



Press Release

Environmental Groups Applaud New Provisions in Ireland's new Waste Action Plan

*****EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL 11:30pm FRIDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER*****

We welcome the government's new Waste Action Plan and its focus on waste prevention and the circular economy. One of Minister Eamon Ryan's first actions as Minister for the Environment is to push forward a progressive and impactful Plan that will start Ireland's journey to reduce its over-consumption habits. Mindy O'Brien, Coordinator of VOICE and member of the National Waste Advisory Group stated, "We applaud the release of this plan and the collaborative approach taken by the Department to listen and discuss the views put forward by a wide group of stakeholders, and we look forward to further collaboration in the implementation of this action plan. We must ensure that many of the aspirational aspects of this plan come to fruition."

Many of the policy measures outlined in this action plan are designed to redefine how we look at resource use and waste, embracing a circular approach and investigating how to prevent waste at the beginning rather than building disposal systems to get rid of the waste at the product's end. O'Brien continued, "We must design out waste and change current business models. The existing extract, consume and dispose consumption model has been revealed to be the cause of many of our environmental troubles, poisoning our oceans with plastics and harming developing countries living with the legacy of plastic mountains, contaminated water and polluted air. We cannot continue to consume as if the Earth has unlimited natural resources. Last Saturday was Earth overshoot day, the day after which we are living beyond the resources the earth can sustainably provide. Some businesses have shown great leadership but the majority of businesses will only change their manufacturing and operating systems when faced with strong government policy." The new waste action plan's many actions embrace sustainable production and consumption and the objectives set out in Sustainable Development Goal 12.

Sorcha Kavanagh, Coordinator of the Conscious Cup Campaign and also a member of the National Waste Advisory Group, welcomes the levy on single use cups. "I have no doubt that this will contribute to the change in consumer behaviour necessary to support reuse. Climate breakdown is here and we need to move towards a circular economy and design out waste fast. Collaboration within the

industry will be paramount in ensuring systemic change and developing sustainable reuse systems that provide economic efficiencies.”

We call on supermarkets to do their part to make it easier for the ‘conscious consumer’ to do the right thing in reducing their waste generation, especially unneeded and unwanted plastic packaging. They should offer refill solutions for dry goods and cleaning products so that shoppers can bring their own reusable containers or offer reusable containers that can be returned for further use. Loose fruit and veg should be offered at a competitive price to pre-packaged items to encourage shoppers to shop package-free.

We support the following actions and urge the quick adoption of such:

- The establishment of a Deposit Refund Scheme for plastic bottles and cans to reduce the amount of litter found on our streets, beaches and in the marine environment and to meet the mandatory 90% collection rate for plastic bottles as set out in the EU Single Use Plastic Directive;
- The imposition of a latte levy as an economic incentive to encourage the take up and use of reusable cups, thus reducing the 200+ million disposable cups used in Ireland each year;
- The future adoption of levies on ‘to go’ food containers to reduce the amount of unsustainable packaging used in this country and to pivot towards a new way of doing business, using more reusable and sustainable options;
- Extending the ban of single use plastic items to include disposable coffee cups, condiment sachets and wet wipes, which are more and more often found littered on beaches and rivers.

Contact:

Mindy O’Brien, Coordinator of VOICE, 087 289 3942

Sorcha Kavanagh, Coordinator of the Conscious Cup Campaign, 086 856 8977

Notes to the editor

- Irish people current consume approx. 580kgs of waste per capita per year (above the EU average 487kg), including 60kg of plastic waste, the highest in Europe
- Ireland has committed to targets of 90% collection of plastic bottle waste by 2030
- Latest EPA reports show Ireland currently recycles approx. 31% of plastic waste, decreasing for the third year in a row, which will have to be ramped up significantly as we have targets of 50% recycled by 2025 and 55% recycled by 2030 of plastic packaging waste

- Earth Overshoot day occurred on Saturday 22nd August 2020. Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity has exhausted nature's budget for the year.