

# Response to the Scottish Government's Circular Economy: Proposals for Legislation

## Submission from the Scottish Youth Parliament December 2018



### Introduction

The Scottish Youth Parliament welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's circular economy proposals for legislation consultation (hereinafter referred to as 'the consultation'). SYP wishes to respond to this public consultation as part of its *Pack it up, Pack it in* national campaign. Please see page 2 for more information about this campaign.

The findings and recommendations from the *Pack it up, Pack it in* [report](#) form the basis of our response to this consultation. Although we don't have specific answers to the questions posed in this consultation, our response outlines young people's views on reducing litter and single-use packaging, and increasing recycling in Scotland. Our recommendations are outlined on page 3.

Our key findings (pages 4-7) are structured around the following themes outlined in the *Developing Scotland's circular economy: Proposals for Legislation* consultation paper:

1. **Reduce:** tackling our throwaway culture.
2. **Reuse:** encouraging use and reuse to prevent waste.
3. **Recycle:** maximising value of materials.

### The Scottish Youth Parliament

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the basis for the Scottish Youth Parliament's (SYP's) vision, mission and values. In particular, SYP embodies Article 12 of the UNCRC, which states that young people have the right to express their views freely and have their opinions listened to in all matters affecting them. As a completely youth-led charity, the words and sentiment of Article 12 have profound importance for our work.

### Our Vision

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) is the democratic voice of Scotland's young people. Our vision for Scotland is of a nation that actively listens to and values the meaningful participation of its young people. Our goal is to make this vision a reality, in order to ensure young people in Scotland grow up loved, safe and respected, and able to realise their full potential.

### Our Mission

SYP is a rights-based charity, with members supported by all of Scotland's 32 local authorities and 11 National Voluntary Organisations.

SYP's mission is to provide a national platform for young people to discuss the issues that are important to them, and campaign for changes to the nation that they live in. We support our members in their work by training them, supporting their personal development, and empowering them, using a youth work ethos.

Our democratically elected members listen to and recognise the issues that are most important to young people in every community across the country and ensure that decision-makers listen to their voices.

## Our Values

- **Democracy** - We are youth-led and accountable to young people aged 14 to 25. Our democratic structure and the scale of our engagement across Scotland gives us a mandate that sets us apart from other organisations.
- **Rights** - We are a rights-based organisation. We are passionate about making young people aware of their rights, and ensuring that local and national governments uphold their rights.
- **Inclusion and Diversity** - We are committed to being truly inclusive and work tirelessly to ensure policymakers and politicians hear the voices of young people from every community and background in Scotland.
- **Political Impartiality** - We are independent from all political parties. By working with all stakeholders, groups, and individuals who share our values, we deliver the policies that are most important to young people.

### Contact us:

Rosy Burgess  
Events and Campaigns Officer  
[rosy.b@syp.org.uk](mailto:rosy.b@syp.org.uk)  
0131 557 0452

### Visit us:

On our website: [www.syp.org.uk](http://www.syp.org.uk)  
On Twitter: [@OfficialSYP](https://twitter.com/OfficialSYP)

## SYP's *Pack it up, Pack it in* campaign

The *Pack it up, Pack it in* campaign was selected by the SYP membership in June 2019, after consulting with over 10,200 young people. It will run from September 2019 until October 2020.

*Pack it up, Pack it in* concentrates on **reducing pollution levels** which contribute to climate change. The campaign particularly focuses on reducing single-use packaging and waste, and improving recycling in Scotland.



The overarching aim of this campaign is:

**‘To empower young people to speak out and take action to reduce pollution levels in Scotland.’**

To achieve this aim, SYP will:

- Identify young people’s views on single-use packaging, waste, and recycling in Scotland.
- Make recommendations and call for the changes young people want to see in relation to single-use packaging, waste and recycling in Scotland.
- Take action to reduce the single-use packaging and waste, and to improve recycling in Scotland.

