**APPG on Microplastics minutes, 15.06.21**

**Attendees**

Alberto Costa MP, APPG Chair   
Harriet Main, Parliamentary Assistant to Alberto Costa MP   
Fiona Thomas, APPG Secretariat (National Federation of Women’s Institutes)   
Kevin Considine, Samsung PLC   
Professor Jamie Woodward, University of Manchester   
Dr Laura Foster, Marine Conservation Society   
Tanya Reed, Matter Inc   
Avril Greenaway, Cleaner Seas Group   
Dr Natalie Welden, University of Glasgow   
Christian Cullinane, Xeros Technology PLC   
Martin Grieg, Xeros Technology PLC   
Andrew Mullen, Beko   
Sophie Mather, The Microfibre Consortium   
Francis Thomas, AMDEA   
Jennifer Trittschuh, Fisher and Paykel   
Ingrid McCabe, Keep Britain Tidy   
Henry Swithinbank, Surfers Against Sewage   
Dr Mark Taylor, University of Leeds   
Rachael Miller, Cora Ball   
Ian Moverley, Whirlpool Corporation   
Gemma Austin, BSH Home Appliances   
Luke Knox, University of Manchester  
Dave Miller, Cleaner Seas Group

**Minutes**

Harriet Main welcomed all attendees to the meeting and invited comments on the structure and the content of the APPG report.

Francis Thomas, AMDEA, outlined that as the report was confidential, AMDEA were not able to circulate their report to all members in the AMDEA trade association. Francis asked if he would have an opportunity to circulate the report following the meeting to additional members.

Harriet confirmed this would be fine and that the APPG Secretariat and APPG Chair would welcome any written feedback from additional stakeholders.

Professor Jamie Woodward, University of Manchester, outlined that the tone of the report was primarily aimed at microplastic impacts on oceans. Professor Jamie Woodward suggested that microplastic impacts on rivers systems were just as important as they are the main conduit for the movement of microplastics into the oceans. Professor Jamie Woodward asked if the report could be rebalanced to reflect this, especially as there is a current Environmental Audit Committee enquiry into river water quality taking place and the report could help to generate further momentum around improving water quality and rivers

Harriet confirmed that the APPG Secretariat and the office of Alberto Costa MP would rebalance the report to take into account the impacts of microplastic on rivers.

Sophie Mather, The Microfibre Consortium, praised the report and the work of the office of Alberto Costa MP and the APPG Secretariat to draw together the information contained in the report. Sophie Mather agreed with the point made by Professor Jamie Woodward on rivers, and The Microfibre Consortium know that a lot of fibres are lost through water pathways and through air pathways. Sophie Mather outlined that the APPG on Microplastics needed to be mindful that the report doesn’t prevent the APPG stakeholders from supporting work on air pathways on microplastics.

Sophie Mather also referenced the graphic contained in the report provided by Matter, which outlines estimated figures of microplastic release from different pathways. Sophie Mather outlined that whilst 35% of microplastic release comes from the clothing industry, 65% of microplastic release comes from other sources other than the clothing industry. Sophie Mather flagged that the report focuses heavily on textiles as the main emitter of microplastics. Sophie attributed this to the emerging research from academia and the textiles industry on the environmental impacts of microplastic fibres, but outlined that other industries on the visual graphic need to be held accountable too.

Dr Laura Foster, Marine Conservation Society, also praised the thorough nature of the report and outlined that she had sent over to the APPG Secretariat and office of Alberto Costa MP some further technical clarifications on wastewater treatment and sludge pathways. Dr Laura Foster outlined that she saw the framing of the report as textiles is an area that we can immediately start working on, but we can move forward in future on a number of areas or pathways of microplastic release. Dr Laura Foster outlined that report’s focus on textiles showcased the positive work taking place on the prevention of microplastic fibre release from the textiles industry.

Harriet Main outlined the current draft report is an initial report, and it doesn’t mean that the APPG on Microplastics wouldn’t be able to get together and do another report and focus on different aspects of microplastic release.   
Harriet Main outlined that the report is an initial starting point for parliamentary interventions in the microplastic fibre debate.

