

A 20 minute guide to responding to the Scottish Government circular economy consultation (closes on 19th December)

Introduction

Thank you for taking time to respond to this Scottish Government consultation. This guide gives you some suggested answers, but please feel free to add your own ideas.

The Scottish Government's proposals are a good start, but don't go nearly far enough to realising a truly circular economy. We need to re-programme our economy to extract less from the planet, re-use what we've already taken and reduce our waste. This requires many changes – we need to:

- Design products that last a long time, are easy to repair and can be used repeatedly
- Make new products from the materials in the things we no longer use
- Share and make better use of things like cars, tools, toys
- Regenerate our damaged natural systems

In order for this to happen, we need producers to be responsible for the whole life cycle of their products, we need a planned approach not only to recycling, but also to re-use and sharing and we need to incentivise the use of used and recycled materials so that they loop back into the system. Importantly, we need reduction targets focussing on the amount of raw materials that we use to drive this change.

The consultation has 21 questions, but you can choose to answer as many or as few as you like. Every contribution to the consultation will help shape the Government's thinking and signal the demand for a circular economy across Scotland.

If you have any questions, please contact Phoebe Cochrane at phoebe@scotlink.org

The Consultation

Please copy this link –

<https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/circular-economy-proposals-for-legislation/>

into a new tab on your browser so that you have the consultation document open in a different window and click on 'begin consultation' at the bottom of the page



Go to Section 1. Reduce: tackling our throwaway culture.

1. Reduce: tackling our throwaway culture

There is some background text followed by the proposals followed by three questions:

1. Do you agree in principle that Scottish Ministers should have the power to set charges for environmentally harmful items, for example single-use disposable beverage cups?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

Q1 select YES

2. Do you agree with the proposal to prioritise introduction of charges for single-use disposable beverage cups?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

Q2 select YES

3. Are there any other items that these new powers for environmental charging should be applied to in the future?

Yes

No

Don't know

If yes, please specify.

Q3 select YES if you have ideas. Charges are good to encourage behaviour change and disincentivise single-use items which are hard to recycle and single-use items for which there are readily available re-useable alternatives. Can you think of other items which you would like to discourage through a charge? Take away food packaging is one idea. Banning single-use items is also an option, and you could suggest banning single-use beverage cups from sit-in cafes or other closed settings.

2. Re-use: encouraging use and re-use to prevent waste

There is some background text followed by the proposals and four questions:

4. To strengthen monitoring, measurement and reporting of waste across all sectors, do you agree with the principle that Scottish Ministers should have the power to require mandatory public reporting of:

I) business waste?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

II) business surplus?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

Q4 I and II select YES

5. Do you agree with the proposal to prioritise introduction of mandatory public reporting for businesses of:

I) food waste?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

II) food surplus?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

Q5 I and II select YES

6. Are there any other items, such as textiles and clothing, that mandatory reporting requirements on waste and surplus should be expanded to in the future?

Yes

No

Don't know

If yes, please specify.

Q6 select YES

In specifying other items, we suggest you include clothing and textiles (including carpets and other composite textiles) and any other items which you might know of which meet these criteria:

- a) surplus / waste is an issue;
- b) high environmental and/or social costs are associated with the items;
- c) good re-use potential for surplus / waste.

7. Do you have any suggestions on how to encourage the reuse and redistribution of unwanted surplus stock, such as clothing and textiles?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes, please specify.

Q7 select YES if you have suggestions. In a Circular Economy, surplus stock should be minimised and re-used wherever possible or recycled so it is fed back into the production loop. This needs to be incentivised and organised to move us away, once and for all, from business-as-usual supply chains reliant on cheap production and virgin raw materials. What do you think is needed to make sure unwanted surplus stock is reused and redistributed?

3. Recycle: maximising value of materials

There is some background text followed by the proposals and five questions:

8. Do you agree with the principle of enabling Scottish Ministers to place additional requirements on local authorities in order to increase rates and quality of household recycling?

