
Report To:	Inverclyde Council	Date:	20 April 2023
Report By:	Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital and Customer Services	Report No:	LS/041/23
Contact Officer:	Iain Strachan	Contact No:	01475 712147
Subject:	Single Use Nicotine Vaping Products (Disposable Vapes) – Request by Councillor McCabe		

1.0 PURPOSE AND CONSIDERATIONS

1.1 For Decision For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to advise the Council of a request received from Councillor McCabe relative to single use nicotine vaping products (disposable vapes).

1.2 The terms of Councillor McCabe's request are set out below, further to the email and attachments, annexed to this report, which were received by all Elected Members.

1.3 Disposable Vapes

Inverclyde Council notes with concern the serious and damaging environmental impacts of disposable vapes and recognises an increase in these electronic devices being discarded in communities and public spaces across the Inverclyde Council area.

Research by Material Focus, an independent not-for-profit organisation, identified in 2022 that at least 1.3million so called 'disposable' vapes are littered and binned each week.

It is noted that vapes contain a range of precious materials, including lithium and copper, which can be collected if recycled in a safe and appropriate manner.

Inverclyde Council further anticipates the publication of the Scottish Government's urgent review into the environmental impact of disposable vapes, currently being undertaken by Zero Waste Scotland.

In light of the serious nature of these concerns, Council instructs the Director of Environment & Regeneration to write on behalf of Inverclyde Council to Lorna Slater, Scottish Government Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, conveying Inverclyde Council's view that a ban on the sale of so-called 'disposable' vapes, or other actions to mitigate their harmful effects, be introduced in Scotland as soon as practicable.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Council considers the request by Councillor McCabe.

Iain Strachan
Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital and Customer Services

From: Laura Young
Sent: Friday, 31 March 2023, 21:11
To: Inverclyde Council
Subject: Ban Disposable Vapes - Inverclyde

Hello Inverclyde Councillors!

Apologies for the email out of the blue and a group email, however I wanted to introduce myself and let you know about a campaign I am leading around [banning single-use disposable vapes](#).

This campaign is a combination of both environmental and public health concerns. There has been some amazing progress so far, with the Scottish Government putting out an urgent review on the impact of disposable vapes on the environment, and now five councils support the ban! [Dundee](#), [Renfrewshire](#), [Glasgow](#), [North Ayrshire](#), and [Falkirk](#) have all put pressure on the government to see this as a vital issue to get right. You can click on the hyperlinks to go to the motions put forward by each individual council. There are several more councils lined up to do the same in the next few weeks.

A few key stats:

⚠ 1.3 million+ vapes being discarded in the UK every week, sending valuable materials to landfill.

⚠ This equates to 10 tonnes of lithium reaching landfill/incinerators each year - enough metal to make batteries for 1,200 electric cars.

⚠ Damaged batteries from vapes cause of hundreds of fires each year at recycling plants. They can also cause fires during waste transportation in [bin lorries](#), when damaged for example by grass cutters, or in the waste facilities themselves. The Fire Service suggest the recent fire which devastated the recycling plant at Altens, Aberdeen might have begun in this way.

⚠ Littering/environmental problems: discarded vapes present a leak risk of toxic chemicals and microplastics which are harmful to children, pets, wildlife and water systems. Many local litter picking groups have seen a surge in the number of vapes found in local areas.

⚠ 90% of vape retailers are failing to comply with WEEE (Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment) regulations, meaning recycling is near impossible for consumers.

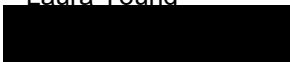
I have attached a briefing and open letter that were created through the coalition of organisations working on this issue in Scotland, but there are many others who have joined since this was drafted.

It would be amazing to know whether this is something you'd be interested in raising as a motion at your next council meeting to have Inverclyde join in support of this ban, especially as the Scottish Government is due to receive the Zero Waste Scotland urgent review on the issue in May this year. So, to help inform their decision it would be powerful to have more councils writing to the government before this time, or around when they will be deciding what to do.

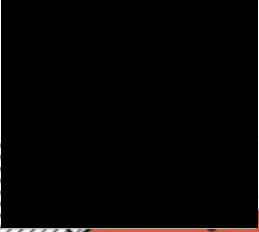
This issue has been accepted across all parties and had unanimous support with councils previously, so I truly believe this is an issue we can get right, together!

Thank you in advance for the time taken to look over this email, and I'd be very happy to discuss this issue further.