Andrew Mullen, Beko, supported the point made by Sophie Mather, and outlined that washing machine manufacturers felt similarly that washing machine manufacturers were not at fault on microplastic fibre release.

Harriet Main asked Beko to submit written feedback either directly to the APPG Secretariat or through the AMDEA on how to improve the report.

Dr Natalie Welden, University of Glasgow, outlined that whilst the text in the report does sometimes focus on washing machine manufacturers, the explanatory text at the start of the report contains a broad range of recommendations on general outcomes to prevent microplastic fibre release. Dr Natalie Welden outlined that recommendation 5 currently has no date, which is a good thing as there is a shortage of data on this point at the moment. Dr Natalie Welden outlined that where recommendation 5 is pushed forward, there needs to be caution in setting achievable, measurable, and sensible long-term targets supported by evidence and data.

Dr Laura Foster, Marine Conservation Society, reflected on the comments made by the washing machine manufacturers and textile industry, and outlined that each stakeholder needs to be part of a solution on microplastics, as no one stakeholder could solve this problem in isolation. Dr Laura Foster suggested that the report could be reframed to focus on each sector demonstrating leadership on preventing and eliminating microplastic fibre release into the environment.

Christian Cullinane, Xeros Technology PLC, outlined that Xeros were very pleased with the draft report, and felt the report was balanaced and pointed to a need for a holistic solution on microplastics fibres.

**Alberto Costa MP, Chair of the APPG on Microplastics joined the meeting.**

Alberto Costa MP, APPG Chair, apologised for the delay in attending the meeting due to his attendance at a private Select Committee Meeting. The Chair suggested for Harriet Main to continue chairing the meeting, and thanked the work of Harriet Main and Fiona Thomas (APPG Secretariat) for pulling the report together.

Harriet Main outlined that following the last meeting, the APPG Secretariat and Harriet restructured the report and the flow of the recommendations to reflect the lifecycle/supply chain of a microplastic fibre. Harriet Main invited stakeholders’ comments on recommendation 1a) and 1b).

Professor Jamie Woodward, University of Manchester, reiterated that recommendation one would be a good place to mention rivers explicitly in the report.

Dr Laura Foster, Marine Conservation Society, echoed Professor Jamie Woodward’s points, and outlined that a greater link needed to be made between the source of microplastic fibres and their route to the sea. Dr Laura Foster asked for an increased focus on sludge used from wastewater companies on agricultural land.   
Dr Laura Foster outlined that she had a slight concern that if people see that this is the first measure that needed to be implement, that it might be the only measure that is tackled. Dr Laura Foster asked for the report to include emphasis that microplastic fibre release into the environment is not something that the public can solve on their own with education and public behaviour change campaigns.

Harriet Main explained that the APPG Secretariat and the office of Alberto Costa MP had chosen to order the measures in this way as stakeholders in the previous meeting discussed putting the measures in a supply-chain order. Harriet Main asked for any additional comments on the ordering of the recommendations to be submitted in writing to the office of Alberto Costa MP and to the APPG Secretariat.

Dr Natalie Welden, University of Glasgow, outlined that many of the measures outlined in the report are reliant on consistent and useful public intervention with their own washing machines, and therefore the ordering of the recommendations reflected the importance of these measures to work.

Harriet Main thanked all contributors on recommendation one and moved onto recommendation two. Harriet Main outlined that since the last APPG on Microplastics meeting, the APPG Secretariat and office of Alberto Costa MP had reworded the recommendation to take into account the thoughts of stakeholders that there needed to be a Minister on Pollution. Harriet Main invited comments or reflections from stakeholders on recommendation two.

There were no verbal comments on recommendation two from stakeholders.

Harriet Main moved onto recommendation three, which is focused on the need to have an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for textiles by 2023.   
Harriet Main outlined that the APPG Secretariat and the office of Alberto Costa MP had organised a specific meeting to discuss EPR with APPG members with a specific interest in Extended Producer Responsibility schemes, and incorporated feedback from this meeting into recommendation three.   
Harriet Main invited feedback from APPG on Microplastic attendees on recommendation three.