- Yes
- No
- Neither agree nor disagree

If yes, what should these 'additional requirements' be?

Q8 select YES. You can make the point that any additional requirements need to be funded through producer fees such that producers are paying for the management of their products at the end of

their life. Please then add suggestions for how local authorities could improve recycling services. Collecting different materials separately is important for quality and you could include that as one suggestion.

9. Do you agree with the principle of greater consistency in household recycling collections in different local authority areas?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

For Q9, we suggest you answer YES

12. Are there any other measures that you consider Scottish Government should take to help accelerate the rate and quality of household recycling in Scotland, taking account of experience and approaches elsewhere and existing householder behaviours?

Yes

No

Don't know

If yes, please specify.

Q12 select YES. You could mention:

- Learning from Germany and Wales, where high recycling rates are achieved.
- Supporting the recycling industry as a whole so that it is viable and there is demand for the recycled materials.
- Deposit return systems achieve very high recycling rates and could be considered for other items beyond drinks containers.
- Extended Producer Responsibility schemes whereby producers are responsible for ensuring the re-use and recycling of their waste also incentivise eco-design and use of recyclable materials.
- Banning re-useable or recyclable waste from landfill and incineration.
- Better labelling including full material disclosure.

4. Improving enforcement

There is some background text followed by the proposals and three questions:

13. Do you agree that Scotland should have the power to seize vehicles suspected of waste crime, similar to the rest of the UK?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

For Q13, select YES

14. Do you agree Scottish Ministers should have powers to introduce a new fixed penalty regime for littering from vehicles?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

For Q14, select YES

15. Do you agree with the introduction of a new system that stipulates that the registered keeper of a vehicle is ultimately responsible for criminal offences such as littering from or in relation to their vehicle (for example by passengers or people using that vehicle at that time)?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

Q15 select YES

5. Assessing impact of bill proposals

18. Do you think that the proposals contained in this consultation are likely to have an impact on the environment? If so, which ones and how?

Please specify.

Q18. You could make the following points:

The proposals put forward are insufficient. More comprehensive proposals with overall consumption reduction targets and subsequent penalties for failure to meet them would have a greater positive impact on the environment.

With regard to the specific proposals put forward:

- Proposed charges should have a positive impact on the environment through reducing the use of single use beverage cups and an associated reduction in litter and waste. However,

the extent that it will result in an overall reduction in material and carbon footprints, depends on reusable alternatives being readily available and used many times. The impact of the charge will be enhanced if charges are accompanied by reusable cup schemes (ideally with a uniform cup). The impact also needs monitoring; and targets for reduction introduced.

- Reporting on surpluses would potentially have a positive environmental impact, but this would be enhanced if it was accompanied by other measures to encourage uptake of surplus stock and its use as a substitute for raw materials.
- Enhancing household recycling services should have a positive environmental impact through diverting waste from landfill and increasing the range and quality of recycled material. Impact would be further ensured with measures to incentivise recycled content in new goods (eg proposed UK plastics tax and similar taxes for other materials).
- Stronger enforcement should have positive environmental impact regarding reduced littering and pollution from end of life vehicles.

6. Proposals for secondary legislation

There is some background text followed by the proposals and three questions

19. Do you agree with the proposal that procurement strategies published by relevant public bodies should include consideration of activity which supports the circular economy and action on climate change?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

Q 19 select YES

20. Do you agree with the proposal to increase the minimum charge on single-use carrier bags from 5p to 10p?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

Q 20 select YES

21. Do you agree that the initial 5p minimum charge on single-use carrier bags has had a positive impact on the environment?

Yes

No

Neither agree nor disagree

Q 21. We suggest you answer YES or NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

There is insufficient data to show the overall environmental impact of the 5p carrier bag charge. The total number of plastic bags has fallen. However, the overall impact in terms of plastic consumption depends on the total weight of plastic bags, rather than the number, and the re-useable plastic bags are much heavier, containing much more plastic than the single-use bags.

