



19 April 2018

Mr David Wardrop
Chairman
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Dear Mr Wardrop

Thank you for your letter of 12 April addressed to a number of members of the House of Commons Commission, addressing the issue of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

I am not sure that in your letter and the attached note by Mr Wright you keep a clear distinction between the relatively narrow responsibilities of the Commission for the administration and expenditure of the House of Commons, the far wider responsibilities of the Government, and the work of House of Commons select committees, which falls to be considered by the House's Liaison Committee.

You also refer in your first sentence to "Parliament's next Annual Report" and Mr Wright refers to Parliament's Annual Report. You will wish to be aware that the Commission is responsible for the administration of the House of Commons rather than Parliament as a whole, although it does report some facts and figures for Parliament as a whole. I imagine that your three Joint Presidents will be well placed to advise on the relevant activities in the House of Lords.

The recent report by the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee has indeed been influential, including within the parliamentary administrations. Attached is a note on plans which are well advanced for reducing the use by the House of Commons of single-use plastic items, including the straws referred to in information given by the Commission to David Linden MP, to which Mr Wright refers.

/PTO ...

It was very helpful to refer to the work carried out by the Parliament of Fiji, and as a direct result of your letter the Clerk of the House has been in touch with colleagues there and procured a copy of the report. We will examine it to see if there would be value in a self-assessment here. I do not know if you have read the report, but much if it is about the structures of parliamentary scrutiny rather than parliament as an institution.

The Annual Report for 2017–18 is under preparation, and we will consider what reference to the SDGs would be genuinely useful.

Yours sincerely



Marianne Cwynarski
Secretary to the House of Commons Commission and Head of the
Governance Office

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REDUCTION IN USE OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC ITEMS

Parliament's Environment Team has recently undertaken a review of single-use avoidable plastics and identified that more than two million of these items are consumed per year on the estate.

This total includes approximately 770,000 pieces of cutlery, 690,000 coffee cups, 330,000 condiment sachets, 120,000 water bottles and 12,000 straws. The review illustrated however that the issue of single-use avoidable plastics is not restricted to Catering Services, but that all teams and offices across the House consume these items through their day-to-day operations and deliveries.

The House has a number of current and on-going initiatives to reduce the consumption of single-use plastics, which includes:

1. Catering Services working closely with the Environment Team and suppliers to identify alternative products and encourage sustainable innovation. The Service frequently trial new environmentally friendly products and feed back to suppliers.
2. Baristas have tailored their service to discourage the use of single-use disposable coffee cups.
3. The Environment Team delivers targeted awareness and behaviour change campaigns, such as the ongoing "Right Kit, Right Place", on the prevention of waste and importance of recycling at Parliament.
4. Across all catering venues, free drinking water is visible and available as part of our commitment to H4 of the Department of Health responsibility deal. In addition, clean drinking water is available across the entire estate through fixed water coolers, kitchens, office tea points and within the majority of toilets.
5. In 2017, Parliament sold 5,054 re-usable 'bags for life' to customers in our retail outlets. These reusable bags are prominently displayed in the shops to encourage customers to purchase them instead of using a single-use disposable bag.
6. Parliament's Sustainable Procurement Policy requires that as part of procurement exercises packaging is assessed, amongst other environmental issues.
7. Contract managers work closely with the House's stationery provider to identify opportunities for reducing our environmental impact. Improvements in the form of receiving bulk deliveries have been implemented, which has reduced the packaging and carbon emissions associated with these deliveries.

The review identified however that these existing initiatives will not deliver the necessary step change in the reduction of single-use avoidable plastics across the House.

As such, the Environment Team has devised a strategy which follows the principals of the 'Waste Hierarchy'. Where single-use items cannot be avoided, alternative materials are recommended to be used to either avoid the possibility of the escape of plastic into the environment, or potentially move higher up the waste hierarchy.

The strategy is currently being considered by the House Authorities and a decision will be announced in May 2018.