Sophie Mather, The Microfibre Consortium, outlined that in the essence of time she would be submitting written feedback on recommendation three to the APPG Secretariat and to the office of Alberto Costa MP. Sophie Mather outlined that whilst the report discussed both synthetic and natural fibres, the supporting information outlined in the textiles section was specifically focused on synthetic fibres. Sophie Mather asked for further supporting information on natural fibres.

Francis Thomas, AMDEA, outlined that AMDEA and its members were in general support of an EPR scheme. Francis Thomas echoed Sophie Mather’s points on the language used in the explanatory description of the scheme. Francis Thomas also reflected that the 2023 introductory date was quite ambitious, especially bearing in mind the extent of the EPR scheme that would need to be introduced and the definitions needing to be agreed on microfibres.

Harriet Main outlined that the reason the 2023 date had been chosen was because the Government had outlined that they would like to bring in two EPR schemes out of five specific areas- including textiles- by 2023. Harriet Main outlined that as the 2023 was suggested to be feasible by the UK Government, the APPG Secretariat and the office of Alberto Costa MP felt it appropriate to include the 2023 date.   
Harriet Main outlined that the proposed date was intended to reflect the urgency of the situation and it was up to the UK Government to decide, in consultation with stakeholders, the mechanics and logistics of implementing such a scheme by 2023.

Dr Laura Foster, Marine Conservation Society, reflected that the Marine Conservation Society would support as early a date as is feasible to implement.   
Dr Laura Foster asked Sophie Mather (The Microfibre Consortium) for details on The Microfibre Consortium data on material shedding, and whether or not the intention was for this to be open source data available to the public. Dr Laura Foster outlined that having open source data available on the rates of material shedding would help consumers to make informed choices. Dr Laura Foster outlined that the open source data would be hugely helpful ahead of the implementation of an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme. Dr Laura Foster reflected on costs for the scheme could be funded- in addition to the recommendation of 1p per garment as recommended by the Environment Audit Committee’s Fixing Fast Fashion inquiry- by a 1% levy instead. Dr Laura Foster outlined that this would encourage high-end clothing manufacturers to pay proportionally on the basis of their profits. Dr Laura Foster outlined that a 1p levy could be the suggested minimum level of EPR contribution.

Harriet Main thanked Dr Laura Foster for her contribution and invited any further comments on recommendation three.

Harriet Main introduced recommendation four and invited stakeholder feedback on microfibre filters to be introduced on all new domestic and commercial washing machines by 2025. Harriet Main outlined that following the previous meeting of the APPG on Microplastics, the proposed date had been revised from 2030 to 2025.

Christian Cullinane, Xeros Technology PLC thanked the APPG Secretariat and the office of Alberto Costa MP for amending the proposed date as there are already a number of available microfibre filtration solutions in the market, and there’s significant engagement with numerous parties in this space.

Francis Thomas, AMDEA, outlined there should be standards in place before a requirement for microfibre filters on washing machines is made mandatory. Francis Thomas outlined that standards take several years to develop.   
Francis Thomas outlined that washing machine manufacturers would like standards on washing machine filters to be made globally as the appliance industry is a global industry, and this is a global problem, and should be made by a global body.   
Francis Thomas outlined that based on this, a 2025 timescale is unlikely to work, as the standards need to be all-encompassing and define the size of a microfibre and the efficacy of the field or system in place. Francis Thomas outlined that legislation should not be restrictive on technological developments that may be non-filtration.   
Francis Thomas outlined the countries looking at a 2025, including France who are having difficulties with a 2025 date as they have no local washing machine manufacturing facilities and they have to import all of their washing machines.

Harriet Main outlined the purpose of the APPG report was to provoke debate and conversation about microplastic fibres and encourage conversation and coverage of the problem. Harriet Main outlined that the APPG Secretariat and the office of Alberto Costa MP would be prepared to change the suggested date if a simple majority of stakeholders would like it changed, but otherwise 2025 will be the proposed date. Harriet Main outlined that as the APPG on Microplastics group is a UK parliamentary group, the proposed measures will be focusing on the UK.