In addition to an increase in the minimum charge for single-use carrier bags, we would like to see a ban on all single-use plastic carrier bags of all thicknesses, charge at least 10p on bags made from all other materials, and create a minimum standard for bags sold for re-use.

Conclusion

22. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make, relevant to the subject of this consultation, that you have not covered in your answers to other questions?

Please provide any comments.

Q 22. We suggest you highlight the lack of ambition in the Government's proposal and suggest some additional measures. Below are some of the points we will be making, but please add your own thoughts.

Although welcome, we do not consider that the proposals brought forward are sufficient. We have climate and nature emergencies and the Scottish Government wants to 'end our contribution to climate change'. 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. Consumption of natural resources has tripled since the 1970s and is set to further double by 2060 according to [research](#), and 80% of biodiversity loss is caused by resource extraction and processing. It is abundantly clear that we need to systematically reduce the impact from our production and consumption; and we need to bring in an ambitious plan of how to do this.

We feel that a Circular Economy Bill should set the framework to drive our economy to one that is more circular. As with climate change, the changes needed are many and varied; also akin to climate change, it is hard to imagine those changes occurring without the overall framework of legally binding targets and a coordinated, national plan.

Additionally, a key feature of a circular economy is that it is restorative, regenerating natural systems. The Circular Economy proposals do not include any measures for the agricultural and land use sectors.

We would like to see the following additions to the current proposals:

1. Set ambitious targets to reduce consumption

In order to drive a change in our system, so that we extract less and reduce our pollution, the Scottish Government should set targets to reduce our material footprint (the raw materials used for all goods used and consumed in Scotland) and our carbon footprint (the greenhouse gas emissions embedded in goods used and consumed in Scotland). We suggest the following targets:

- **Scotland's carbon footprint to reach net zero by 2050.**

- **Reduce key elements of our material footprint – metals, minerals and fossil fuel feedstocks – by 50% by 2030.**

Additional targets will be needed to make sure that all sectors play their part and we need re-use targets to ensure that products are re-used where possible.

2. Place a duty on Scottish Ministers to report annually on Scotland’s progress towards these targets

3. Publish a Resources Reduction Plan

The Plan, updated every 5 years, must set out how to meet the targets, with outcomes, milestones and aligned budget resource; and Ministers must report progress to parliament on an annual basis. This mirrors the Scottish Government’s approach to meeting and reporting on climate change targets and has been shown to be successful over the past decade.

A Resources Reduction Plan would look at different sectors, such as textiles, construction, electrical goods; and propose the policies needed to make our economy less wasteful and more sustainable. A cross-sectoral Resources Reduction Committee should be able to provide expert advice to the Scottish Government when drafting the plan.

4. Regenerate our natural systems.

The Circular Economy can also deliver a thriving environment but this important aspect is absent from the current proposals. We would like to see: an inclusion on the face of the bill that a key feature of a circular economy is that it is restorative, regenerating natural systems; and a commitment to a National Soils plan, so that we look after our soils; and nutrient budgeting so that we stop using too much fertiliser.

5. Increase manufacturers’ responsibilities.

Scottish Government needs powers to introduce (and improve existing) Extended Producer Responsibility obligations, whereby manufacturers must cover the costs of recycling and recovering their products for reuse, to additional items such as clothing and textiles. Powers are also needed to introduce Deposit Return Systems to additional product areas, such as mobile phones and tablets.

6. Focus on hiring, sharing and repairing in public procurement.

Our government and public bodies must procure goods in a way that contributes to the Circular Economy. We believe the bill should set a requirement for the public sector to report on ‘circular spending’ – where choices have been made to hire, share, repair or purchase refurbished products rather than procuring new ones. This circular spending should be increased year on year.

7. Establish local share and reuse hubs

As well as being responsible for delivering a coordinated approach to recycling collection, local authorities (or another public agency) should be tasked with and given sufficient resources to establish local sharing and re-use hubs. All local recycling centres should have a collection point for goods that could be reused and become a source of items that can be repaired or reused.