

Response to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform's Green Recovery: Call for Views

Submission from the Scottish Youth Parliament

August 2020



The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Environment, Climate Change, and Land Reform's 'Green Recovery: Call for Views'. More information about the Scottish Youth Parliament, and our current *Pack it up, Pack it in* campaign is outlined on page five.

Q1: Do the principles of sustainable development, and those for a resilient recovery, as proposed by the UK Committee on Climate Change, provide a comprehensive framework for guiding an effective green recovery in Scotland?

A focus group was carried out with seven members of SYP's Conveners Group to discuss this inquiry. A further three young people responded to the questions in writing. Overall, the majority of young people felt the principles provide a comprehensive framework. However, they did raise a number of concerns, as outlined below:

- **"Fairness is open to interpretation."** - The young people involved in these discussions were concerned there is a risk that fairness could be undermined by the other principles, and that effort should be made to avoid this. One young person said "fairness must underpin the entire recovery, ensure that no one is given a pass."
- **"There is no 'one size fits all' approach."** - The group felt efforts should be made to ensure no area is disproportionately affected, and that every area is able to move towards a green recovery in a way that best suits the needs of the communities within that area.
- **"It's not something we're all talking about."** - In order to engage individuals and industries in a green recovery, the group felt more effort would be needed to raise awareness of the principles in a way that makes change feel accessible. Further, the group felt that the focus should be on the importance of long-term behaviour change, rather than a short-term approach in response to the pandemic.
- **"Changes need to be specific and targeted."** - While the group felt the principles are comprehensive, they were concerned that any changes need to be specific, clear, and targeted.

Q2: What are the key barriers to delivering a green recovery (within your sector and / or community)?

A focus group was carried out with seven members of SYP's Conveners Group to discuss this inquiry. A further three young people responded to the questions in writing. The key barriers highlighted in these responses were:

"Young people must be involved every step of the way." - The young people involved in this discussion agreed that a key barrier to delivering a green recovery is the lack of engagement with young people. Some of the MSYPs feel frustrated that decision-makers don't always appear to be listening to young people's views, while others felt that engagement with young people is not always meaningful or inclusive. One participant said "the inclusion of young people cannot be tokenistic or limited to contributions to small change. Young people should also be included in the more radical measures being taken, and their voices should be heard on this at every level."

"Going green can be more costly" - The group highlighted cost as one of the main barriers to a green recovery, both for individuals and for local authorities. For example, in response to our *Pack it up, Pack it in* campaign consultation, one quarter of young people told us they would be encouraged to use more environmentally friendly packaging, such as reusable cups and bottles, if it was cheaper or free. The high costs of reusable packaging (for example) can be prohibitive, particularly if reusable alternatives are not readily available. Similarly, our *All Aboard* campaign [report](#) highlighted that the cost of using public

transport is too high, particularly if young people only earn minimum wage or don't live close to the places they need or want to visit. In relation to local authorities, the young people involved in the focus group recognised that even before the pandemic, many local authorities were making budget cuts. These young people expressed concern that "cash strapped local authorities will focus on money saving over green recovery."

"Convincing people the simple changes are worth saving the planet." - The group identified the challenges of changing individual and collective attitudes and behaviours as a major challenge. They felt some people perceive environmental changes to be 'inconvenient', or too difficult. For example, they identified that young people in rural areas may face greater barriers due to poorer physical and digital connectivity, a lack of access to public transport, and greater reliance on cars because active travel is not a safe or feasible option. Likewise, they highlighted that with the reopening of businesses, particularly the hospitality sector, there has been an increase in litter and single-use packaging waste, and significantly fewer takeaway businesses are allowing the use of reusable alternatives (such as drinks cups).

"It's a complex issue, but does not need to be explained in a complicated way" - For many young people, the language used to discuss environmental issues is inaccessible and overcomplicated. Similarly, the use of scientific and economic jargon can be off-putting, and inhibits young people from meaningfully participating in discussion and decision-making around these issues. The MSYPs involved in the focus group felt that **more effort should be made to use language that is accessible, and to explain complicated information more clearly.** They also felt a **whole-system approach should be taken, to ensure everyone is able to participate and contribute to a green recovery.**

"Ensuring geographical and community fairness in a green recovery is important." - The young people involved in the focus group were particularly concerned that there may be inequity in the approaches taken to achieve a green recovery across the country. In particular, they felt it is important that "all areas are allowed to excel, rather than favouring either rural or urban areas, for example". They were also concerned that green investment should be shared equitably between rural and urban areas. Furthermore, they highlighted the challenges of engagement with seldom heard groups, and particularly with those in communities who may be at greater risk of poverty or isolation as a result of new measures to introduce a green recovery.

Q3: What key policies, actions and immediate priorities are needed to deliver a green recovery (within your sector and / or community)?

It is essential that action is taken to ensure young people are not unfairly disadvantaged by steps to deliver a green recovery.

Young People's Rights

It is clear that Scotland's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the rights of children and young people. Whilst we acknowledge that decisions had to be made quickly, and for the safety of the country's residents, it is essential that **thorough Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments are carried out for all law and policy that affects Scotland's young people.** We would encourage the Committee to review the 'Independent Children's Rights Impact Assessment on the Response to COVID-19 in Scotland', published by the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland in July 2020 (available at <https://bit.ly/2X3lUYu>) and to commit to taking a child and young person rights based approach to recovery.

