

3 November 2016

Ref: FOI2016/21699

Environmental Information Regulations: Polymer Bank notes

Thank you for your Environmental Information enquiry of 14 October 2016.

You asked for the following information:

"I would like to know the rationale for introducing plastic bank notes and the environmental considerations which were made in replacing paper notes with plastic notes. Are the plastic notes biodegradable and if so how long do they take to degrade? If not please explain why."

I can confirm that HM Treasury does hold some information within the scope of your request. However, all the information held is already in the public domain.

The rationale for introducing polymer (plastic) banknotes is in the public domain and can be found at the following link:

http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/banknotes/polymer/Pages/why_polymer.aspx

At this link you will also find the 'Life Cycle Assessment of paper and polymer notes report'. This report states that polymer banknotes are more environmentally friendly than their paper counterparts. Polymer notes can also be recycled when they reach the end of their life in circulation.

If you would like more information about these banknotes, the Bank of England, as the issuing authority for banknotes, should be able to provide you with more information. You can contact them at enquiries@bankofengland.co.uk.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us. Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.