

MP pulls together debate on state of the industry

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A Westminster Hall debate on the packaging manufacturing industry has been tabled by MP Eric Illsley for next Tuesday 12 June at 9.30am.

Few politicians understand packaging, said Illsley, and he intends to use the formal debate in parliament to explore misconceptions about packaging manufacturers.

Illsley, who chairs the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Packaging Manufacturing Industry, expects environment minister Ben Bradshaw to take part in the one-and-a-half-hour session in Westminster Hall.

Packaging Federation chief executive Dick Searle has been consulted about the contents of Illsley's briefing, which Searle said will focus on examples of packaging considered to be excessive as well as the state of recycling facilities in the UK.

The debate follows a flurry of Early Day Motions – petitions to which MPs sign up – about packaging.

More than 60 MPs have signed a motion in support of the UK packaging industry, but 27 of those have also signed motions against excessive packaging.

Mr Illsley said this was a

direct contradiction and evidence that many MPs had little understanding of the issues these motions were intended to address.

But he added: "I'll give them the benefit of the doubt as they sign so many of these things they tend to forget they have signed one that contradicts the one they're signing now."

He said that Tuesday's debate would be a chance to look at concepts such as excess packaging in more depth.

"The point I want to get across is that we need some packaging and sometimes it is essential," he said.

"I hope to have a reasonable debate, but some people will want to turn up simply to bat on about excess packaging."

Searle said it was possible to support the industry and still call for appropriate packaging.

But he agreed the fact MPs had signed both pro- and anti-packaging statements "could be regarded as curious".

He said that having six separate motions on packaging – five condemning excessive packing – showed packaging was getting "a disproportionate amount of attention" compared with other industries.

"We're a soft target and we're visible," he said.