In line with Scotland's commitment to uphold young people's rights, it is essential that young people are actively consulted, engaged, and involved in any actions taken to deliver a green recovery.

Education is essential to ensure Scotland's young people are informed and confident to make decisions that will affect their own lives and those of others. The Scottish Youth Parliament has two relevant policy recommendations:

1. 'The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that the Climate Change Act Key Household Climate Change Behaviours should be taught about in school, such as in Personal, Social and Health Education and Home Economics, to ensure young people understand their relevance and benefits.' (Recommendation from [SYP Policy](#)) This recommendation is particularly relevant at this time, as education establishments, staff, and young people are adapting to a new way of working. There is

an opportunity to encourage and empower establishments and individuals to take a more environmentally friendly approach as part of the changes implemented.

2. '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 from SYP's *Pack it up, Pack it in* [report](#)).

Poverty

'Poverty and income inequality should be tackled, and action should be taken to support those living in poverty.' (Recommendation from [SYP Policy](#)) Throughout the pandemic, it has become clear that the impact of lockdown, and related decisions, have had a greater impact on young people who were most at risk, including those living in, and at risk of, poverty. **It is essential that any actions to implement a green recovery will not have a further detrimental impact on the lives of these young people.**

The COVID-19 recovery period offers an opportunity for Scotland to review how we address poverty and income inequality in a green and just way. The Scottish Youth Parliament has a number of relevant policy recommendations, including:

1. 'The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that all citizens should be provided with a guaranteed minimum of income support to ensure that no individual faces financial hardship; and therefore supports the principles of Universal Basic Income to ensure all citizens, no matter what their circumstances, are able to live with dignity and economic security.' ([SYP Policy](#)) Young people are one of the groups most likely to be negatively impacted by the closure of the hospitality, retail, and tourism sectors, particularly due to the lack of holiday or weekend jobs, and the number of zero-hours contracts within these sectors. These sectors may also be impacted by steps to deliver a green recovery due to, for example, higher initial costs to implement safe and sustainable working practices. **Support should be available to enable the hospitality, retail, and tourism sectors to reopen in a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way, and to ensure that everyone working in these sectors is able to work safely and with a guaranteed minimum income.**
2. 'The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that legislation should be introduced to prevent the unnecessary disposal of unsold food by manufacturers, supermarkets, and other businesses, and ensure the food is instead donated to charity, or converted to animal feed, fertiliser or energy where appropriate.' ([SYP Policy](#))
3. 'The Scottish Youth Parliament recommends that reusable period products should be available in addition, not as an alternative, to the products which are currently available. Choice is an important factor for young people.' ([SYP Policy](#))

Single-Use Packaging

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and particularly since the wearing of face coverings became mandatory in Scotland, there has been a noticeable rise in the number of single-use face masks and gloves which have not been disposed of safely or responsibly. This irresponsible littering is likely to have a huge impact on Scotland's environment. **We believe reusable face coverings should be more affordable and more readily available in shops. There should be stronger messaging around the harmful impacts of single-use face coverings on the environment, and more positive messaging around the safety and benefits of using reusable alternatives.**

Similarly, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of takeaway packaging, such as single-use cups, being used as companies refuse to allow customers to use reusable cups and other packaging due to fears about the spread of COVID-19. While we recognise the potential risk of this, we would like to see clarification of whether or not the risks are as high as, for example, the risk of handling money or touching other surfaces within a retail environment. **We believe there should be clearer guidance for retailers on the safety of using reusable packaging, in an attempt to rebuild customer and retailer confidence to avoid using single-use packaging where possible.**

The Scottish Youth Parliament's *Pack it up, Pack it in* [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 which contribute to climate change in Scotland. Key recommendations in relation to this question are:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Local Authorities and the Scottish Government should make funding and support available for young people and other community groups to carry out local projects to reduce the impact of littering and increase community pride in their local area.

Just Transition

The Scottish Youth Parliament's *#WhatsYourTake* survey received responses from 287 young people across Scotland in March 2020. This survey addressed the question of how as a society we can balance meeting people's basic and urgent needs (food, housing, safety, transport) with the climate emergency. Based on these responses, the Scottish Youth Parliament recommends:

1. Steps should be taken to support suppliers and consumers to reduce and recycle food waste.
2. Sustainable and locally sourced produce should be subsidised to bring the cost in line with less environmentally-friendly products, to make it more affordable for everyone, and to enable people to buy local and seasonal produce.
3. Support should be provided for farmers through subsidies to ensure farming methods are sustainable, and to enable diversification to more environmentally sustainable farming methods or products.

Although these recommendations focus on Just Transition, rather than Green Recovery, and are based on consultation carried out prior to the start of lockdown, we believe they should be considered as part of a holistic approach to recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. (The *#WhatsYourTake* summary report is available on the SYP website at <https://bit.ly/3g6AxRx>.)

Q4: How should the 2021/22 Budget support a green and sustainable recovery and avoid locking in carbon; and what funding is needed in the ECCLR portfolio to deliver a green and sustainable recovery?

A focus group was carried out with seven members of SYP's Conveners Group to discuss this inquiry. These young people agreed funding is required for:

- Sustainable energy, industry, and business.
- Education and training.
- Supporting industries to shift to more sustainable business practices.
- Active travel and public transport.
- Active engagement with young people on climate change, and for teacher training.

Contact us:

Rosy Burgess
Events and Campaigns Officer
rosy.b@syp.org.uk
0131 557 0452

Visit us:

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

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.

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](#) 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.