As part of this campaign, SYP carried out a Scotland-wide consultation in late 2019. The resulting *Pack it up, Pack it in* campaign [report](#) launched on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019. This report outlines young people’s views and experiences of litter, single-use packaging, and recycling in Scotland, and makes eight recommendations to reduce pollution levels in Scotland.

<p><b>Age</b></p> <p>12-14: 46.0%</p> <p>15-17: 38.6%</p> <p>18-20: 7.0%</p> <p>21-23: 2.5%</p> <p>24-26: 2.9%</p> <p>No response: 3.1%</p> <p><b>Gender</b></p> <p>Male: 39.5%</p> <p>Female: 53.8%</p> <p>Non-binary identity: 2.0%</p> <p>I prefer to use my own term: 1.2%</p> <p>Prefer not to say: 1.3%</p> <p>No response: 2.3%</p>	<p><b>Current education status</b></p> <p>School: 81.8%</p> <p>College: 3.0%</p> <p>University: 6.4%</p> <p>Apprenticeship: 0.9%</p> <p>Other training: 0.4%</p> <p>None of these: 5.0%</p> <p>No response: 2.5%</p> <p><b>Regions (1,670 respondents)</b></p> <p>Glasgow and Central Scotland: 22.5%</p> <p>Highlands and Islands: 4.7%</p> <p>Lothian: 7.7%</p> <p>Mid Scotland and Fife: 5.7%</p> <p>North East Scotland: 5.0%</p> <p>South Scotland: 41.1%</p> <p>West Scotland: 13.3%</p>
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In total, 2,051 young people took part in SYP's *Pack it up, Pack it in* consultation. Responses were received from every Local Authority in Scotland, and from the eleven national voluntary organisations represented within SYP. The respondent profile is shown in figure 1.

*Figure 1: Pack it up, Pack it in* respondents profile.

## Our Recommendations

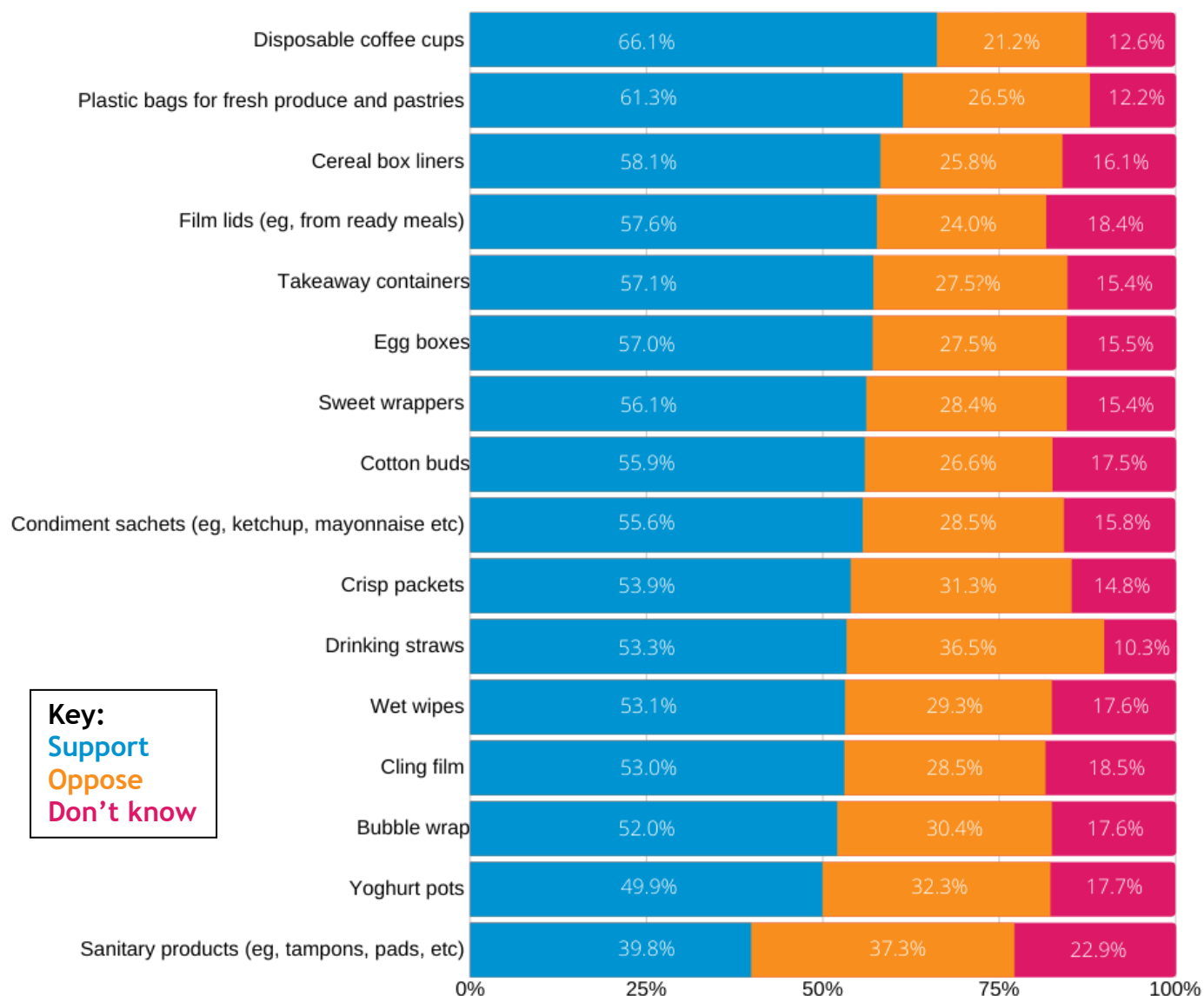
Based on the findings from the Scottish Youth Parliament's [Pack it up, Pack it in report](#), our recommendations are:

- **All young people in Scotland should receive improved practical environmental awareness education, and be empowered to take action to live more sustainably.** To help achieve this, the Scottish Government and Education Scotland should take a human rights based approach when implementing the 'Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Action Plan', by meaningfully including children and young people in the design and delivery of LfS programmes. (*Recommendation 3, Pack it up, Pack it in report, launched 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019*).
- **The Scottish Government should carry out a full review of how to reduce the use of plastic,** with consideration of a full or partial ban for certain products in Scotland. Further research should also be carried out to explore the reasons why people may support or oppose a ban on products being made out of plastic. (*Recommendation 4, Pack it up, Pack it in report, launched 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019*).
- **Shops and manufacturers, including online and offline retailers, should take steps to improve the recyclability and reusability of their packaging, and to minimise the amount of excess packaging.** (*Recommendation 5, Pack it up, Pack it in report, launched 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019*).
- **Retailers and the food industry should ensure that reusable packaging is affordable, more readily available, and easy to use, to reduce the reliance on single-use packaging and plastic items.** (*Recommendation 6, Pack it up, Pack it in report, launched 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019*).
- **Local Authorities and the Scottish Government should do more to raise awareness amongst young people to help them understand what can be recycled, and when recycling is collected, in their communities.** (*Recommendation 7, Pack it up, Pack it in report, launched 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019*).
- **In order to improve recycling and encourage more people to recycle, there should be more recycling bins in public places, including in schools, colleges, and universities.** (*Recommendation 8, Pack it up, Pack it in report, launched 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019*).

# 1. Reduce: tackling our throwaway culture

The Scottish Youth Parliament welcomes the Scottish Government’s intention to consult on a proposed legislative approach to ban or restrict the sale of plastic items outlined in the EU’s Single-use Plastics Directive by 2021 (as discussed in the ‘current and future activity’ section of the consultation paper). The second section of SYP’s *Pack it up, Pack it in* report discusses young people’s views on single-use plastic packaging and other items which young people feel are damaging to the environment. These findings can be found on pages 11-13 of the [report](#).