Tanya Reed, Matter Industries, praised the content of the report, its framing and its wording. Tanya Reed outlined that Matter were in support of a 2025 date, and outlined that the technology exists for microfibre filters on washing machines to be viable by 2025. Tanya Reed outlined that the validation of the efficacy of filters is not far away and could be feasibly done quickly. Tanya Reed pointed to the studies conducted by Professor Richard Thompson, University of Plymouth, and Dr Natalie Welden, University of Glasgow, on this.

Professor Jamie Woodward, University of Manchester, supported the 2025 date, and asked for the section on the filtration of water to be renamed to be called filtration or wastewater.

Harriet Main agreed with Professor Jamie Woodward’s suggestion, and invited further stakeholder reflections on recommendation four.

Dr Laura Foster, Marine Conservation Society, outlined that there is not currently up to the consumer to try and put something on their effluent pipe themselves, and consumers would have to employ plumbers at their own personal expense to address their personal microfibre release through effluent. Dr Laura Foster outlined that an in-machine filter at the point of purchase would be the best solution for a consumer in a domestic context. Dr Laura Foster outlined that external filters may need to be used when retrofitting older washing machines with microfibre filters.

Avril Greenaway, Cleaner Seas Group, suggested that the APPG on Microplastics group should contact the OECD as they had done a lot of work advising the French Government on the policy making around mandatory microfibre filters in washing machines by 2025. Avril Greenaway outlined that this would be a good opportunity to link up with another nation in order to devise global standards on this problem, or at the very least encourage cross-border information sharing on this problem.   
Avril Greenaway stated that Cleaner Seas Group would be happy to make an introduction to the OECD on the Group’s behalf.

Jennifer Trittschuh, Fisher and Paykel, outlined that recommendation four was very filter-centric, and if the overall goal was to reduce microplastic fibre release into the environment, it could be better to look at the system overall as there may be other technologies that are made available or better stem the tide of microplastic fibres into the environment. Jennifer Trittschuh asked if the policy recommendation referred to all or new machines, and whether or not retrofitting is included in the 2025 target.

Harriet Main outlined that the Group had decided to leave out measures on retrofitting as there was little consensus amongst the Group on how this could be achieved. Harriet Main invited Jennifer Trittschuh and Fisher and Paykel to submit written feedback on how recommendation four could be improved.

Francis Thomas, AMDEA, outlined that APPLiA, the pan-European trade association for the electrical appliance industry are engaging with the French Government through GFAM- the French equivalent to AMDEA. Francis Thomas reflected that he would be able to update the Group on any developments in France in this way. Francis Thomas stated that APPLiA themselves were in the process of commissioning some lifecycle assessment work on the viability of microfibre filters, which will include assessments on energy usage and water usage. Francis Thomas stated that then that data becomes available, AMDEA would send this across to the APPG Secretariat and the office of Alberto Costa MP.

Christian Cullinane, Xeros Technology PLC, asked Francis Thomas, AMDEA, that if APPLiA do produce any assessments, or materials or studies, Xeros Technology PLC would be interested to understand the process that APPLiA have undertaken and be able to scruntinize the outcome of it. Christian Cullinane asked for full transparency on any information that would be able to support a policy discussion.

Harriet Main thanked Christian Cullinane for his contributions and invited discussion on recommendation five. Harriet Main outlined that recommendation five needed the most work out of the recommendations.

Francis Thomas, AMDEA, outlined that AMDEA members thought recommendation five would be a very difficult policy to implement and would negate some of the benefits of recommendation three (an EPR scheme for textiles by 2023). Francis Thomas outlined that microplastic fibre waste is not the problem of the OEM.   
Francis Thomas reflected that the UK WEEE regulations would not be an appropriate vehicle to attack microfibre waste with as they are specifically focused on the disposal of electrical waste.

Harriet Main thanked Francis Thomas for his contributions and outlined that the APPG Secretariat and the office of Alberto Costa MP would be happy to amend or remove recommendation five as appropriate.

Dr Natalie Welden, University of Glasgow, outlined that it would be beneficial for a waste stream to be developed for microplastic fibre waste as it is undesirable to ask consumers to collect microplastic fibres in order to divert them to potentially another undesirable waste stream. Dr Natalie Welden suggested there could be some form of wider consultation about where a suitable endpoint for collected microfibres could be, as there would be no benefits to focusing on washing machine manufacturers to using microfibre collection filters.

