

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Responsible Business Minutes for Meeting on Waste Management

Monday 23 February 2026, 3:30pm-5pm

Location: Wilson Room, Portcullis House

Present:

APPG Officers: Dame Harriett Baldwin MP (Co-Chair), Martin Wrigley MP (Co-Chair), Lord Bassam (Officer)

Business in the Community (Secretariat): Kieran Harding (Acting CEO), Gail Greengross (Creative and External Affairs Director), Hannah Tankard (Content, Research, and Engagement Senior Lead), Polly Dacam (Senior Public Affairs and Media Officer), Gudrun Cartwright (Climate Action Director)

Speakers: Councillor Tim Rowkins, Deputy Leader, Brighton and Hove City Council; Alex Hilton, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Beyondly; Harriet Martin, Regulatory and Policy Manager, Biffa; Andrew Dunwoody, Circular Economy Associate Director, Arup

Additional Parliamentary attendees: Jamie Stone MP

Additional non-Parliamentary attendees: around 10 additional attendees representing the APPG for Responsible Business's Associate Member companies, including AB InBev, Convatec, and Novus Solutions.

1. Welcome from Martin Wrigley MP, Co-Chair of the APPG for Responsible Business

- Thanked everyone for coming to his first meeting as a Co-Chair of the APPG for Responsible Business and introduced his interest in waste management through his background in local government. He introduced his background in business and his target to understand local politics.
- Talked about how he is acutely aware of bins and bin collections, household waste, and how businesses make a huge volume of packaging, as well as how it is up to the Council or District authority to pay to take away the waste. This is what Extended Produced Responsibility (EPR) is supposed to be about, but there are also problems associated with it.
- Spoke about how legislators need to make sure that packaging works for everyone, and that businesses should be involved with this decision-making.

- Outlined his experience, with 30 years in the high-tech sector as Senior Director at Orange, as well as working in the software and defence industries.
- Introduced speakers, thanked Andrew Dunwoody for stepping in last-minute on behalf of Diane Emerson, Climate and Sustainability Leader (UK, India, Middle East and Africa region), Arup, and wished Diane well and a swift recovery.

2. Councillor Tim Rowkins, Deputy Leader, Brighton and Hove City Council

- Introduced his role as Cabinet Officer for Net Zero and Environmental Services in Brighton and Hove Council; introduced Brighton and Hove as a great place to live, where businesses and community take environmental responsibility. Outlined that there are 39 certified B-Corps in the city, with amazing circular businesses, such as Marinatex and long-standing independent food retail businesses offering free packaging refills. Highlighted that Brighton and Hove City Council is one of four councils that sits on DEFRA's pathfinder group on circular economy.
- Mentioned that a circular economy action plan has just been produced to stimulate circular economy growth in Brighton and Hove; Brighton is further ahead than many other cities but still has issues with packaging and fly-tipping. Highlighted that bars are giving out single-use plastic cups and due to windy conditions, these end up on beaches and in the sea and regular beach cleans have to take place.
- Talked about high levels of fly-tipping due to low car use in the city – 40% of people in the city do not have a car (closer to 60% in the city centre). There is a high student population in Brighton, so many are leaving furniture, etc. outside their houses when they move.
- Spoke about how Brighton & Hove City Council periodically carry out waste composition analysis. The most recent one showed that 38% of residual waste was food waste and about 40% of this was still in its packaging, due to people buying more than they need.
- Raised that EPR is a very welcome bit of legislation and it is good to see it come into fruition, as it recognises the burden on local authorities. However, highlighted that it is too soon to see behaviour changes from producers.
- Suggested that supermarkets should offer refills and packaging-free options on their products, which we have seen happen in Europe already.
- Discussed the asks of local B-Corp companies in Brighton and Hove:
 - Predictable multi-year EPR fees to give local authorities a chance to plan ahead.
 - Stronger and more comprehensive 'right to repair' to make buying new less attractive.
 - Standardised public sector procurement so suppliers have one version of what good looks like.

- An incentive for suppliers to innovate.
- Support for putting together a 'library of things'.
- Nationwide infrastructure for things like material recovery.
- Direct investment in circular economy skills.
- Highlighted the Environment APPG's 6-step plan, which is useful to complement this discussion.

