

CALL FOR A STRONG CIRCULAR ECONOMY BILL FOR SCOTLAND

Scottish Environment LINK

June 2019



Our climate and ecological emergencies are driven in part by what and how much we consume and what we throw away. We need to move rapidly to a more circular economy and we need a strong Circular Economy Bill which will set us firmly on a course in that direction.

The impact of plastic pollution on wildlife, seas and human health have hit the headlines, but the problem is much wider. One million species face extinction, according to a UN-backed [report](#). Consumption of natural resources has tripled since the 1970's and is set to further double by 2060 according to [recent research](#), and 80% of biodiversity loss is caused by resource extraction and processing. Pollution and waste blight communities; and there is a danger of economic disruption from the exhaustion of supplies of materials. What's more UN Environment [finds](#) extractive industries are responsible for half the world's carbon emissions and [carbon footprint data](#) shows that 84% of Scotland's carbon footprint is derived from emissions embedded in goods we consume.

The best way to reduce the quantity of natural resources that we consume, including minerals, timber, metals, is to make our economy more circular, where products are designed to last as long as possible, are easy to repair, and made out of materials that can be recycled. Such an economy should be regenerative, replenishing the natural systems which we are damaging through returning biological materials as composts to the soil and restoring and nurturing biodiversity.

Scotland's Circular Economy Strategy: [Making Things Last](#) has made a start, with valuable work in supporting innovative enterprises and investing in specific institutions. The Scottish Government is also banning some problematic products, such as plastic stemmed cotton buds; has introduced a levy to disincentivise the use of plastic bags, and is introducing a deposit return system for drinks containers.

However, despite this, our impact on the planet remains too large, so we urgently need more radical and systemic change - and there is public appetite for this. There are examples of best practice elsewhere in Europe to follow and the model of Extended Producer Responsibility, through which producers or vendors of products are made responsible for all of the environmental costs throughout their products' life-cycles, needs to be applied throughout the economy.

The SNP made a commitment in their 2016 manifesto to bring forward a Circular Economy and Zero Waste Bill in the current parliamentary term. We need to establish a shared vision, set ambitious targets and a framework for implementation and urge the Scottish Government to bring forward an ambitious bill to do this, which will galvanise action in all sectors of the economy. With the declaration of a Climate Emergency, Scottish Government has announced a review of all policy areas, which opens up the prospect of far-reaching ambitions underpinned by legislation as well as renewed vigour in using powers already available.

We suggest that the Bill includes the following:

1. Vision



For an economy where waste and pollution are designed out, products and materials are kept in use and natural systems are regenerated; and which provides fair and fulfilling livelihoods for all citizens.

2. Targets

In setting the targets, we should align with the aim of **One Planet Prosperity**, introduced by SEPA and adopted by the Scottish Government as the proposed vision of its Environment Strategy. We currently consume unsustainably, as if we had 3 planets available to produce the resources we use and absorb the wastes we produce, based on UK Ecological Footprint data.

At the Scottish level, we will have data available to measure our carbon and material footprints so we are proposing that targets be set for these; and that targets for ecological, water and land footprints should be considered when data become available.

- i) ***We need to set long term, interim and year on year reduction targets for carbon and material footprints to meet One Planet Prosperity, based on scientific advice.***

What should our long-term targets be?

Here we make some suggestions for ambitious targets based on three factors:

- The overall aim for One Planet Prosperity.
- Reductions in resource consumption will be needed to help meet climate emissions targets and globally it is necessary to hit net zero by 2050 in order to limit temperature increases to 1.5°C.
- Examples of best practice within the EU, for example the Netherlands' targets for 50% reduction in non-renewable resources by 2030 with the aim of 'achieving a circular economy by 2050'.

The carbon footprint covers greenhouse gas emissions from goods and services consumed in Scotland including those which are imported; as well as emissions directly produced by Scottish residents, such as from heating and transport. We already report on our carbon footprint periodically but have no targets associated with it.

Suggested target for carbon footprint: reduction to net zero by 2050 (note: this is different to the 2045 target for net zero production emissions)

Material footprint covers the raw materials used for all goods consumed in Scotland. It includes metals, fossil fuels, non-metallic minerals and biomass (for example food and timber). In the near future, there will be data available to measure basic flows of raw materials in Scotland.

Suggested target for metals, minerals and fossil fuels: 50% reduction by 2030 (following the Netherlands)

Target for biomass: to be developed. We need a target for biomass to ensure that increased demands for biomass (for example, the proposed substitute of timber for concrete and steel in construction) do not result in habitat destruction and biodiversity loss and to guide us towards One Planet Prosperity.

ii) Re-use targets

We need re-use targets to ensure that goods are made to be repaired and re-used where possible. As soon as a EU common methodology is adopted (expected 2019), targets for re-use should be set.

iii) Other targets to drive resource optimisation

We would expect the Resource Reduction Committee (see below) to advise on and set additional targets to optimise the use of resources as data become available. For example, to increase recycling rates for rare earth metals, to increase sharing of assets, to reduce the use of some agro-chemicals, to increase the proportion of green public procurement.

3. A Duty on the relevant ministers

A Duty on the relevant ministers to report annually on the progress towards these targets

4. A Resources Reduction Plan

A duty to produce a plan to meet the targets, updated every 5 years, similar to the Climate Change Plan. This plan would include the policies and other instruments needed to steer our economy to one that is more circular. For example, charges on single use items for which alternatives are available, pay as you throw schemes, levies to discourage the use of virgin materials. There needs to be a requirement for the plan to have outcomes, milestones and aligned budget resource; and for Ministers to report progress to parliament on an annual basis.

5. A Resources Reduction Committee

To establish a committee, including representatives from academia, NGOs, Local Authorities, community 're-use' sector, SEPA; to advise Government on how to meet the targets.

6. A duty on public bodies

A duty on public bodies to act in such a way as to contribute to the targets set by this bill.

7. Additional powers

To give the Scottish Government sufficient powers to introduce Extended Producer Responsibility obligations to additional product areas; and any other powers deemed necessary to transition to a more circular economy.

8. Measures to address specific materials

Certain materials are particularly problematic in the environment, such as plastics. We need a commitment to phase out all but the safest and most essential single-use plastics and plastics that are difficult to recycle.

Please see our briefing for more detail – [A Strong Circular Economy Bill for Scotland](#)

This call is supported by:



Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, Binn Group, Blythwood Care, Butterfly Conservation Scotland, Circular Edinburgh, Coastal Communities Network Scotland, Cairngorms Campaign, Changeworks, Common Weal, Construction Scotland Innovation Centre, CRNS - Community Resource Network Scotland, Eco-congregation, EAUC - the Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education, EcoIdeaM Ltd, Fidora, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Froglife Scotland, Green Alliance, IBioC – Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre, IEMA, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Marine Conservation Society, Nourish Scotland, Oxfam Scotland, Project Heather, Remade Network, Resource Futures, Ricardo Energy and Environment, SMaSH – The Scottish (Managed) Sustainable Health Network, Scottish Wild Land Group, Scottish Wildlife Trust, RSPB Scotland, Soilutions Ltd, Tearfund, Trees for Life, UNISON, WasteSwitch Ltd, Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland.

Next Steps

Scottish Environment LINK invites other organisations to support this Call - its broad principles and the high levels of ambition. We want to stimulate discussion about how to drive systemic change and what targets to set. If you would like to support the Call and be involved in further work please contact Phoebe Cochrane, Sustainable Economics Officer, Scottish Environment LINK phoebe@scotlink.org

Scottish Environment LINK

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland’s voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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