All the best,
Laura Young



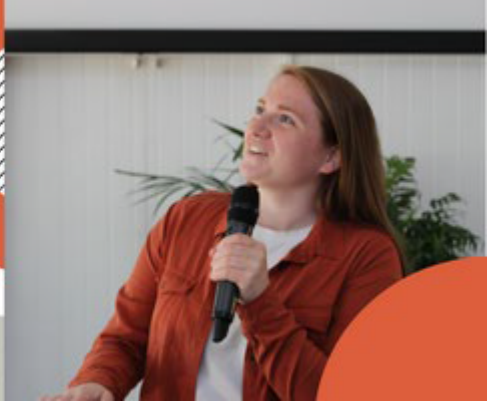
All the best,



Climate activist
Environmental scientist
Ethical influencer

Scottish Influencer of the Year - Inspiration

@LessWasteLaura
www.lesswastelaura.com



Scottish Parliamentary Briefing by the Marine Conservation Society, ASH Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Laura Young and Elliott Welch

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Date Approved: January 2023

Tackling the environmental and health impacts of e-cigarettes

We call on the Scottish Government to take action to reduce the impact of disposable and refillable vapes by:

- ✔ **Banning the manufacture and sale of disposable vapes in Scotland by 2024.**
- ✔ **Increase awareness and enforcement of existing WEEE Regulations and the Waste Batteries Regulations for producers, distributors and retailers of vapes including disposal and recycling.**
- ✔ **Requiring businesses to report on the number of vapes (as a percentage sold) that are returned for recycling under WEEE.** Increased enforcement of businesses and increased awareness of both business and the public should result in significant improvement over time, otherwise additional steps should be proposed.

Background

Vapes, including disposable vapes, can be categorised under the umbrella of electronic cigarettes but are commonly known as e-cigarettes or vapes. They are a diverse group of battery-powered devices that convert a liquid into an aerosol for inhalation.¹ Vapes were invented in China in 2003² where they are still produced for export, however the Chinese Government itself banned “fruity” vapes from sale in their domestic market last year (2022) due to health concerns with underage vaping.³ Most disposable e-cigarettes on the UK market are produced in China⁴.

Compared to re-useable vapes, which are rechargeable and refillable, disposable vapes come ready to go and only last for around 600 puffs, at which point they become obsolete and require complete replacement.⁵ Consequently, disposable vapes are discarded and purchased repetitively, undermining the principles of a circular economy.

Between January 2021 and April 2022, there has been an 18-fold increase in the use of disposable vapes in the UK among those who use vaping products rising from 1.2% to 22.2%, with the trend being particularly significant among younger adults.⁶ This has occurred alongside a concerning rise in e-cigarette use among children and young people.⁷ It is reported that half a billion are sold each year in the UK with 1.3 million disposable vapes being thrown away every week.⁸



Environmental and health impacts

The rapid increase in vaping, especially by young people, is concerning the health charity ASH Scotland, as these are products that harm the health of children, young people and non-smokers that are age-restricted for good reason.⁹ Nicotine is highly addictive, and many vapes include toxic chemicals that have not been safety tested for inhalation. The long-term effect of these products remains unknown.

The littering of these items also contributes to the ongoing decline in local environmental quality in communities and neighbourhoods across Scotland. Indeed, Keep Scotland Beautiful's recent report highlighted significant public concern about litter and littering behaviour.¹⁰ In addition, there is a worrying downward trend in use of the original reusable options¹¹ at a time when the Scottish government has highlighted the need for more re-use and recycling under Circular Economy goals.¹² Disposable vapes are increasingly found discarded in Scotland's environment¹³ contributing to an increase in plastic pollution and leakage of toxic chemicals.¹⁴ Microplastics have been found in the stomachs of seabirds, turtles, cetaceans, plankton and fish, including seafood for human consumption.¹⁵

Vapes are considered e-waste under the WEEE Regulations.¹⁶ All retailers selling e-cigarettes must provide a free in-store take-back service or set up an alternative free take-back service for environmentally sound disposal.¹⁷ Under these regulations similar responsibilities exist for producers and distributors. However, many disposable vapes are binned in general waste or littered, increasing the environmental impacts and resulting in the loss of precious finite materials such as lithium.¹⁸

Recycling disposable vapes is not simple as their toxicity makes disassembling the product complex and costly to waste managers.¹⁹ Each vape consists of glass, plastic and metal, and a heating coil and lithium-ion battery which require the product to be handled in compliance with the WEEE Regulations. In addition, the vape itself as well as the e-liquid contain a variety of harmful chemicals such as flame retardants and nicotine²⁰ which present further environmental and health concerns.

