018 on a **proposal to ban the manufacture and sale of plastic-stemmed cotton buds in Scotland**. This is available at <https://consult.gov.scot/marine-scotland/cotton-buds/>

The Consultation seeks views on proposals to ban the manufacture and sale of plastic-stemmed cotton buds in Scotland by introducing secondary legislation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The aim of the proposed ban is to further protect our seas from plastic pollution. Plastic-stemmed cotton buds contribute to the global marine plastic problem, damage the marine environment and wildlife, present a risk to public health from contact on beaches and bathing waters, and risk health further when fragments of plastic enter the food chain.

The Consultation acknowledges that marine litter is a global challenge, and provides details of research showing that the majority of litter at sea

and washed ashore onto beaches is discarded plastic. Plastic cotton buds are some of the most common marine litter items identified in beach clean surveys. These reach the marine environment because, despite multiple awareness-raising campaigns and product labelling, people continue to flush them down toilets, and sewage treatment processes cannot prevent all of them reaching the sea.

The East Lothian based environmental charity 'Fidra' has led work with manufacturers and retailers to substitute plastic-stemmed cotton buds with biodegradable alternative stems made from fully natural materials such as paper. Major manufacturers and supermarkets have committed and changed to the non-plastic option, however, plastic-stemmed cotton buds are still available to buy in Scotland. The work of Fidra has directly influenced the Scottish Government's proposal to develop new legislation to address marine plastic cotton bud litter to protect Scotland's marine environment, ensure fairness for the manufacturing and retail industry, and build consumer confidence.

- 3.2 The Council's response supports the proposals being consulted on by the Scottish Government. The Council recognises that plastic litter in the marine environment is a major issue of considerable public concern. In addition to the significant threat to marine life, plastic-stemmed cotton bud litter blights Scotland's coastline, including the beautiful and iconic beaches of East Lothian, and presents a risk to human health on our recreational beaches and associated bathing waters.

The Council is developing a Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan for East Lothian, which will set out the Council's strategic approach to tackling the plastic litter agenda, and will include working with the Scottish Government and Fidra to take forward this next phase in tackling the issue of marine litter pollution.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications directly arising from this Consultation. If the Consultation leads to legislative changes it is anticipated that there will be further consultation on the implications and enforcement measures proposed under the new legislation.
- 4.2 The Council will publish an East Lothian Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy in 2019, which will take cognisance of any new duties or powers arising following the Consultation.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The Scottish Government expects that there will be minimal impacts resulting from the proposed bans. The necessary Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment will be prepared by the Scottish

Government to inform the parliamentary process. An Equalities Impact Assessment will also be considered.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial – None

6.2 Personnel – None

6.3 Other – None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 The East Lothian Council response can be accessed at the following link:

https://consult.gov.scot/marine-scotland/cotton-buds/consultation/view_respondent? b_index=180&uuld=488149566

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