

# CALL FOR A STRONG CIRCULAR ECONOMY BILL FOR SCOTLAND

Scottish Environment LINK  
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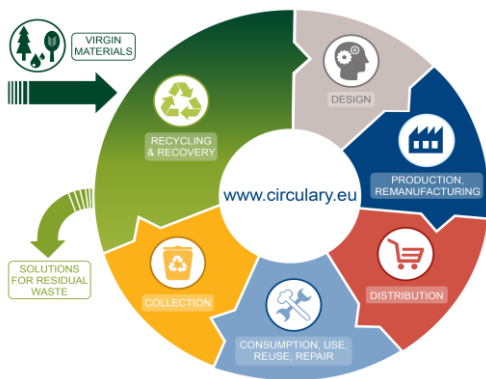
**The ways in which goods are made and used is driving our climate and ecological emergencies. We must move more rapidly to a circular economy in which our use of virgin raw materials is reduced, and Scotland needs a strong circular economy bill to set us firmly on a course in that direction.**

[Research](#) shows global consumption of natural resources has tripled since the 1970s and is set to further double by 2060, and 90% of biodiversity loss is caused by resource extraction and processing. [Material flow accounts](#) for Scotland, published in 2021, show our material footprint to be more than double sustainable levels and [carbon footprint data](#) shows that 82% of Scotland's carbon footprint is derived from emissions embedded in goods we consume. Addressing the quantity of raw materials used in our economy is therefore key in meeting climate and biodiversity goals.

The best way to reduce the quantity of raw materials that we use is to make our economy more circular, with repairable products designed to last as long as possible; made of materials that can be safely reused or recycled. Such an economy should be regenerative, replenishing natural systems through returning biological materials as composts to the soil and restoring and nurturing biodiversity. Scotland has a Circular Economy Strategy, [Making Things Last](#), and there has been some valuable work, for example, in supporting innovative enterprises and banning some [single use plastics](#). It is encouraging to see circular economy principles increasingly embedded in other policy areas such as the draft [National Planning Framework](#). However, overall progress in converting the high-level commitments into on-the-ground reality has been slow with, for example, missed [household recycling targets](#).

Our climate and nature emergencies demand systemic change across our economy to really address the impact from the way we make and use products. Such systemic change needs to be driven by targets to focus minds - in all areas of the economy – on reducing our use of raw materials. In the same way that our climate change targets are driving policy to decarbonise energy and heat production, a material footprint target could drive policy to 'circularise' our economy. The Scottish Government has committed to bring forward a Circular Economy Bill in the current parliamentary term. This bill must establish a shared vision, set ambitious targets and a framework for implementation. We urge the Scottish Government to bring forward a bold bill to do this, which will galvanise action in all sectors of the economy.

## We suggest that the Bill includes the following:



### 1. Vision

The Bill must include a vision for an economy in which waste and pollution are designed out, products and materials are kept in use and natural systems are regenerated; and which embeds the polluter pays principle and provides fair and fulfilling livelihoods for all citizens.

### 2. Targets

#### a. Headline target: Material footprint.

**The Bill must require annual publication of Scotland's material footprint and set long term, interim and year on year reduction targets**, based on scientific advice. Scotland's 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 timber. Scotland must aim for sustainable levels of material use, estimated at about 8 tonnes per capita per year. We suggest an interim target for metals, minerals and fossil fuels of 50% reduction by 2030 (following the [Netherlands](#)) with a target for biomass to be developed to ensure that increased demands for biomass do not result in habitat destruction and biodiversity loss.

#### b. Other targets

To drive action in specific areas or address particular materials, other targets are needed. In general, these would be part of the Circular Economy Plan (see below) but two in particular should be on the face of the bill. First, we need a re-use target to ensure that goods are made to be repaired and re-used where possible. Second, Scotland's existing food waste target of 33% by 2025 should be put in legislation and extended to 50% by 2030.

### 3. A Duty on the relevant ministers

The Bill must include a duty on the relevant ministers to report annually on Scotland's material footprint and progress towards headline targets

### 4. A Circular Economy Plan

The Bill must include a duty to produce a plan, updated every 5 years. The Plan would map out how to **reduce our material footprint**, how to **address problematic materials and chemicals** and **obligations on different sectors**. This Plan would include the policies and other instruments needed to steer our economy to one that is more circular. For example: take-back obligations, targets for cascaded use of critical metals and recycling of wind turbine blades, requirements for recycled content. Policy requirements are many and varied – please see our [briefing](#). The Plan should include outcomes, milestones and aligned budget resources; and Ministers should report progress to Parliament on an annual basis.

