



# Press Release

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## INCPEN STATEMENT ON THE GOVERNMENT'S 25 YEAR ENVIRONMENT PLAN

INCPEN's CEO, Paul Vanston, joined the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Environment Minister and other high-profile ministers and guests at yesterday's launch of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP). As today is Day 2 of a 25-year project, INCPEN has reflected over the last 24 hours on the Government's aims in the Plan.

Paul Vanston comments, 'Our global lands and oceans cannot continue to be used as unauthorised waste sites. If we're part of government, local government, businesses or we're a citizen, no-one can exempt themselves from contributing to the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan. We must go forward acting together on the solutions. INCPEN is already working on a collaborative basis across **four important sectors – the packaging supply chain, local government, waste and resource management companies, and reprocessors**. The 25YEP provides added impetus to ramp-up our cross-sector working to achieve results.

'I'm impressed with the dynamism of Defra ministers over the last six months and I welcome that Ministers Gove and Coffey were both affirmed in their roles this week. Their desire to work constructively with the packaging supply chain is evident, and that includes manufacturers, retailers and brands – in effect, INCPEN's membership.

'What we have now from the Government is a long-term Plan within which short and medium-term actions can be framed. Many of those actions need to be discussed and defined and INCPEN is already well placed to continue contributing to that work with Ministers, officials and across the four sectors. We're pleased the Government has not dictated every twist and turn that must be taken over the coming years but, rather, has invited the packaging supply chain to be part of the discussions that determine the best ways forward for our country.

'In response to a question on deposit returns at yesterday's event the **Prime Minister confirmed** that interventions will be based on '**looking at the evidence and determining the best impacts**'. In our minds, this evidence-based approach needs to be at the core of the 25YEP. That is very important to all four sectors because we will need, all of us, to join-up our activities better. Compromises may need to be made, which are far better done based on robust evidence of potential impacts, benefits and consequences whether intended or otherwise.

'Truly '**valuing resources**' means working together across the four sectors on product design, use, reuse, recyclability and the implications of end of use. That may be far easier said than done when we come to analysing how materials are used in every facet of how society functions.



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‘For example, the **collection of used packaging materials for recycling** is, itself, a highly important aspect. To meet the aspirations of the 25YEP the four sectors will need to delve deeply together into consistency and types of councils’ service offerings to residents and businesses; participation in recycling services; contamination issues; communicating with residents and businesses on a long-term national basis; and development & stability of national and international markets among much else.

‘Delivering the 25YEP also involves reform of existing systems such as the **Packaging Recovery Notes (PRN)** scheme. On that, I am very buoyed with the current consensus across the four sectors for discussions to move forward speedily between us all right now, leading to a potential package of PRN reforms that can be considered by the Government this year for new packaging targets, and a much-improved PRN framework, post-2020. ‘Striking while the iron is hot’ comes to mind.

‘Another example where an evidence-based approach is important is the idea for fresh food to be sold loose in **plastic-free aisles**. I can see the attractions that are asserted by some, though an immediate concern raised by many is that this may result in greater quantities of **food waste**. I’d hope we all agree this isn’t an acceptable result for the country given the 7 million tonnes of food the UK already wastes annually. Good packaging has already helped to bring down food waste in the supply chain though we have a lot more work to do on household food wastes. So INCPEN agrees the Prime Minister’s evidence-based approach focused on best impacts needs to be applied when it comes to specific ideas in the 25YEP.

‘We agree with **Minister Coffey’s views** given to Channel 4 News that the word ‘plastics’ covers a multitude of materials with very different functional qualities dependent on a mass of situations in life. Materials with functional qualities related to, for example, health & safety aspects and medical uses, are likely to need a longer evidence-based approach than for other aspects of how we live.

‘In terms of next steps, **INCPEN is very pleased to be forming an effective day-to-day working partnership with WRAP**, and I especially welcome how closely Marcus Gover and I are working together since my arrival at INCPEN. Yesterday’s simultaneous announcement from WRAP on its work with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to ensure plastic never becomes waste is a welcome advance that I wish to help develop over the coming months leading to the launch in the Spring.

‘To be clear, this statement is not to say that change is impossible. It is to say that change needs to be properly assessed, tested, and supported by stakeholders to make sure desired outcomes are achieved without unintended consequences.

‘It is a truth that the 25YEP is itself attempting to tackle a range of unintended consequences of decisions made by past generations of people over many decades who thought they were doing the right things within legal frameworks set by governments. Breaking that cycle of unintended consequences was alluded to by the Prime Minister in her speech. Truly sustainable systems need hard work by everyone, and INCPEN is ready and willing to contribute constructively and intensively.’

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