3. Alex Hilton, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Beyondly

- Introduced Beyondly as a packaging compliance scheme, which also does waste electrical and battery compliance, as well as having a circular sustainability consulting arm and is a B-Corp. Highlighted his background in local and central government, holding roles with DEFRA on packaging and in two local governments on waste.
- Outlines four key thoughts around the meeting topic:
 1. **Extended Producer Responsibility:** highlighted that this is a good thing as it takes on a 'polluter pays' mindset – the consumer wants the right packaging but there are no incentives to ensure that the producers make that change. It is early days in the regulation, so it is unclear of the amount of switching at the moment, but there is a big cost to change formats, so it's not an easy switch. Highlighted that large manufacturers make most of the packaging and any companies that place less than 25 tonnes of packaging on the market in a year are not required to do any reporting, so businesses are making a point of making less than 25 tonnes to avoid fees, driving an increase in imported packaging from around the world, which is not necessarily up to the standard and quality that we expect to see, which is impinging on domestic production, and may not follow the same waste processing process as locally-made packaging.
 2. **Household vs non-household waste:** spoke about how non-household waste includes packaging coming from hospitality venues, and construction materials bought by businesses. People are having to pay for the correct disposal of their waste, so there is an economic burden on consumers and councils, which limits ability to invest effectively. Raised the point that the decimation of plastic packaging manufacturers is detrimental if we want to promote effective circular economy practices.
 3. **Fly-tipping:** shared that fly-tipping is a symptom of friction in the system, as proper disposal of waste is expensive and there are no incentives to dispose of it properly. £1.1 million has been levied against an individual who has been fly-

tipping waste around the UK. Emphasised that this puts pressure on local government.

4. **Policy elements are solutions:** emphasised the need to think about ringfencing EPR fees to reduce the burden of costs on local authorities. People are having to pay to dispose of waste correctly at household waste and recycling centres, which provides the wrong incentive. Highlighted that digital waste tracking is coming online imminently, which will help us to track waste in the system at all points. Deposit return schemes are being introduced in the next year or so as an incentive, but we are trying to solve a problem with the current system when the current system is not the most optimal.

4. Harriet Martin, Regulatory and Policy Manager, Biffa

- Introduced Biffa and her role in Biffpack, Biffa's waste compliance scheme. Biffa only used to collect and dispose of waste but has now also moved to recycling and sorting of 'black bin waste' to turn it into something else. Biffpack helps producers comply with regulations, including EPR.
- Emphasised that circular economy is important to Biffa – Biffa owns Company Shop Group, which takes surplus food and resells to members in their stores.
- Shared that EPR and fly-tipping are both also important issues that Biffa deals with. Biffa wants to help both consumers and producers reduce their waste, but clear policy and guidance is needed for them to do this effectively. Highlighted that producers are trying to do the right thing and reduce their packaging, but they are reluctant to invest in packaging.
- Shared that waste crimes cost the UK economy £1 billion per year, but this is a conservative estimate as only 27% of instances of waste crime are reported. The impact of waste crimes is felt by consumers, authorities, landowners, and local authorities. Talked about how Biffa fed into the Lords' enquiry on waste crime – one finding that came out of this was that there is minimal coordination of who waste crime should be reported to. There are only five investigators between Dorset and Dover. Suggested that waste crime and the legislation and provisions surrounding this need to be tightened up.
- Spoke about how consumers are increasingly expecting waste reduction options, which can help to drive business. We have seen the success of this in things like chocolate Easter egg packaging. Businesses need clear policy to help them do this.
- Talked about plastic packaging tax, through which producers have to pay a tax per tonne of plastic if less than 30% of it is recyclable. Highlighted that virgin polymers are still cheaper even with the tax added, so many still choose to use them. If there was incremental changes and a decrease in tax, that would help producers.

- Concluded that clearer guidance and granularity is needed.

5. Andrew Dunwoody, Circular Economy, Associate Director, Arup

- Gave apologies from Diane Emerson and introduced himself and his long-term background in waste and circular economy, including work on HS2 and with the Mayor of London on waste and circular economy policy. Outlined his work with the Mayor – focusing mainly on refill schemes and water fountains and surplus food redistribution schemes, as well as how every developer had to implement a circular economy statement on how they would reduce waste for more immediate impact.
- Emphasised that significant waste reduction cannot be achieved without circular economy policy. Product redesign needs to happen, looking at longevity, repairability, and maximum product value. Service models also need to be changed, looking at leasing different models and looking at what consumers actually need in terms of function. Highlighted the importance of take-back and refill scheme in helping with circular economy. Circular economy also relies on recycled materials, reducing the demand on virgin materials, reducing waste, and ensuring materials are available for reuse.
- Highlighted that data and traceability are key to how we reduce waste in the future. Product passports are important for this.
- Spoke about how it might take some time if packaging is required to change, and real impact might not be seen for a while. Discussed ways in which we can have a more immediate impact:
 - Make sure that there are easy and convenient routes for reuse, take-back, etc. at a local level, that will help to reduce the burden on homeowners and support reuse in communities. This includes repair cafés, community reuse hubs, and a ‘library of things’.
 - Circular economy infrastructure needs to be implemented in both a virtual and physical format, with virtual policies and guidance, as well as access to the physical materials and resources to help people make the right choices, including access to local facilities.
 - Responsible waste management needs to be convenient and cost-effective, and businesses need to be confident in their understanding of the policies in place. Business incentives need to be aligned with government objectives, so that businesses are confident to invest in circular economy.

