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Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig  
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-847  
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/06103/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC  
Chair of the Petitions Committee

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6 June 2019

Dear Janet

Thank you for your further letter of 6<sup>th</sup> May in relation to the petition regarding the creation of water fountains in the centre of cities and towns to eliminate plastic waste.

I would like to provide additional detail in relation to Refill in order to reassure the petitioner's concerns regarding this policy. A Refill Station can either be a water fountain or a tap, with each station being owned by a local business or organisation and can include public buildings. There are now over 1000 Refill Stations in Wales and over 100 in Cardiff alone.

In addition to the Refill app, areas such as St. David's Shopping Centre in Cardiff, publicise refilling water bottles in a number of ways; on their website, on advertising boards within the centre, and individual participating stations also display window stickers. All registered Refill stations are obliged to offer free refills. The Refill stations in St. David's shopping centre registered on the app are; Pret a Manager and Costa Coffee. Cosy Club and Starbucks are also registered on the Refill app and are located on the street connected to St. David's. The Refill movement is widespread across the UK and is building an international presence. For example, there are now over 20,000 Refill stations in the UK with Germany and Greece also joining the scheme to further grow Refill.

In terms of the level of investment needed, water fountains can be expensive to install. An individual fountain may cost as little as £1000 to purchase and install, or it could cost over £10,000. If a fountain is being installed, it is often difficult to estimate the cost beforehand as the underground infrastructure is where the bulk of the installation cost lies.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

However, the Welsh Government has indicated to water companies our desire to see fountains considered in the design of new developments and public buildings in Wales as this potentially removes the unpredictable cost element of fountain installation. The Wales Refill co-ordinator will also be speaking at the Institute of Civil Engineers annual event in the summer about the importance of planning for practical Refill Stations (in this case accessible fountains) to ensure planners are considering water fountains in the design of their infrastructure.

Local Authorities in Wales are responsible for an extensive range of public services which include provisions of public use amenities and facilities. They may choose to install fountains as part of their provision of public services. The Welsh Government already grants Local Authorities a portion of Capital funding every year which they could use to install water fountains.

I would also like to take this opportunity to summarise some of the other work the Welsh Government is undertaking to reduce plastic consumption in Wales. The Welsh Government has been working for over a decade to increase recycling within Wales, we introduced statutory recycling targets for local authorities in 2011 and have become the second best recycling Nation in Europe and third in the World. We introduced a ban on plastic microbeads in products in 2018 to contribute to the reduction of microplastics in the marine environment. Recently, we consulted on proposals to address the problems associated with packaging waste, including plastic bottles. One was held jointly with the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive on the merits of introducing a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Also, we are working with industry to develop new infrastructure to increase the reprocessing of plastic waste in Wales. As part of this, the use of our £6.5m Circular Economy Capital Investment Fund for 2019/20 is focussed strongly on the recycling of plastics, although other waste materials will be considered.

Regards  
Lesley

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