Young people were given a list of sixteen packaging items which commonly contain plastic, and asked them to tick whether they support or oppose a ban on each item being made out of plastic (see figure 2). Overall, the majority of respondents supported a ban on all of the items listed being made out of plastic, with the exception of yoghurt pots (49.9% support) and sanitary products (39.8% support).



**Figure 2:** responses to the question ‘Would you support or oppose a ban on each of the following products being made out of plastic?’

Young people were also asked if there are any other packaging products they feel are damaging to the environment. Nearly three quarters (71.3%) of responses related to plastic products, with over one tenth (12.8%) saying all plastic is damaging. Other plastic items include plastic bottles (27.4%); plastic food containers such as microwave meal and dried food packaging, and plastic bags for fruit and vegetables (13.3%); plastic bags (11.5%); plastic rings and wrapping on multipack cans (9.6%); plastic straws (7.0%); and takeaway cups, lids, and other packaging

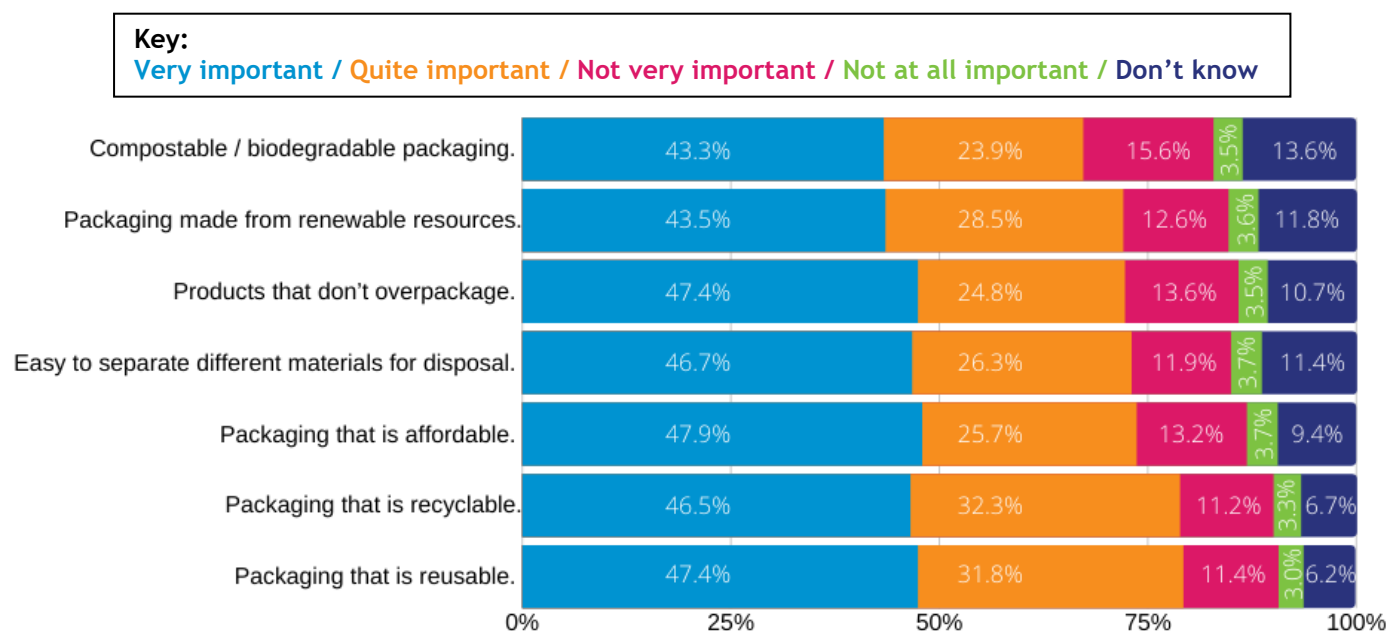
(6.9%). Non-plastic items, including cans, paper, mixed-material packaging, and cardboard, were also mentioned, although to a much smaller extent.

Although young people in Scotland recognise the harmful environmental effects of plastic and other single-use packaging, the responses do not show clear evidence to support a full ban on ALL items being made out of plastic.

