



**Ascension Island Government**

## **Draft Policy on the Prohibition of Single-use Vapes in Ascension**

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## Background

1. Single-use vapes are disposable e-cigarettes that do not have rechargeable batteries, and cannot be recharged and/or have their relevant substance refilled to allow for repeated use. They are typically powered by lithium ion batteries.
2. There is limited capability for waste disposal in Ascension, with the majority of waste being incinerated or put in a landfill. There is no provision for safely recycling or processing the chemicals or batteries present in single-use vapes, and incorrect disposal and pose a significant fire risk.
3. Ascension is home to numerous endemic and endangered species of plant and wildlife. There is significant scientific evidence to suggest that the presence of lithium ion batteries can lead to leaching of the contamination from the contents, including the degrading batteries being exposed to the elements, likely to have an adverse impact on plants, wildlife, and the marine environment.

## Context

4. Single-use vapes are currently the subject of discussion in the UK, and their sale may be prohibited as early as July 2025. While this may have a knock-on effect of reducing availability of single use vapes in Ascension, supply lines to on island retailers from South Africa or the United States would still exist.

## Issue

5. Although it is a relatively recent subject, there is already a substantial number of studies about the environmental impacts of the use and disposal of single-use vapes. A 2023 systematic review of published research on this topic (Ngambo et al., 2023) identified several studies which listed environmental impacts of the disposal of e-cigarettes, such as lead leaching (Krause and Townsend, 2015), presence of oxidants and copper metals (Lerner et al., 2015), toxic volatile organic compounds (Lee et al., 2017) and other contaminants (Beutel et al., 2021).
6. Ascension is party to several international agreements that have a bearing on marine management. Target 11 of The Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) states that "*at least 10% of coastal and marine areas especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes*". The

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) lists, on its Appendix 1, Green and Hawksbill turtles, and places an obligation on Ascension to put in place "strict protection on them striving towards strictly protect the animal, conserving or restoring the places they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them".

7. These international agreements, together with the Ascension Island National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP), which presents threat analysis and proposed actions for the marine species and habitats, and is used as part of the MPA Management Plan, have to be taken into account when dealing with a potential threat to the MPA, such as single-use vapes.

## Principles and Objectives

8. The main principle being considered in this policy is preservation of wildlife, plants, and the marine environment in Ascension. This may be considered in the form of single-use plastic in the shell of the vapes, the chemicals in the vapes themselves entering the environment, and the increased risk of uncontrolled fires by these products being in landfill increasing the likelihood of air pollution.
9. The objective of this policy is to reduce the presence of harmful chemicals in Ascension. The simplest way of achieving this is prevent the regular use of single-use vapes in Ascension.

## Application of Policy

10. The most effective way of reducing the number of single-use vapes in Ascension is to prohibit their supply, whether by sale or not. Supply of single-use vapes will be made a criminal offence. By removing incentive for these products to be imported in wholesale amounts, the single-use nature of these products will result in their reduced presence in Ascension.
11. Other approaches, such as making single-use vapes illegal entirely, is considered to be disproportionate, and very difficult to enforce. Therefore, those which are already in a person's possession for their own use will not be unlawful.
12. A vape will be considered to be single-use if it cannot have its battery recharged, or have its vaping substance refilled.

## References

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