

# SYP's priorities for COP26



This document outlines five priority areas young people across Scotland have told us they want decision makers to take action on.

These priority areas are:

- meaningful participation of children and young people.
- climate justice.
- education on living sustainably.
- access to active and sustainable transport.
- circular economy and packaging.

These calls are based on SYP policy, which is created through consultation with Scotland's young people. There is more information more about this and the Scottish Youth Parliament on page four.

## Priority: meaningful participation

'Children and young people from seldom heard groups (such as immigrants and refugees, gypsy traveller communities, single parents, disabled people, Armed Forces, care experienced and justice experienced) must be listened to by policy makers on issues that affect them.' - [2021-26 manifesto](#) statement, which 80.4% of young people agreed with.

*"I think decision makers focus on things that will make a change to them, but act like they care about things that will change for us."*  
- young parent who participated in one of SYP's manifesto focus group.

We do not believe these words reflect the vast majority of decision makers' intentions. In fact, SYP hugely appreciates the work of the Scottish Government to consult with children and young people in decision making, not least by working to incorporate the UNCRC into law.

However, many young people - particularly those from seldom heard groups and communities - feel the decision-making process is not accessible to them. This needs to change.

The Scottish Youth Parliament has always advocated for a rights based approach to engagement. This means that children and young people's views should be included in decision making from the very beginning of policy development. We believe decision makers have a responsibility to regularly meet with the young people they represent, to listen to young people's views, and to call out when they see young people's rights are not being upheld.

For more information about this priority, check out [this blog post](#).

# SYP's priorities for COP26

## Priority: climate justice

*'The global climate emergency is an issue of climate justice, where those who contribute least to greenhouse gas emissions are most impacted. Countries most responsible for greenhouse gas emissions must:*

- *'Be the first to reduce their emissions.'* (75.4% agree)
  - *'Share benefits of their increased wealth and development with those countries most impacted by climate change.'* (71.4% agree)
  - *'Compensate loss and damage incurred in less developed countries as a result of climate change by contributing finances to a global fund, supporting research and working on international cooperation.'* (69.9% agree)
- [2021-26 manifesto](#) statement.

We know the Scottish Government is taking steps towards this goal, with efforts to reduce emissions as well as the announcement they are increasing their Climate Justice fund to £6 million per year.

We are not experts in how this goal should be achieved and, as we have not consulted young people on the government's recent announcements, we can't share their views on whether they think this is a proportionate response. However, we do recognise there are many people and organisations who believe a lot more needs to be done to achieve true climate justice.

## Priority: education on living sustainably

Young people we consulted for our [Pack it up, Pack it in](#) campaign told us they think individuals should play a role in reducing the amount of waste in Scotland. But they need to be supported to do it.

That's why we believe the education provided to young people on environmental awareness and living sustainably needs to be improved.

We believe 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.

We also believe 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.

# SYP's priorities for COP26

## Priority: access to active and sustainable transport

*'Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government should provide funding to support initiatives which make it easier, cheaper, and safer for young people to use active and sustainable travel options.'*

- [2021-26 manifesto](#) statement, which 89.0% of young people agreed with.

We believe that making the shift towards using active travel and public transport is a key part of our society moving towards more climate friendly behaviours. But more funding is required to both raise awareness of this and to enable young people to make this shift.

We also believe free bus travel should be extended to include everyone under the age of 26, as well as those who may struggle to access transport more generally, such as those on low incomes or in recovery from addiction.

Furthermore, we are calling for decision makers to review ferry fares, to make them more affordable for young people. Free bus travel across Scotland is not going to help young people in island communities if they cannot afford to travel to the mainland to access it.

Access to active and sustainable transport is essential to ensure that those hit hardest by Covid can access work, education, leisure and generally live as we recover from the pandemic - which in turn would allow them to exercise their rights - but it would also allow for a more just transition to a net zero society. [This blog post](#) outlines this position further.

## Priority: circular economy and packaging

*The food and retail industry should:*

- *'Make it possible to recycle and reuse packaging.'* (93.5% agree)
- *'Avoid using too much packaging in their products.'* (90.7% agree)
- *'Make it possible for people to rely less on plastic packaging.'* (89.3% agree)
- *'Make it possible for people to rely less on packaging that can only be used once'* (85.8% agree) - [2021-26 manifesto](#) statement.

We note that the Scottish Government has made several commitments to improve upon Scotland's current recycling and waste management infrastructure and regulations, including a ban on many single use packaging items. We also note their plans to bring forward legislation on a circular economy and to roll out the Deposit Return scheme. These are all changes SYP and the young people we have engaged with are supportive of.

Given that many of these initiatives have already been delayed due to the pandemic, we feel it is vital they are taken forward as urgent action. We cannot say we are committing to become a Net Zero society without action to reduce waste and improve recycling.

# SYP's priorities for COP26

## Introducing the Scottish Youth Parliament

The [Scottish Youth Parliament](#) (SYP) is the democratic voice of Scotland's young people. Our members are elected from across different communities of place and interest to represent the views of their peers, and campaign for the changes they wish to see. You can find out more about the wide diversity of our membership on our [website](#).

Our work is grounded in article 12 of the UNCRC and we want young people to grow up in a Scotland where their views are listened to in all issues affecting them.

All of our stances and priorities come directly from the views of young people across Scotland. Most recently, we published our 2021-26 manifesto, [From Scotland's Young People](#), which engaged with thousands of young people to find out what changes they want to see over this Scottish Parliamentary term - including several relating to climate and environmental policy. This manifesto focused on amplifying the voices of seldom-heard groups as well as those of the general youth population.

We are by no means climate experts nor do we claim to have the answers to the issues. But what we can do is share young people's concerns and suggested solutions.

SYP has run several campaigns relating to environmental issues, including our [All Aboard](#) campaign, which focused on improving public transport, and [Pack it up, Pack it in](#) which focused on reducing litter and pollution levels.

We're also currently working to ensure young people across Scotland have their voices heard by decision makers in the run up to COP26 through our work on [The Moment](#), which we are running in partnership with the Children's Parliament and the Scottish Parliament.

You can check out this '[about SYP](#)' sheet for more information.

For more information, or to discuss any of the issues outlined, please contact Rosy Burgess, SYP's Events and Campaigns Officer ([rosy.b@syp.org.uk](mailto:rosy.b@syp.org.uk))

[www.syp.org.uk](http://www.syp.org.uk)

[@OfficialSYP](https://twitter.com/OfficialSYP)