## 2. Reuse: encouraging use and reuse to prevent waste

The second section of SYP’s *Pack it up, Pack it in* report also explores the importance of different features of packaging to young people, and concludes by discussing what would encourage young people to use environmentally-friendly alternatives. These findings can be found on pages 11-13 of the [report](#).

SYP’s *Pack it up, Pack it in* consultation gave respondents a list of seven different packaging features, and asked them to identify how important each feature is. Overall, when it comes to day-to-day items, packaging that is recyclable and packaging that is reusable rank as most important to young people, followed by packaging that is affordable. Compostable or biodegradable packaging is least important. These results are shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Response to the question ‘When it comes to day-to-day items, how important are each of the following to you?’

Young people were also asked to explain what would encourage them to use environmentally friendly alternatives more often. Whilst just over one tenth (10.9%) of respondents said the environmental benefits of using environmentally friendly alternatives would encourage them to use these items more often, the vast majority said they would use alternatives more often if they were cheaper or free (24.2%); if they were more readily available and visible in shops and eating establishments (19.5%); or if it was easier to use them, for example, if more establishments encouraged their use, if there were more water refill stations, or if there was somewhere to wash the items between uses (12.4%). A smaller number of respondents said they would be encouraged to use environmentally friendly alternatives if there were incentives such as discounts or rewards (9.8%); if ‘un-friendly’ products were banned (6.5%); or if there was a fine or other penalty for not using reusable packaging (3.1%).

### 3. Recycle: maximising value of materials

The Scottish Youth Parliament welcomes the Scottish Government's proposal to strengthen Scotland's approach to household recycling collection services. Although we do not have specific responses to the consultation questions, this section discusses the importance of recycling to young people, how much young people recycle, and young people's awareness of which items can currently be recycled in areas across Scotland. It concludes by summarising what would encourage young people to start recycling, or to recycle more. These findings are outlined in the third section of SYP's *Pack it up, Pack it in* [report](#) (pages 14-16).

Respondents were given a list of five groups and asked to rank each group in order of responsibility for reducing the amount of litter in Scotland, from 1 (most responsible) to 5 (least responsible). Responses were collated and analysed to identify the overall ranking of each group. Individuals were ranked as most responsible for reducing the amount of litter by over half of the respondents (56.5%). Local Councils were ranked as second-most responsible, followed by the Scottish Government third, and manufacturers fourth. Shops were ranked as least responsible for reducing the amount of litter in Scotland.

Over three quarters (84.7%) of *Pack it up, Pack it in* survey respondents said recycling is very important or quite important to them. Over nine in ten (92.5%) young people recycle at least sometimes. Respondents who said they recycle at least sometimes were asked to pick up to three things from a list of thirteen options that motivate them to recycle. Of those who said they recycle at least sometimes, over two thirds (70.2%) said they are motivated to recycle because it is good for the environment. Nearly half (47.0%) are motivated to recycle because it reduces the amount of litter going to landfill or to be incinerated; and one third (36.8%) said they recycle because it is the right thing to do.

Young people were asked to identify what can be recycled in their area from a list of eleven items. Generally, respondents were aware that more commonly-recycled items can be recycled in their area. However, there was less awareness of whether or not items such as drinks cartons, clothes, plastic bags, small electrical items, or batteries can be recycled in their area. The results are shown in Figure 4.

Young people were then asked to identify whether they already knew this information, or whether they looked it up in order to answer the question. Whilst the majority said they already knew, a small number said they did not and had found it difficult to find the answer. Some respondents felt information is directed at homeowners and is therefore not accessible to young people. This suggests there is an issue relating to awareness and information about what can and can't be recycled across Scotland.



