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Elliot Colburn MP
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Dear Elliot,

Thank you for your letter of 23 July to the Secretary of State on behalf of the Keep Britain Tidy campaign and the Tidy Britain APPG about smoking related litter. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area and I apologise for the delay in doing so. Defra is currently dealing with high volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. Thank you for your understanding during this challenging time.

I was pleased to attend the recent Tidy Britain APPG meeting on smoking related litter, which highlighted this very important issue. Like you, I am determined to reduce the level of cigarette litter in this country.

In the 2017 Litter Strategy we set our ambition to clean up the country within a generation. Smoking related litter is a particularly persistent and widespread problem and I had hoped to see the Tobacco Manufacturers' Association and the companies it represents work more pro-actively to deliver on the commitments it gave during the 2015 select committee inquiry on litter and fly-tipping.

Following my commitment to do so at the Tidy Britain APPG, I recently held a roundtable discussion between various stakeholders, including tobacco product manufacturers as well as Keep Britain Tidy, to discuss progress on the commitments the industry made and to explore what is preventing the tobacco industry from working with organisations independent of government, such as Keep Britain Tidy, to tackle this problem. Notes from this meeting will be available on GOV.UK shortly.

Working with an independent body to develop a voluntary producer responsibility scheme appears to provide a potential vehicle for the industry to reduce smoking related litter in this country. We have been clear that any such scheme must be developed in accordance with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the FCTC guidelines and the Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control.

Defra will continue to monitor the growing body of evidence surrounding the environmental harm caused by cigarette filters and any changes in the level of smoking related litter.

If smoking related litter continues to be a significant environmental concern, we will have to reflect on what steps the Government can take going forward to ensure that the tobacco industry takes increasing responsibility for the litter that its products create. This could include a regulatory EPR scheme for cigarette butts, which could go beyond a voluntary scheme in terms of scope and fees.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact the Secretary of State about this important issue.



REBECCA POW MP