We therefore call on the Scottish Government to ban disposable vapes to help move Scotland toward a sustainable circular economy and protect children and young people from risks to their long-term health.

For further information or to set up a meeting please contact: Calum Duncan, Head of Conservation Scotland on calum.duncan@mcsuk.org

References

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Humza Yousaf MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care
Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Circular Economy, Green Skills, and Biodiversity
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

14 February 2023

Dear Cabinet Secretary and Minister,

Environmental Impact of Disposable Vapes

We write to welcome the recently announced review into the impact of disposable vapes (disposable e-cigarettes), and to further draw to your attention to the growing threat posed to the environment and public health by these items.

Disposable vapes are single-use, non-rechargeable and non-refillable items designed and placed on the market to be used and discarded. These disposable items are wholly incompatible with the circular economy principles we are working so hard toward here in Scotland. We welcome the decision of [Waitrose & Partners](#) to withdraw from sale single-use vapes and imitation cigarettes containing lithium.

It is estimated that the number of disposable vapes purchased in the UK is [168 million per year](#), and the expanding size of this market is clearly being driven by the promotion of these cheap, bright coloured and sweet flavoured products to younger people. Recent [research indicates](#) that around two vapes are disposed of every second (around 1.3 million per week). This contains the equivalent of 1,200 electric car batteries, or 10 tonnes of lithium – which is being sent to landfill or waste incinerators each year.

In addition, the littering of these items contributes to the ongoing decline in local environmental quality across communities and neighbourhoods throughout Scotland as detailed in Keep Scotland Beautiful's [recent report](#) that highlighted significant public concern with litter and littering behaviour.

The uptake of vaping amongst young people is particularly concerning, with multiple health professionals warning that instead of being used as a cessation tool to encourage existing smokers to give up the habit, disposable vapes have the potential to create a [whole new generation](#) hooked on nicotine. [ASH research](#) shows that last year e-cigarette use doubled among 11-17-year-olds, likely caused by the exponential growth of disposable e-cigarettes. Use prevalence of disposable e-cigarettes increased 7-fold between 2020 and 2021, rising from 7% to 52%, whilst the use of reusable and refillable e-cigarettes decreased.

Some vapes contain enough toxic chemicals to be classified as hazardous waste and when these are littered or improperly disposed¹ of can leach heavy metals (including mercury, lead and bromines), battery acid, and nicotine into the environment impacting upon Scotland's wildlife and indeed wider human health.

¹ In the UK vapes are classified as Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and are therefore subject to a number of obligations including being listed on the public register for WEEE producer requirements – as such they also require specialist recycling.

What's more, disposable vapes contain highly valuable and finite resources and materials including lithium which is vital to both the green and high-tech economy for use in such items as mobile phones, computers and electric cars.

We welcome the commitment to undertake a review on the environmental and public health impact of these disposable items following the question raised by Gillian Mackay MSP on 19 January 2023, and strongly encourage Scottish Government to use existing powers **to ban the sale and manufacture of disposable vapes in Scotland as soon as possible**.

An [open letter](#) has been sent to the UK Government Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Health calling for a ban on disposable vapes, signed by ASH Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful, and Marine Conservation Society along with a range of health and environmental organisations. The issue of the environmental impact of disposable vapes was the subject of a [Westminster Hall debate](#) on 29 November 2022. Further information can be found in this [Briefing](#) prepared by ASH Scotland, and [in this joint Scottish Parliamentary Briefing](#) by the Marine Conservation Society, ASH Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Laura Young and Elliott Welch.

This is an urgent cross-cutting issue that we believe poses a very real threat to both public health and the quality of Scotland's local environment. We would be grateful if we could schedule a meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss further the issues outlined here along with the proposed mechanisms and timeline for conducting the evidence review. We look forward to contributing to the evidence review and reaffirm our ask to consider a ban on the manufacture and sale of these items in Scotland.

We, the undersigned, look forward to hearing from you in due course. This letter is co-signed by a range of organisations who support our ask.

Signed,

ASH Scotland

Keep Scotland Beautiful

Marine Conservation Society

Laura Young

Elliott Welch

With support from:

APRS

bin twinning

Fidra

Friends of the Earth Scotland

Froglife

LANDED

Scottish Wild Land Group

Scottish Wildlife Trust