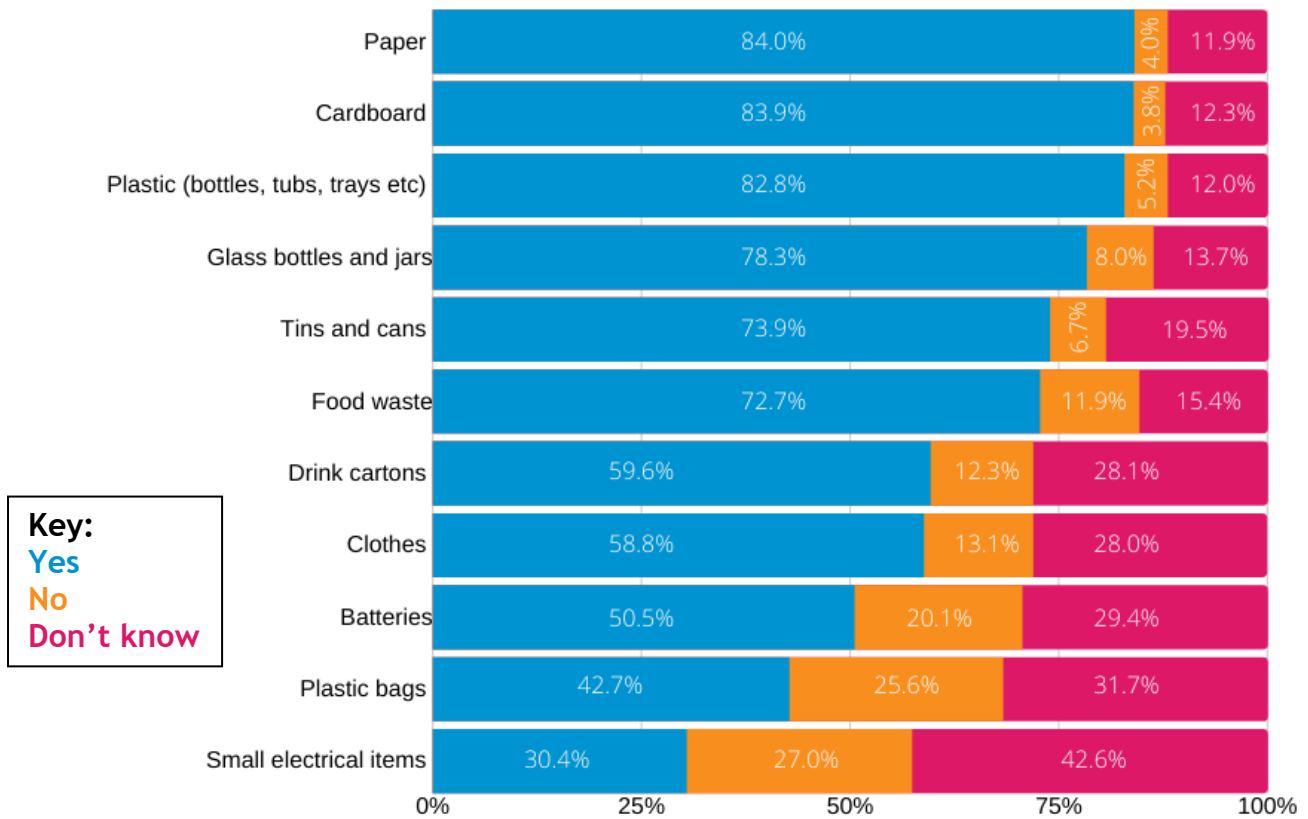


Figure 4: Response to the question ‘Which of these items can currently be recycled in your area?’

Finally, survey respondents were asked to select up to three things, from a list of fifteen options, which would encourage them to start recycling or to recycle more. Over half would be encouraged to recycle if there were more recycling bins in public places (56.1%), or in schools, colleges, and universities (36.8%). One fifth (20.0%) would be encouraged to recycle if they had better or more information about what can be recycled, whereas a much smaller number would like better or more information about the benefits of recycling (11.4%), or about what happens to recycled materials. A smaller number of respondents said they would be encouraged to recycle if there were charges for not recycling (17.4%), or if there were incentives to recycle (17.1%).