6. Reflections from Martin Wrigley MP

- Reflected on how while some local areas have been seen to be reducing their plastic, none of the measures they are taking are combatting the scale of the issues we are facing.

7. Questions

Martin Wrigley MP – we can all agree that paying for plastic bags has been phenomenally successful. What is the next big thing that will change behaviours?

Alex Hilton: Suggested that we should look at pre-fill options rather than refill options. Spoke about how the introduction of Bags for Life has caused the amount of plastic to increase in tonnage compared to how much was being produced for single-use plastic bags – highlighting the unintended consequences. Stressed that we need to have the right product in the right place to do the right job – plastic is not bad in the right application; messy packaging is where the problem lies. We need to increase our use of mono-materials – some packaging can be good and help to reduce food waste as it can extend food life. Highlighted that Biffa has a process in which 80% of a milk bottle is made back into a milk bottle.

Martin Wrigley MP – we need to be risk averse, not risk aware. If it's not zero waste, what is the next best thing in terms of the level of reduction needed?

Councillor Tim Rowkins: Emphasised that there will be some examples of where plastic packaging cannot be swapped out but highlighted that EPR will help with reduction in waste; there is a sense that the innovation side of this has not yet come into play. Posed the question: if we are going to encourage producers away from the packaging they currently use, what are we steering them towards? Used the example that cafés in Brighton have started switching to vegware cups and lids, which take longer to compost and decompose than plastic in some instances.

Martin Wrigley MP – how much should we be pushing for the right to repair?

Councillor Tim Rowkins: Stressed that historically, the right to repair used to be much better than it is now, and we need to look to the EU to see how this could be implemented into current regulation. Made the point that repair has been designed out of products and we do need to push for the right to repair.

Andrew Dunwoody: Talked about how repair is key to circular economy and materials should last as long as possible and have repairability built into them. Simple tweaks can extend the life of products that would otherwise be waste.

Martin Wrigley MP: Made the point that to repair something, you have to use more products.

Alex Hilton: Talked about how we need the right to repair and how this should be a requirement that all products are repairable and affordable so that not only the wealthy can afford to repair – the luxury sector is concerned about the right to repair. Stressed that there are no safeguards in place for repair shops to guarantee that repair is good and authentic.

Lord Bassam – what is a realistic policy objective when it comes to recycling and is this achievable for each packaging product?

Councillor Tim Rowkins: Spoke about how refills are possible and achievable, and can be seen already in practice at large supermarkets, but this is not possible across all products.

Alex Hilton: Stressed that large supermarkets need to ramp it up and move away from trials – they are fed up of doing trials as they can work on a small scale but we need stability in legislation and policy for it to be effective on a larger scale. When there is a replacement horizon on packaging over many years but legislation is changing annually, this can cause problems – there are brands that are not aligned with regulation even though they are trying to align with policy. Emphasised that policy needs to be as forward-looking and consistent as possible.

Harriet Martin: Shared that producers can feel like they are doing the right thing but are charged for things like shredded cardboard as this is seen as a new product. Producers need to have policy behind them to make them feel like they are doing the right thing.

Martin Wrigley MP – changes are expected all the time, so regulations will need to change at the same rate. How can we change the issue to it relevant to today and stand the test of time, and what are we missing?

Andrew Dunwoody: Made the point that we are missing engagement with businesses and an understanding of how the real-world works. We need to engage with the likes of businesses and the waste industry and learn from other countries like Germany, to see what best practice looks like.

Martin Wrigley MP – has enough engagement been happening with EPR?

Alex Hilton: Shared that he has seen this from both a government and business perspective. DEFRA liaises with many departments and stakeholders to get as many views as possible. Stressed that we need to engage effectively with business but it is so difficult to synthesise all the different parts. We need to make sure policy works across

all possible permutations of packaging – this is why it is so complex. Made the point that it is almost an impossible task and there is a chance that there could be a detrimental impact.

