

28 May 2013



H.E. Mr Janez Potocnik
Member of the European Commission
DG Environment
B-1049 Brussels

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Dear Mr Potocnik,

Re: Resource efficiency and the use of secondary raw materials

About the ILA

The International Lead Association (ILA) is a membership body that supports companies involved in the mining, smelting, refining and recycling of lead. We represent the producers of about 3 million tonnes of lead and almost two thirds of lead production in the western world.

The role of lead in a closed loop economy

I have read your speech to the 3rd Annual European Raw Materials Conference, held in March, regarding resource efficiency and the use of secondary raw materials, with great interest as it makes many important and timely points on this issue.

The lead industry and its downstream users consider themselves to be at the forefront of the 'closed loop economy' that you referred to. Arguably lead has the highest recycling rate of any major commodity, at greater than 95% in the EU - a figure that has been achieved without any need for recycling subsidies.

It is also noticeable that lead plays an important role in many of the priority areas that are being focused on in the EU's new industrial policy, as well as in areas such as transportation, energy and construction.

The unique properties of lead have seen it develop into one of the most essential and sustainable substances for any future thriving green economy.

More than 90% of lead use is now in lead-acid batteries - a vital component in the one billion petrol and diesel vehicles worldwide. These batteries are also allowing significant vehicle CO₂ savings through "start-stop" and micro-hybrid technologies, which are at the forefront of developments in high performance hybrid electric vehicles, often in conjunction with other battery technologies. Indeed most electric vehicles require lead-based batteries to support on-board systems.

The EU is currently creating major opportunities for battery energy storage notably in the areas of sustainable mobility and renewable energy. In these areas lead-based batteries will help fulfil EU objectives for the reduction of CO₂ emissions, increased energy efficiency and the development of renewable energies.

It is also worth noting that lead-based batteries provide emergency back-up power to most of the world's IT and telecoms infrastructure, not to mention back-up power during emergency events, such as natural disasters.

Industry has also worked closely with regulators to ensure that risks for the environment and human health resulting from the substance are managed properly.

All these facts brought together should speak in favour of a sustained use of lead and lead-based batteries and for support from EU institutions. However, we believe that not enough consideration is being given to the vital contribution that the lead industry and downstream users can play in a sustainable and resource efficient Europe.

As an illustration of our concerns, the recent proposed REACH candidate listing for authorisation by the EU Commission of 21 lead compounds included four lead compounds (lead monoxide, lead tetroxide, pentalead tetraoxide sulphate, and tetralead trioxide sulphate) which are critical raw materials used in the manufacture of lead-acid batteries.

The ILA believes that placing these substances on the Candidate List for Authorisation may discourage investment in the European lead battery industry, which employs more than 20,000 workers and is a global leader in the development of lead-based battery technology.

In addition, overlap in legislation, as recognised by the Commission in its General Report on REACH, published in February 2013, notably between the REACH regulation and the End-of-Life Vehicles (ELV) Directive, creates uncertainty on the stability of the legislative framework for lead-based batteries. Their continued use may in the future need to be demonstrated both under the REACH Regulation and the ELV Directive every few years.

This uncertainty is also detrimental to investments in Europe's manufacturing base and adds to the above-mentioned concern on the addition of substances to the Candidate List. These issues have far-reaching implications both for our industries, but also possibly for the good implementation of EU policies for sustainable transportation and energy.

We would therefore very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you and Members of your Cabinet to further explain our concerns.

Meanwhile, we remain at your disposal for any additional information you may need on this subject.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A.M. Bush'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Dr Andy Bush
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