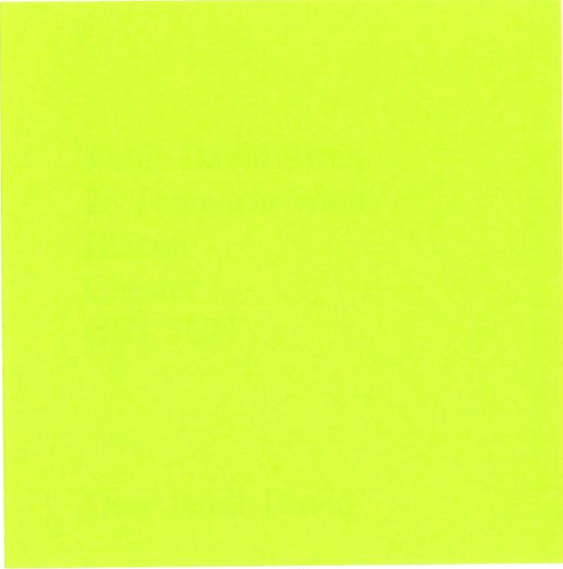




10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA
www.gov.uk/Number10

From the Direct Communications Unit

21 May 2021



I am writing to thank you for your letter to the Prime Minister of 20 May 2021 in which you raised the important matter of plastic pollution. The Government appreciates hearing from young people with well thought out concerns for our future and those who are keen to improve the environment and protect wildlife.

We have been making big steps to tackle plastic pollution. In 2015, we started the 5p charge for single-use plastic carrier bags given out at supermarkets and large stores, which has helped to reduce the number of plastic bags used and reaching the ocean. The number of such bags given out by supermarkets has gone down by over 95%. This charge will be extended to all retailers and increased to 10p later this year. In October 2020, we also introduced a ban on giving away and selling plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds.

Rinse-off personal care products, such as some make-up and toothpaste, used to contain tiny pieces of plastic known as microbeads, which would get into the ocean and harm marine wildlife. In January 2018, the Government put a ban on microbeads being used in these products, to stop them getting into the ocean. As plastic pollution in the ocean is a worldwide problem, we meet and work with other countries and organisations around the world to address it. Through these meetings, the UK and Vanuatu were able to create the Commonwealth Clean

Ocean Alliance in April 2018, involving over half of the Commonwealth countries, all of which promise to take action to reduce plastic pollution.

To further protect marine life, we also take part in the Global Ghost Gear Initiative, a group that works hard to prevent lost and discarded fishing gear from harming marine animals.

The United Nations Environment Programme has been set up to organise and support environmental activities around the world. Through the programme, we are supporting young people around the world to reduce plastic pollution and become leaders within their communities through the Tide Turners Plastic Challenge Badge.

We want to tackle plastic pollution faster and further, with the aim of all plastic packaging on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025. As someone interested in the environment, you may wish to ask your teacher to sign up to *Wastebuster*, an environmental awareness campaign that will help you and your friends to learn more about how you can help to save the planet. You can find more information at: www.wastebuster.co.uk.

Thank you, once again, for writing to the Prime Minister about this important issue. I hope you remain interested in how best we can serve the environment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frances", written in a cursive style.

Correspondence Officer