Martin Wrigley MP – how can we chunk this down?

Alex Hilton: Made the point that what seems very simple is actually incredibly difficult. We can still learn from Germany’s best practice in this area. Packaging in other countries is different to that in the UK, so this is a challenging thing to do as we need to think about how foreign policy can be translated into a UK context.

Councillor Tim Rowkins: Used the carrot and stick analogy – EPR is currently seen as the ‘stick’; how can we make it the ‘carrot’? The sponsor of the Brighton marathon has gone from being a plastic bottled water company to being a hydropack company. However, innovation has not gone as far as it needs to.

Martin Wrigley MP: Mentioned that plastic shopping bags can be used for other things beyond shopping, and there is a lack of incentives where people are trying to do the right thing.

Harriet Martin: Highlighted the Deposit Return Scheme as it will give us interesting insight into the feedback from consumers. Consumers are not fully aware of the scheme and what they are and are not able to take back.

Martin Wrigley MP: Stressed that EPR needs to level the playing field for those businesses already doing the right thing.

Andrew Dunwoody: Highlighted that behaviour change can be sparked and it is unusual to see anyone shopping without a reusable bag now. However, we are lagging behind other countries. Stressed that the Deposit Return Scheme could be a good incentive.

Martin Wrigley MP: Pointed out that we may see differences in behaviour as it is driven by commercial desire.

Alex Hilton: Shared that Vinted is now France’s largest retailer of clothing. Quoted Emma Bourne, the recently outgone Director of Circular Economy, who said we need to know when the Government should step in and when it should step out. Posed the question: who needs to move first – regulation or business?

Martin Wrigley MP: Stressed that regulation needs to move first to encourage good behaviour amongst businesses.

Lord Bassam – how much have business models, such as the delivery of cardboard, changed and affected packaging?

Alex Hilton: Spoke about how there has already been a reduction in newspaper and an increase in cardboard. However, smaller products are now coming in smaller packaging.

Councillor Tim Rowkins: Stressed that if consumers have the choice, they may be more likely to choose the right thing.

Martin Wrigley MP – would something like sugar tax be good to introduce for packaging?

Harriet Martin: Talked about meat in vacuum packaging being disliked and how recycled water bottles have changed – people had to take time to get used to the ‘greyness’.

Emma Cunningham, Convatec – changing packaging can take a hugely long time and there is a need for stability in regulation. Information on this differs across countries and areas. Where can we simplify things for companies, and if the EPR regulation is going to change, can there be a commitment to some parts that will not change so that businesses can start working on certain things now?

Additionally, in Hull and East Riding there is a collection of large items twice a year every year, and now you do not experience fly-tipping there.

Martin Wrigley MP: Spoke about the twice annual community skips that are run in his constituency – 20 to 30 skips are taken away in a day, twice a year, since the nearest recycling centre is 20 miles away.

8. Closing remarks from Martin Wrigley MP

- Thanked the panel for giving their time and expertise.
- Emphasised that there is no one magic bullet but that solutions can be found; we need to provide stability over time, but also look at how we can evolve regulations.
- Stressed that we need to be rewarding good practices where they emerge and to be fixing things sooner rather than later where they are wrong.
- Highlighted that these issues are not easy problems to fix.

Appendix

Parliamentary members of the APPG for Responsible Business

The APPG for Responsible Business currently has 21 parliamentary members:

- Dame Harriett Baldwin MP
- Martin Wrigley MP
- Elsie Blundell MP
- Lord Bassam
- Chris Bloore MP
- Lord Blunkett
- Lord Bourne
- Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted
- Lord Brennan
- Baroness Coussins
- Alison Griffiths MP
- Lord Haskel
- John Milne MP
- Iqbal Mohamed MP
- Lord Newby
- Baroness Sater
- Greg Smith MP
- Jamie Stone MP
- Baroness Valentine
- Valerie Vaz MP
- Viscount Younger of Leckie

The APPG for Responsible Business currently has 19 corporate members:

- AB InBev
- Associated British Foods
- AWE
- Cemex
- CMS Cameron McKenna
- Consilient Health
- Convatec
- Coventry Building Society

**All-Party Parliamentary Group
for Responsible Business**



- Henry Boot
- Home Instead Limited
- Minority Supplier Development UK
- Novus Solutions
- Orbit Group
- Pool Reinsurance
- Thales UK
- The Learning Nuggets Company
- Watches of Switzerland
- White & Case LLP
- Zurich Insurance