Harriet Main thanked Dr Natalie Welden, and outlined that the reason recommendation five referred to the UK WEEE regulations is because they were mentioned by a stakeholder in a previous APPG meeting. Harriet Main invited written comments on recommendation five from stakeholders.

Avril Greenaway, Cleaner Seas Group, agreed with the point made by Dr Natalie Welden, and emphasised that recommendation five should be kept in the paper but without the emphasis on OEMs. Avril Greenaway referred to current work being undertaken by the Ellen McArthur foundation, and by grassroots organisations on a waste stream for microfibres and recycling. Avril Greenaway outlined that there were some huge opportunities for joined-up thinking on this between organisations and academia, and it would be a great way to find solutions to the disposal problem.

Dr Laura Foster, Marine Conservation Society, asked for recommendation five to be clarified to outline the expectations on what a washing machine filter captures. Dr Laura Foster outlined that a feasibility assessment needs to be conducted to assess whether it would be feasible, practical and economical to send collected microfibres for recycling in a domestic context.

Harriet Main thanked Dr Laura Foster for her contributions and reiterated that stakeholders are invited to submit written feedback on each of the policy recommendations.

Andrew Mullen, Beko, outlined the upcoming launch of a microfbre capture filter within Beko washing machines. Andrew Mullen outlined that Beko will be using a closed loop system with a cartridge in the machine which will be returned to Beko by the consumer. Andrew Mullen outlined that whilst Beko think this is currently the only viable microfibre filtration solution, this is an expensive way of recycling the cartridges, and is also not the most sustainable way to do it based on CO2 emissions. Andrew Mullen outlined that if microfibre capture washing machine filters are going to be in every machine in the UK, recyclers would not be able to cope, and customers won’t maintain a practice that costs them more over the lifecycle of a washing machine than the cost of the product itself. Andrew Mullen outlined a more viable solution would need to be designed.

Kevin Considine, Samsung PLC, outlined that his suggestion to use the UK WEEE regulations had been misinterpreted by the authors of the draft APPG report, and was only intended to be in reference to providing more information to consumers about waste. Kevin Considine outlined that as OEMs are not the polluter, it would not be appropriate to include them in recommendation five.

Harriet Main thanked all contributors and invited stakeholder comments on recommendation six.

There were no further comments on recommendation six.

Harriet Main outlined the next steps of the report, and reiterated that stakeholders should submit further written feedback on any of the recommendations or the general framework of the report to the APPG Secretariat and to the office of Alberto Costa MP.

Frank Thomas, AMDEA, asked for the timescale of further comments on the report.

Harriet Main outlined that it was the intention of the APPG Secretariat and the office of Alberto Costa MP to publish the APPG report ahead of the summer parliamentary recess on the 22nd of July 2021. Harriet Main asked for stakeholders to promote the completed report and its recommendations when the report had been designed and published to their networks. Harriet Main outlined that it was the intention of APPG Secretariat and the office of Alberto Costa MP to table for debates and parliamentary questions upon completion of the report, and organise a parliamentary launch event for late September 2021.

Alberto Costa MP, APPG Chair, outlined that due to the extension of COVID-19 regulations, it is not yet clear how parliamentary events will be impacted, and on what date Parliament would be open to host external events. The Chair outlined that he would be in consultation with Harriet Main; the APPG Secretariat; and members of the APPG group on this. The Chair outlined that ahead of any event, the first thing to do was to complete the report and to ensure the report is backed and promoted by as many organisations as possible to extend its reach and credibility, in order to encourage Government to practically implement the reports’ proposals.

Harriet Main outlined that organisations with a wider membership would be able to circulate the report in its draft form amongst its wider membership.   
Harriet Main reiterated that any feedback given by additional stakeholders would have to be incorporated into the report in a way that was agreeable to everyone. Harriet Main stated that the deadline for this additional feedback was the 22nd June 2021.

Harriet Main thanked all meeting contributors and closed the meeting.