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Single Use Vapes and the Environment:

E-cigarettes are part of the drive towards a smoke-free society. But I have concerns about the rise in e-cigarette use among children, as well as the environmental impacts of disposable vapes.

As constituents may know, ministers are considering a ban on single-use vapes. But so far, nothing has been confirmed. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill proposes raising the age of sale for tobacco products, to prevent individuals born on or after 1 January 2009 from legally buying cigarettes in England. Wider measures in the Bill include restricting the sale and marketing of e-cigarettes to children.

The Government has promised to review the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations, with a view to introducing measures aimed at driving up levels of collections of waste electricals, including vapes, to ensure more of these products are properly recycled. Yet progress has been slow.

Research suggests at least 1.3 million vapes are thrown away each week across the UK. The incorrect disposal of these devices can have significant consequences for our environment.

In terms of public health, the concerning trend in young people vaping has been highlighted by Professor Chris Whitty, the chief medical officer, who described the promotion of vapes to children as "utterly unacceptable."

I want all children to be not just smoke-free but vape-free. That is why I supported an amendment to the Health and Care Bill (now Act), which would have given the Health Secretary powers to prohibit branding on e-cigarette packaging that is appealing to children. Disappointingly, ministers rejected the amendment and it was defeated.

It is important that we strike a delicate balance between supporting smokers in their journey towards a smoke-free future while safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our youth.

E-cigarettes are one measure that should sit within a broader public health strategy to help people live well for longer. But I fully support a ban on vapes being branded and advertised in a way that appeals to children. And I believe we should work collaboratively with local councils and the NHS to ensure e-cigarettes are being used as a stop smoking aide, rather than a new form of smoking.

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