



The Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park  
Minister for Pacific and the Environment  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW

6 September 2021

Dear Lord Goldsmith,

We, the undersigned, are writing to urge you to speak in favour of setting a plastics reduction target in the Environment Bill, and accept Baroness Jones of Whitchurch's amendment on this issue.

The weight of plastic entering the ocean every year is estimated to be equivalent to 60,000 fully-grown blue whales, and this number is set to [triple by 2040](#). The damage caused by plastic pollution in our oceans is deeply worrying, and plastic pollution found in our highest mountains and most remote lakes, is harming our wildlife, seeping into the food we eat and [toxifying the air we breathe](#).

A Friends of the Earth [survey](#) commissioned in May 2021 found that 92% of Britons are concerned about plastic pollution, and almost 4 in 5 people now take steps to reduce single-use plastic, with a majority wanting to do more. In 2020, the average Briton's annual plastic waste amounted to 242 bottles, 109 coffee cups and 209 crisp packets. The total weight of plastics sold by British supermarkets in 2019 was equivalent to 90 Eiffel Towers. We have a long way yet to go.

Across the UK, young people have taken initiative on this issue in their schools, colleges, youth groups and in voluntary services. At the British Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament, we have highlighted this as one of our priority campaigns for the upcoming year. We aim to raise awareness, change behaviours, and impact local and regional change. We look to the government to do the same nationally and internationally.

We welcome the government introducing the Environment Bill to combat the serious dangers we face. However, we fear that it will not go far enough. This is why we are calling for a cohesive strategy on non-essential single-use plastic in the Bill, underpinned by a plastic waste-reduction target that will encourage us to move towards a circular economy.

**Run by young people for young people**

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We believe that the crucial opportunity in the House of Lords to amend the Environment Bill and address plastic pollution cannot be missed. The cross-party amendment is supported by all peers who spoke to it at the Lords Committee stage, and it asks the government to secure a target by 31 October 2022, after consulting widely using the Bill's target-setting process.

In an address to the Global Plastic Action Partnership in November 2020, you stated, *"The challenge we face is immense and urgent. We believe it is time to negotiate a new global agreement to coordinate action on marine plastic litter and microplastics, one that goes far beyond the existing frameworks."* We agree wholeheartedly.

In the upcoming votes on the Environment Bill, and in the run up to COP26, the UK can choose to adopt domestic targets on plastic pollution, backed by young people and used as a model for the rest of the world to follow, or it can ignore these calls from the generation that will inherit the consequences. We therefore call on you to:

- Meet with the Peers who have submitted the plastics reduction amendment
- Adopt the amendment to secure targets on reducing plastic pollution
- Initiate a wide consultation on what the target should be, incorporating youth voices

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

## UK Youth Parliament

### Steering Group Members

Andrew Speight, North West  
Anna McElhinney, Northern Ireland  
Cal Parr, East Midlands  
Cam Hodds, East of England  
Connor Clarke, Wales  
Faye Drinkhard, North East  
Jamie Burrell, South West  
Libby Russell, South East  
Renée Samra, West Midlands  
Safaa Shreef, Yorkshire and Humber  
Theo Sergiou, London

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Staples", written over a horizontal line.

**Sarah Staples**  
Chair, British Youth Council

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