

Ban on microbeads comes into force today

The ban will make it an offence to manufacture or supply any rinse-off personal care product which contain the microbeads.

A microbead is a water-insoluble solid plastic particle of up to 5mm in size, too small to be filtered out in sewage treatment systems. An estimated 680 tonnes of plastic microbeads have been used in personal care products in the UK every year, billions of which end up in the sea. The tiny beads accumulate because they do not biodegrade and are considered impossible to recover once released.

Plastic microbeads have been added to a variety of personal care products for many years, including hand cleansers, face scrubs, toothpastes, shower gels and cosmetics.

The policy to ban microbeads in cosmetic products has gained support from the general public, as well as from the cosmetics industry itself. The legislative ban will ensure a level playing field and consistency in the definition of a "microbead", so that all relevant products are free from microbeads.

The Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn, said:

"I'm pleased to introduce this ban in Wales, which will reduce the amount of plastics entering our seas and prevent further harm to our marine life.

"Microbeads in rinse-off products are unnecessary and there are suitable alternatives which do not have negative impacts on the environment. The ban will provide confidence to consumers that the products they buy will not endanger sea life.

"2018 is Wales' Year Of The Sea and earlier this month I signed the UN Clean Seas pledge. We're taking action to reduce plastic pollution in Wales, such as developing water refill points at key communities along our Wales Coast Path.

"We want to be an example to other countries around the World so that together we can reduce the dangers of plastic to sea life."

Peter Davies, Chair of the Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group, said:

"Evidence shows the damage plastic microbeads can cause the marine

environment, as well as their potential risk to food security and human health.

“I’m delighted to see this legislation come into force today, which is an important step towards eliminating the danger to sea life from plastic pollution.”