

Meeting with Barry Sheerman MP

Context

The meeting with Barry Sheerman MP was organised as part of TIPA's engagement with politicians to discuss how compostable packaging can play a valuable role in eradicating plastic waste and supporting a sustainable economy.

Higginson arranged the meeting to try to influence the Environment Bill and to ensure compostable targets are included within it.

Logistics

TIPA and a representative from Higginson will meet with Barry Sheerman on Tuesday 10th March. The meeting will begin at 2:00pm.

The meeting will take place at Portcullis House: 1 Parliament St, Westminster, London SW1A 2JR.

TIPA should arrive 15 minutes early to allow for the time needed to get through security. Please call Barry's office on arrival: 020 7219 5037.



Barry Sheerman MP

Barry Sheerman is a Labour and Cooperative Party politician who has served as the Member of Parliament (MP) for Huddersfield since 1979. Sheerman was unsuccessful to contest Taunton in an election in 1974 but was elected MP for Huddersfield East in 1979 until 1983. In the general election of 1983, he was elected MP for Huddersfield, and he has kept his seat there ever since. He has consistently voted for and spoken in favor of better sustainability and waste management projects for the United Kingdom.

Sheerman earned his Bachelor of Science degree in economics at the London School of Economics in 1965 and his Master of Science degree at the University of London in 1967. He lectured at the University of Wales, Swansea from 1966 until he was elected to Parliament in 1979.



In 1995, Sheerman founded his not-for-profit think tank Policy Connect, which works across party lines to improve policies surrounding health, education, technology, and sustainability. The group

collaborates with MPs, government, businesses, and academics to improve people's livelihoods through research and innovation.

Sheerman has served as the co-chair for the All-Party Parliamentary Sustainable Resource Group (APSRG) as an extension of Policy Connect. The group is responsible for organising various parliamentary events and policy research projects. APSRG has produced policy briefings related to fighting food waste, creating an environmentally stable economy, and banning packaging that is not compostable or recyclable.

Relevant Views

Waste Management

On 28 January 2020, Sheerman spoke during a debate on energy from waste. In response to MP Steven Doughty's opposition to an energy recovery facility, Sheerman asked the following questions:

"Is [Doughty] aware that many of us who have specialised in this area over the years think that energy from waste is absolutely part of the answer to climate change, when it comes to the waste that towns and cities create and do not want to take responsibility for? Is he aware that modern energy from waste can be excellent in scooping up that stuff, bringing us energy and stopping us exporting waste all over the developing world?"

Sheerman further elaborated his questioning about the exportation of waste, saying the following:

"I have to ask [Doughty] the acid test question: what is the answer to all the waste that is generated in south Wales? Most of the local authorities have low performance in recycling; the national average is certainly not good. Will the waste be exported to my constituency, or to Indonesia or some other country? What will he do to take responsibility for that waste, which he has a moral duty to deal with in some modern way?"

Plastic

Sheerman is an advocate for a strong reduction in plastic pollution on a national and global scale. He made the following statement on the plastic crisis:

"According to Sky Oceans Rescue, a rubbish truck's worth of plastic is dumped in the ocean every minute and WWF has found that 90% of world fish stocks are fully or over-exploited from fishing. This consciousness has led to many achievements, such as the ban on microbeads which will be enforced in the New Year, the creation of nearly 300 Marine Conservation Zones and the introduction of a plastic bag charge. Moreover, national campaigns to introduce a Deposit Return Scheme for bottles and the Government's desire for the United Kingdom to 'become a world leader in tackling the scourge of plastic', as stated in the Autumn Budget, are further steps in the right direction."



Sheerman further specifies that a global approach to addressing plastic waste is necessary:

“We need to bring together the major players and the huge variety of special interest groups to tackle this problem at a fundamental level. The plastic manufacturers, the fishing and shipping liners all need to open up a dialogue with politicians and campaigners. A seriously joined-up approach will be the only successful approach. Practically, we need to map out this problem and the variety of possible solutions. For example, waste is currently dealt with through a waste hierarchy scheme which ranks the best ways to dispose of waste. This has been incredibly effective and could be expanded to construct a pollution, plastic disposal and ocean clean-up hierarchy. This would illustrate where focus needs to be most fervently concentrated. Only with a comprehensive mapping of the problem can we best learn how to solve it.”

Labour Manifesto

Labour stated in their 2019 manifesto that the party will hold producers of plastic accountable for the waste they are creating in order to encourage more sustainable design. The party also demonstrated that they will end the exports of plastic waste in the future to reduce oceanic pollution. Other key issues the party addressed included supporting DRS and building new steel recycling plants.

The Labour Party also mentioned a commitment to reduce food waste. The party plans to accomplish this by working with local councils and setting up a National Food Commission to cut down on waste.

Analysis

Barry Sheerman is a politician who has been highly successful in advocating for a reduction of plastic production. His desire to move towards a greener, plastic-free United Kingdom and globe are demonstrated by his work on All-Party Parliamentary Sustainable Resource Group and Policy Connect.

Sheerman clearly believes that the plastic crisis is prevalent not just in the United Kingdom, but across the globe. TIPA has an advantage in this regard and should frame proposals around this global context. Sheerman mentioned his concerns about how the Welsh recycling system is poorly executed and could result in waste being exported elsewhere. TIPA should appeal to this concern by saying that the company's compostable packaging will reduce waste and, subsequently, waste exportation to countries abroad. Additionally, Sheerman has said that businesses, governments, and manufacturers all need to work together to tackle this issue. It would be beneficial for TIPA to address the fact that they are a manufacturer who can play an important role in this process.

Takeaways

1. The first key takeaway from this meeting will be to convince Sheerman of the importance of compostable targets in order to ensure their inclusion in the Environment Bill. Compostable products are a necessary response to the abundance of plastic and the damage it causes to



the environment. TIPA should discuss with Sheerman how to best reduce plastic waste and how to outline explicit goals for composting infrastructure.

2. Sheerman has a long history of working as the founder of Policy Connect and the co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Sustainable Resource Group. Both of these groups operate across party lines to promote meaningful sustainability policies with the help of innovative technology. There are other MPs within this group that Sheerman could potentially influence to promote sustainable policies. These include Alan Whitehead MP (the Shadow Minister for Energy and Climate) and Kerry McCarthy MP (the former Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food, and Foreign Affairs). TIPA should discuss with Sheerman how these groups can help use their influence to advance policies that specifically target composting goals and incorporate compostable products into businesses.
3. Sheerman has expressed a deep concern for the global impact of British plastic pollution on the environment. He has strongly opposed transporting waste abroad and has said he is in favor of outlining a clear hierarchy of waste responsibility. TIPA should discuss with Sheerman how their products fit into this hierarchy and reduce the amount of plastic exported abroad.