### 5. A Circular Economy Committee

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

### 6. A duty on public bodies

The Bill must include a duty on public bodies to act in such a way as to contribute to the targets set by this bill. All funding, investment, public procurement, and policies and plans should be scrutinised against circular economy principles and material impacts, and opportunities sought to reduce such impacts.

## 7. Additional powers

The Bill must give the Scottish Government sufficient powers deemed necessary to transition to a more circular economy, for example, the powers to:

- Ban single-use products where practical reusable alternatives exist.
- Introduce charges on environmentally harmful items.
- Introduce deposit schemes (for products beyond drink containers).
- Require producers to take back end-of-life products.
- Introduce mandatory public reporting on surplus stock and waste including supply chain waste for retailers including food services.
- Ban the destruction/landfilling/incineration of surplus stock.
- Enable local authorities to introduce 'pay-as-you-throw'.
- Mandate the household recycling charter and the separate collection of plastic waste, and a re-use charter.
- Ensure that locally-appropriate food waste collection is available throughout Scotland.

## 8. Secondary legislation

The Bill should introduce powers and/or duties for Ministers to bring forward secondary legislation on above areas to speed up delivery and a duty to require action in areas where primary powers already exist, including:

- Introduction of a reparability index.
- Banning of single use beverage cups and food containers from closed loop settings, plastic wet wipes and other single use plastics where reusable alternatives exist.
- Requirements for recycled content.
- Requirements for transparent smart labelling which includes material and chemical content for all products.

## 9. Measures to address problematic materials and chemicals

Certain materials are particularly harmful in the environment. The Bill must include a commitment to phase out harmful chemicals, all but the essential single-use plastics (avoiding direct substitution with other single-use materials), and plastics and composites that are difficult to recycle. Critical metals like lithium and neodymium are also problematic due to the forecast demand. A commitment to recover and recycle such materials is needed.

## 10. A restorative economy

Restoring natural systems is a key part of a circular economy. The Bill must include a commitment to: nutrient budgeting for phosphorus and carbon, as well as the planned work on nitrogen; a National Soils Plan with ambitious targets to increase soil carbon and prevent soil erosion; and the appointment of a National Soils Officer in Scottish Government.

Many of the actions suggested for this CE Bill might affect the market in goods and services in Scotland, and thus could be subject to consideration under the UK Internal Market Act 2020. The Scottish Government, at the time, expressed concern about that legislation, [shared by NGOs](#), about its potential to prevent a "race to the top" in environmental regulations. With environmental protection being a devolved competence, the Scottish Government should be bold and propose an environmentally ambitious approach. Neither the pre-EU 'internal market' in the UK nor the EU's single market prevent local administrations pursuing environmental or other regulations within their competence – and the UK Government sought to reassure stakeholders that environmental regulation in the public interest was compatible with a new internal market approach. The Scottish Government should, therefore, propose what is most appropriate in the interests of Scotland's environment, and the delivery of a circular economy.

**Without an overarching approach in legislation to drive action across our economy, our transition to a circular economy will continue to be slow, piecemeal and accompanied by unsustainable levels of raw material consumption and related carbon emissions and biodiversity loss. The many individual policy measures needed will flow from the Circular Economy Plans, further examples in our [briefing](#).**

## This call is supported by:



Circular Communities, Common Weal, Ricardo Energy and Environment, Oxfam, Balfour Beattie Construction, IBioC, WEALL, Green Alliance, RMAS, EAUC, Changeworks, Circular Edinburgh, ACS Clothing, APRS, North East Mountain Trust, Froglife, Soil Association, Scottish Council for National Parks (SCNP), RSPB, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Bat Conservation Trust, Nourish Scotland, Scottish Seabird Centre, SWLG, Scottish Countryside Rangers Association, Nature Foundation, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Buglife, Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group, Cairngorms Campaign, Scottish Badgers, Marine Conservation Society, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, The Verdancy Group, Fidra.

### 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. If you would like to support the Call and be involved in further work, please contact Phoebe Cochrane, Scottish Environment LINK [phoebe@scotlink.org](mailto:phoebe@scotlink.org)

### Scottish Environment LINK

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 40 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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