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Response to Microbeads – February 2016

Thank you for contacting me about plastic microbeads.

I understand and share your concerns about the impact these ingredients can have on the marine environment and fish. That is why I am pleased to tell you that, following work with the industry to achieve a voluntary phase-out, the Government has announced plans to ban them from cosmetic products completely.

The Government has launched a consultation on proposals to ban the sale and manufacture of cosmetics and personal care products containing harmful microbeads. This consultation will run until 28 February. It will also gather evidence on the environmental impacts of microbeads found elsewhere, such as in household and industrial cleaning products, and consider what more can be done in future to tackle other plastics, such as microfibers, that also enter the marine environment.

Clearly there is an international dimension to this issue so I am pleased to say that the UK, along with several of our neighbours, is party to an international organisation known as the Oslo and Paris Convention for the Protection of the North East Atlantic. In 2014 its members agreed a regional action plan to address marine litter, one of its most important objectives. The plan includes international action on microplastics.

I understand that manufacturers are exploring natural alternatives to plastic microbeads, including nut shells, salt and sugar. These have the same exfoliating properties but do not threaten the environment, so the products containing them should perform just as well.

I hope this will address your concerns. Thank you again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP