

PE1896/K: Providing every primary school child in Scotland with a reusable water bottle

Scottish Water written submission, 7 February 2025

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to replace the disposable water bottle provided with primary school lunches with a sustainable, reusable, metal bottle.

Thank you for your letter about petition PE1896, lodged by Callum Isted, about providing all primary school pupils with reusable water bottles.

We are very grateful to Callum for raising awareness of how important it is to stay hydrated by drinking water and, also, to reduce the use of plastic by carrying a reusable water bottle. These are issues which are very important to Scottish Water and we now have 132 Top Up Taps across Scotland which give people access to high quality drinking water whilst they are out and about. Our top up taps have filled the equivalent of 14 million bottles to date and we are proud of the impact that will have had on people's pockets and the planet.

The water bottles Scottish Water uses at events are made from 100% recycled plastic, reclaimed from the sea. This makes them sustainable as a product we give to customers when we are talking to them about important changes in behaviour which all of us can make to help the water environment.

We would like every primary school child in Scotland to have a refillable water bottle. However, we do not think it is the best solution for Scottish Water to provide them.

There are just under 380,000 primary school children in Scotland, and we believe it would cost us around £1.14 million on an ongoing basis to provide the bottles, on the basis that these would be relatively low cost, identical bottles. Research tells us that many people have individual preferences about the types of water bottles they like to use. Many identical or similar water bottles might also present practical challenges within schools, and we think there would be potential for a significant number of the bottles provided to be wasted.

There are financial considerations too, as we have finite resources and funding on this scale would otherwise be used to invest in the services we provide to customers to ensure we are able to continue to deliver high quality services and meet net zero ambitions into the future in the face of a changing climate. As a publicly owned, independently regulated and commercially run organisation, we are mindful that our services are funded directly by customers through the charges they pay.

We do have our *Generation H₂O* programme, which is curriculum linked and provides educational resources for teachers and Scotland's young people to become responsible water citizens. We would certainly be delighted to arrange a visit to Callum's school if his teacher would like.

If this would be of interest, please ask Callum's teacher to get in contact with our Public Affairs Team at Public.Affairs@scottishwater.co.uk and we would be happy to make arrangements.

You will no doubt agree that Callum should be commended for how admirably he has participated in the Parliamentary process and, once again, we would like to thank him for raising awareness of such an important issue.

Alex Plant
Chief Executive