

Rt Hon. Emma Reynolds MP
Secretary of State
UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

23 October, 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing on behalf of the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA UK) and 53 co-signatories, welcoming the forthcoming consultation on your circular economy objectives this Autumn.

We commend the Government's commitment to tackling plastic use, as reflected in your Circular Economy taskforce and Global Plastics Treaty positioning – also reflecting the ongoing concerns of [the UK public](#).

However, we are deeply concerned that a full UK plastic waste export ban may not be proposed. Despite currently proposed solutions, issues stemming from UK plastic use will continue if exports are not banned. This is an unethical trade that the previous Government committed to ending partially in the past but which it failed to enact.

UK plastic waste exports drive serious waste crime as well as environmental and human health harm in recipient countries. They also act as a linear loophole undermining other domestic efforts to manage the UK's significantly high levels of plastic consumption and waste. The UK is at risk of legal accountability for its continued lack of responsibility, especially given a full ban is in line with UK international obligations.

Since raising the harms stemming from this practice with your predecessors [Rt Hon. the Baroness Coffey](#) and [Steve Barclay MP](#), new evidence continues to reiterate the need for a full ban. Examples include:

- policy measures (implemented or delayed) to reduce UK plastic consumption are also driving an increase in exports, with [UK plastic waste exports having never been higher](#) since China's implementation of its National Sword policy
- continued [instances of plastic waste crime and fraud](#) and subsequent environmental and human health impacts in recipient countries
- ever-growing support for the need of a ban, including the outcome of the [Runnymede's Climate Change and Racism Inquiry](#)
- other countries taking strong measures against the plastic waste trade, including the EU enacting a de-facto plastic waste export ban to most, if not all countries in its recently adopted [revised Waste Shipment Regulation](#) as well as more key recipient countries placing plastic waste import bans (such as [Thailand](#) and [Indonesia](#)) or significant restrictions (like [Malaysia](#))

While Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) implementation delays can no longer take place and current proposed timelines [need to be upheld](#), we are deeply concerned how current proposed policy design (payments just focusing on recycling management costs, comparisons between local authorities potentially resulting in a race to the bottom pricing scenario, eco-modulation formulations) will simply result in increased plastic waste exports as well as crime.

A full UK plastic waste export ban alongside adequate local competent authority funding to effectively implement the regulation would remedy this.

The UK is responsible for the environmentally sound recycling of its own plastic waste, with reduction of UK plastic consumption and avoidance of incineration being of primary importance in achieving this.

We strongly urge the Government to include a phased-in ban of plastic waste exports to non-OECD and OECD countries.

On behalf of all signatories, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further with you or members of your team. We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Rice
Executive Director
 Environmental Investigation Agency

CC: Emma Hardy MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (DEFRA)
Mary Creagh MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (DEFRA)

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Nusa Urbancic CEO Changing Markets Foundation	Netherlands, UK	 Changing Markets FOUNDATION
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Greener Action	Hong Kong	
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