



21st July 2017

**Statement from the Environmental Investigation Agency, Fauna & Flora International, Greenpeace UK, and the Marine Conservation Society (the microbeads coalition)**

Today the government released the results of its consultation concerning a proposed ban on microbeads in personal care and cosmetic products, and confirmed that it will be bringing forward a microbeads ban this year.

Having campaigned for a ban on microbeads together for the past 18 months, we're delighted that the government has confirmed today that they are going ahead with this ban. This will go a long way towards stemming the flow of damaging microplastic ingredients into our seas and oceans, and will also help consumers who do not want to be adding to pollution when they use cosmetic and beauty products.

However, there are many products not contained within the scope of this ban that contain microplastic ingredients and enter the aquatic environment. We welcome the government's announcement that they will work to gather the evidence needed to decide whether the scope of the ban should be extended, and we strongly encourage industry to help with this process and be transparent about the ingredients that they are using.

In our responses to the the government's consultation, we called for four major points to be addressed::

1. "Microbeads" should be defined as all solid water-insoluble microplastic ingredients of 5mm or less in any dimension used for any purpose. There should be no lower size limit included in the definition, and it should cover all plastics rather than a list of specifically prohibited plastics;

*How well does today's announcement address this?*

We are pleased that the government have confirmed that the ban will not include a lower size limit. We are also very encouraged to see that the government will not restrict the scope of the ban to exfoliating or cleansing products - a loophole that has weakened many other existing bans elsewhere in the world. However, because the government's statement did not include their working definitions of plastic and microplastic it is unclear whether the ban will cover all solid water-insoluble plastics or not. We will be asking the government to clarify this point.

2. The legislation should cover all products that contain ingredients which meet the above definition at the point of disposal and are washed down the drain or discharged directly into the aquatic environment, either through design or reasonably foreseeable use;

*How well does today's announcement address this?*

The legislation will not cover all products that contain microplastic ingredients, because it excludes product types beyond rinse-off cosmetics and personal care products. However, the government has committed to working with the Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee (HSAC) to assess the case for extending the ban to further categories of products. We welcome this and will be pressing the government to release a timeline and scope for this work.

3. Legislation should not allow any exemption for 'biodegradable' plastics, as there are none that have been conclusively demonstrated to fully biodegrade in real-world marine environmental conditions;

*How well does today's announcement address this?*

We are pleased that the government have confirmed there will be no exemption for so-called "biodegradable" plastics in the ban.

4. There should be a clear and prompt timeline for phasing out these ingredients, and a date after which products containing microplastics must not be sold, within 2 years of the ban.

*How well does today's announcement address this?*

Manufacture of products covered by the scope of this ban will be required to end by 1st January 2018, with the ban on sale coming into force on 30th June 2018. We are delighted to see the government commit to this timeframe, which is clearly achievable given the extent of industry commitments to date.