

27 September 2018

Waste Free Future Team
Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362
WELLINGTON 6143

Email: ZCB@mfe.govt.nz

Proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags. This is our final submission, having been finalised by our Council at their meeting on 27 September 2018.

Kāpiti Coast District Council (Council) supports the submissions from Wellington City Council, Wanaka Wastebusters, and Plastic Bag Free Wanaka. Council has also taken into account feedback provided by WasteMINZ from sector group members, a survey of industrial composters, and discussions by the Behaviour Change Committee and the TAO Forum Steering Committee.

In principle, Council strongly supports the proposed mandatory phase out (ban) of single-use plastic bags in New Zealand and would like to take this opportunity to commend the Government for using the powers within the Waste Minimisation Act (2008) to proactively address the negative effects that single-use plastics are having on our environment.

However, while our submission is in support of the proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic bags, we feel that there are bigger issues, e.g. effective product stewardship, that the government should be addressing in this space to achieve the goal of transitioning to a circular economy where waste is designed out of the system.

Included below are Council's responses to the consultation document questions.

Questions from the submission form

- 1. Do you agree with the proposed mandatory phase out of the sale or distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags in New Zealand, including those made of degradable (e.g., oxo-degradable, biodegradable and compostable) plastic? Why / why not?*

Yes, Council strongly supports the mandatory phase out of the sale or distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags in New Zealand. However, being cognitive of the potential impact on small retailers of a mandatory phase out of all single-use bags (e.g. oxo-degradable, biodegradable and compostable), Council requests that the Ministry undertake further investigation into alternative materials that may be suitable

for single-use bags while minimising adverse environmental effects. With regards to alternative products, Council strongly supports the development of a nationally consistent educational campaign aimed at increasing consumer knowledge and action to minimise any possible impacts these alternative may result in.

Council agrees that despite single-use plastic bags being a small subset of plastic pollution in the environment, they are a good starting point to further engage with community on the topic of waste and a critical step towards enabling behaviour change with regards to reducing the consumption of single-use plastics.

Inherent in this support is Council's acknowledgement of the underlying drive to establish a circular economy approach to the management of resources and reduction of residual waste in New Zealand.

2. *We have proposed a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags. This could include under 50 microns or under 70 microns in thickness. If you agree with a mandatory phase out, which option do you prefer, and why?*

Council supports a minimum thickness of 70 microns to ensure reusable bags are sufficiently robust for sustainable extended use and to avoid the potential for lighter bags to be erroneously treated as "single use" by retailers.

3. *Are you aware of types of single-use plastic shopping bags that should be exempt from a mandatory phase out?*

No. However, Council supports appropriate initiatives that would remove cost barriers for those on low incomes such as the free provision of up to 10 reusable bags for holders of Community Service Cards and Gold Cards.

4. *Do you currently manufacture, sell, provide or import for sale or personal use these types of single-use plastic shopping bags ... [see question]*

Not applicable.

5. *Should smaller retailers be exempted from a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags? Why / why not?*

No. Given that viable alternatives are already in use and readily available, Council is of the opinion that for the ban to be most effective, it should be applied to all retailers regardless of size; however, if there are small businesses that will experience significant burdens due to this mandatory phase out, Council supports initiatives that will help small retailers comply.

6. *If smaller retailers are exempted from a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags and they are defined by their number of full-time equivalent employees, what should that number be?*

Not applicable.

7. *The proposed mandatory phase-out period for single-use plastic shopping bags is at least six months from when regulations are Gazetted, subject to consultation. Do you agree with this timing?*

Council supports the "at least 6 months" phase out period. Given the already established public and industry interest in the cessation of single-use plastic

shopping bags, six months should allow sufficient time for retailers and consumers to adapt provided that the support communications associated with the ban are comprehensive and widespread.

Council recommends that MfE provides thorough information on the best alternatives to retailers as soon as practicably possible to enable them to make appropriate decisions.

8. Do you agree that the benefits expected from implementing a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags exceed the costs expected from implementing the phase out? Why / why not? Please consider both monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits (those that can be measured by money as well as those that can't).

Yes, Council strongly agrees that the expected benefits exceed the costs expected from implementing the phase out, particularly when the true costs of environmental damage caused by plastic waste are considered. As identified within the consultation document, this ban is a good first step towards encouraging a circular economy which provides an alternative model for creating prosperity not only in a monetary sense but also from an environmental standpoint.

9. Do you think that reasonably practicable alternatives to single-use plastic shopping bags exist in New Zealand? Why / why not?

Yes, Council agrees that a wide range of alternatives are already available to consumers and that such alternatives are already being progressively introduced by major retailers such as Countdown and New World supermarkets, as they work towards their self-initiated commitments to phasing out single-use plastic shopping bags. In addition to the momentum created by these main retailers, there is a growing awareness of plastic pollution amongst the general public which is driving more consumers to actively choose reusable options over single-use shopping bags.

10. How can people be encouraged to reuse multiple-use shopping bags enough times to offset the environmental impacts of producing them? (select one or more)

Through both the a) and b) options but supported by accessible, extensive and enduring information that both underscores the reasoning for the phase out and provides realistic and practical alternatives and attendant behaviour change advice.

Council strongly urges the Ministry to undertake research to identify what the barriers and benefits are for people who still use plastic bags and develop a focussed campaign on reducing those barriers and promoting the benefits.

Identifying the key issues and providing communication resources which councils and community groups can use to overcome those barriers is key, particularly since council has already begun fielding queries around alternatives.

11. What would help you and your family adjust to life without single-use plastic shopping bags?

As discussed in our response to Question 10 above. Council believes that, to ensure national consistency, the required messaging should be developed and driven by the Ministry.

Examples could include:

- Resources to support waste minimisation education
- Thorough information for retailers including the most environmentally friendly alternatives to single-use plastic bags and disposal information for end of life.
- Alternatives to, or suitable products for, kitchen tidy bin liners, wet bags, and dog poo bags etc.
- Home waste minimisation practices such as composting
- FAQ's which could be collated through the submission feedback received.

12. How can data on single-use plastic shopping bags and other single-use plastics entering the market and monitoring of reductions be improved?

By requiring importers and local manufacturers of other single use plastics to report to the MfE on volumes (assuming a minimum trigger quantity) by type, weight and unit number imported or manufactured to provide accurate data on which to base proposals for future actions as New Zealand transitions to a circular economy.

13. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions about the proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags.

Council would note that the on-going education, compliance and enforcement of the phase out will require sufficient resourcing to ensure its effectiveness across the country.


Council supports progressively extending the phase out to other single-use plastics as practicable.

As mentioned earlier, Council supports including in the phase out an initiative, such as the free provision of reusable bags to those on low incomes such as Community Services Card holders and Gold Card holders.

Council wishes to again note support for the aim of product stewardship schemes, as defined in the Waste Minimisation Act 2008, as a critical element in the move to achieving a circular economy.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to submit on the proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags.

Yours sincerely,



Wayne Maxwell
CHIEF EXECUTIVE