



## Blog Template

The idea here is that once you have made a copy of this document you can either write directly into this or copy and paste from any earlier drafts.

### Blog Title

#### **An introduction to the state of plastics Lobbying in the UK**

### Body Text – including subheadings

To anyone who understands the imperative to reduce the proliferation of plastic waste worldwide in this country, it is self-evident that tackling plastic pollution is a moral, environmental and economic imperative. However, as a £27 billion industry employing over 160,000 people, it is unsurprising that organisations exist to support this industry and maintain our continued and expanding dependence upon plastic goods. While many in these organisations no doubt fully support efforts to remedy the situation, it is clear that a significant and influential quality of plastics lobbying absolutely takes place in the UK, with dire effects on attempts at regulation. With little public support for their cause, lobbying becomes a powerful tool in the hands of these interests, especially in our particularly porous and influence-friendly political system. For those seeking to remedy the dire environmental situation, it is important to understand the nature of the organisations that seek to maintain the polluting status quo.

In the United Kingdom, the largest and most powerful lobbying group is the BFP (British Plastics Federation), with over 400 members and representing over 75% of the industry. In 2019, a tax was announced attempting to reduce the number of single use plastics by taxing plastic packaging containing less than 30% recycled content. Despite public commitments to the contrary, the BFP began to coordinate between the industry, MP's and consultancy groups to stymie reform. Seeking to water-down or weaken legislation is the most effective tool for these groups, as outright campaigning against regulation risks public outcry. In 2019 The BPF were advised by consultants Ernst & Young that their best options were to *'Marshall data/evidence to support the "do nothing approach". Seek to mitigate the current proposal with lower rates and exemptions. Seek to supplant the current proposal with an alternative.'*<sup>1</sup> Mark Pawsey, Conservative MP for Rugby and Bulkington is most closely associated with the industry, and can regularly be found at industry events or readily quoted in lobbying-linked publications.<sup>2</sup> He also chairs the Packaging Manufacturing Industry APPG and has a second job as the chairman of

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<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/10/plastics-lobby-group-pushed-treasury-to-ease-back-on-tax-reform>

<sup>2</sup>

<https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2022/06/mp-who-chairs-plastic-packaging-lobbying-group-faces-conflict-of-interest-allegations/>

the Foodservice Packaging Association (FPA). This group describes itself as '*representing the interests of distributors, manufacturers and operators in the foodservice packaging sector.*'<sup>3</sup> The APPG is also connected to The Packaging Federation, another linked trade group for the industry. Even groups like the British Retail Consortium (BRC) campaigned against the introduction of a supermarket deposit scheme for plastic bottles, glass and cans. While these groups seem tangentially connected, they are clearly able to effectively coordinate when it is in their interest, whether through MP's, umbrella trade organisations or other interest groups. These groups are capable of spending a great deal of time and money on eye-catching greenwashing publicity (just check the social media accounts of any of these organisations) and have very much absorbed at least the language of sustainability and environmental awareness. Many manufacturers recently joined the so called Flexible Plastic Fund, but only managed to commit around £1 million, but found plenty of time to create an array of eye-catching social media campaigns and brightly coloured infographics.

Serious taxes and real material incentives, a carrot and stick approach, are the only way to make these polluters begin to take the steps required to mitigate the environmental crisis. At the same time, these groups are able to use their own combination of greenwashing and behind the scenes lobbying to prevent any such changes. Real positive change is possible, but it is important to be aware of what is stacked against those trying to achieve it.

JS Hinds

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## Images

*Include any images you wish to use along with their reference number(s), and any captions.*

## Suggested Categories and Tags

*Include the primary category that fits the topic of the blog, along with any secondary categories where applicable.*

*Also include the tags you feel are appropriate.*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.foodservicepackaging.org.uk/about-us/>

## Any Other Information

*This is the place to leave any references you are not currently using in the main text, or any other things you want to keep with the blog but do not fit into the blog itself.*

<https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2017/02/16/plastic-recycling-targets-quietly-reduced-industry-pressure/>

<https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2022/06/mp-who-chairs-plastic-packaging-lobbying-group-faces-conflict-of-interest-allegations/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\\_Plastics\\_Federation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Plastics_Federation)

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/10/plastics-lobby-group-pushed-treasury-to-ease-back-on-tax-reform>

[https://twitter.com/TheBPF?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor](https://twitter.com/TheBPF?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor)