BBC News - Assembly to debate proposal for 5p chew

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12 July 2012Last updated at 15:57 GMT Assembly to debate proposal for 5p chewing gum levy

A Welsh assembly member is calling for a 5p levy on chewing gum to help pay for the cost of cleaning up litter.

Conservative AM Darren Millar wants to introduce a private member's bill in the assembly.

His proposal comes after a compulsory charge of 5p was imposed on disposable shopping bags in Wales.

Manufacturer Wrigley said introducing a tax would unfairly punish the vast majority of people who throw chewing gum away responsibly.

Mr Millar won a ballot of AMs - the first step for a backbench member to introduce a piece of legislation.

The proposal will be debated in the Senedd and AMs will decide whether to let him introduce a bill.

Clwyd West AM Mr Millar says he has more work to do on how the levy would operate.

He says legislation would help alleviate a growing litter problem by adding 5p to the cost of a packet of chewing gum sold in shops in Wales.

Enforced by local councils, the proceeds would go towards publicity campaigns encouraging people not to litter. It would also help councils pay to clean up discarded chewing gum from the streets, Mr Millar says.

'Change behaviour'

"Chewing gum litter is a blight on our streets which is costing councils thousands to remove," he said.

"The introduction of a small levy on a packet of chewing gum can help to tackle this problem and change the behaviour of those who choose to spit their gum onto our streets.

"I very much hope that assembly members from all parties will allow this proposal to move forward to more detailed scrutiny later in the year."

Research commissioned by the Welsh government recently found the public supported a 5p compulsory charge on carrier bags and had changed their shopping habits since its introduction last October.

In 2010, MPs on the Commons' Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee said the UK government should consider applying a small "clean-up levy" to some products, including cigarettes and chewing gum.

In a statement, Wrigley said it was involved in number of anti-litter campaigns.

"The only effective and sustainable solution to littered gum is to encourage people to dispose of their used gum responsibly," it said.

"We believe these campaigns are a more effective way to address the issue rather than imposing a tax that would unfairly punish regular chewers, the vast majority of whom dispose of their gum responsibly."

A Keep Wales Tidy spokeswoman said: "Chewing gum litter is a big problem in Wales.

"The cost of removing it from our streets can be very expensive, it looks unsightly and has a negative impact on the environment so Keep Wales Tidy is pleased that the National Assembly is discussing it.

"The most effective approach towards tackling the issue is to change behaviour and Keep Wales Tidy continues to encourage people to dispose of chewing gum responsibly through its educational programmes and campaigns."

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