

News Release: 21 11 2005

Nappies in Westminster

Shadow Environment Minister Bill Wiggin MP, hosted a reception in the House of Commons today for the UK disposable nappy industry.



Shadow Environment Minister Bill Wiggin MP with Tracy Stewart, Director General of the AHPMA

The focus was on the benefits of disposable nappies, both for parents and babies, and to question the validity of funding from central Government for projects to encourage the use of washable cloth nappies as a waste reduction exercise. However, it would appear this spending is having little effect on consumer choice. In excess of 95% of parents choose to buy disposable nappies for their babies.

Disposable nappies make up a miniscule fraction of UK waste, just 2.4% of household waste, and 0.1% of total landfilled waste. Furthermore, a Life Cycle Assessment published by the Environment Agency in May 2005 showed conclusively that there is little or no difference in the overall levels of environmental impact created by either type of nappy.

Of particular concern to AHPMA members is:

- Continued funding for cloth nappy schemes
- A further LCA study
- The introduction of commercially laundered cloth nappies on maternity wards and the potential for cross infection

As a parent Mr Wiggin fully appreciates the advantages of disposable nappies. He commented ‘The washable nappy is out of date and while it may reduce landfill, other environmental impacts are worse than with disposables. The Governments huge expenditure has not delivered the desired results. Environmental policy needs to go with the grain of human behaviour and we need to recognise that progress has been made on reducing the environmental impact of disposable nappies.’

The disposable nappy industry is committed to responsible environmental stewardship. Today also saw the UK launch of the industry’s sustainability report for disposable nappies and continence care products. The report outlines technological improvements such as the reduction in recent years of the average weight of a disposable nappy by around 40%, which has greatly reduced the amount of waste they create.

Tracy Stewart, Director General of the AHPMA commented ‘Modern parents with busy lifestyles, but who also care about the environment, can now be assured that whichever type of nappy they choose to use will be no more harmful than the other. Over 95% of parents use disposable nappies for their babies and it is not hard to see why, they are quick, clean and easy to use, and better still they offer skin health benefits to babies as they work so well.’

She continued ‘Disposable nappies are compatible with all prevalent forms of waste management, and the AHPMA welcomes DEFRA’s Waste Implementation Programme funding for new waste technologies. This will move the UK away from it’s overdependence on landfill, and enable us to reach and maintain landfill reduction targets.’

For further information or to obtain a copy of the sustainability report contact Tracy Stewart at AHPMA on 01483 418221.

END

Issued by: Tracy Stewart at AHPMA

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The Absorbent Hygiene Products Manufacturers Association (AHPMA) represents the UK disposable nappy, sanitary protection and continence care industries.

EDITOR' NOTES:

The Absorbent Hygiene Products Manufacturers Association (AHPMA) is the trade association that represents the key UK manufacturers of disposable nappies, feminine care and continence care products. Member companies are Accantia Health and Beauty Ltd, Arquest Ltd, Johnson & Johnson GmbH, Kimberly-Clark Europe Ltd, Multibrands Ltd, Ontex Retail UK Ltd, Playtex Products Inc, Procter & Gamble UK, SCA Hygiene Products UK Ltd., Toiletry Sales Ltd.

The Environment Agency Study was published on the 19th May and is a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of disposable nappies and cloth nappies. LCA is a scientific internationally recognised tool for measuring environmental impact. The LCA on nappies was conducted to ISO standards and was peer reviewed.

The LCA took four years to complete at a cost of £200k+

£2.6 Million has been allocated to The Waste Resource Action Programme (WRAP) Nappy Waste Minimisation Scheme. Further funding is to be allocated for 2006 – 2007

The sustainability report has been published by EDANA which is the European Association for the non-wovens industry, to which AHPMA is affiliated.