

# Scottish Government Consultation: **Delivering Scotland's circular economy: a consultation on proposals for a Circular Economy Bill** Scottish Youth Parliament response - August 2022

## **Introduction**

The Scottish Youth Parliament welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on proposals for a Circular Economy Bill.

Our response to this consultation is based on findings from our 2019 *Pack it up, Pack it in* consultation (report available [here](#)) and from our 2020 #WhatsYourTake survey (report available [here](#)). This document includes our response to questions for which we have relevant policy and evidence demonstrating young people's views.

The Scottish Youth Parliament's response to the Scottish Government's Circular Economy: Proposals for Legislation consultation in December 2019 is available [here](#).

## **About the Scottish Youth Parliament**

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.

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## Part 1: Strategic Interventions

### Proposal 1: Circular economy strategy obligation

#### 2. Do you have any further thoughts on a statutory duty to produce a Circular Economy Strategy?

Although the Scottish Youth Parliament does not have any policy specifically relating to this question, our March 2020 #WhatsYourTake online survey included two questions relating to circular economy to help the Scottish Parliament's Environment Climate Change and Land Reform Committee consider the issues of consumerism and waste (fast fashion; fast food; disposable society) and how this impacts young people as consumers and responsible citizens.

The results of this survey highlighted that Nearly **two thirds of young people** (62.8%) have not heard the term 'circular economy'. Young people who have heard this term understand it to mean:

- Turning waste products into something else.
- An economy revolving around products that can be reused.
- Recycling everything to minimise the amount of waste.
- Focusing on reusing items rather than creating and buying new.

These findings suggest 'More effort should be made to increase young people's awareness of the 'circular economy' and the circular economy debate. It is important that young people are educated on environmental issues affecting them so they can make informed decisions in their daily lives.'

*Recommendation from SYP's #WhatsYourTake report: Circular Economy - 'Disposing of a Disposable Society' - March 2020 (available [here](#))*

### Proposal 2: Statutory targets - consumption reduction, reuse and recycling

*No response*

### Proposal 3: Establishment of circular economy public body

*No response*

## Part 2: Reduce and Reuse

### Proposal 4: Measures to ban the destruction of unsold durable goods

*No response*

### Proposal 5: Environmental charging for single-use items

12. The previous consultation showed broad support for the proposal that Scottish Ministers should have the power to set charges for environmentally harmful items, for example single-use disposable beverage cups. Is there any

**new context or evidence that should be taken into account in relation to this proposal?**

The Scottish Youth Parliament has a large amount of policy relating to single-use packaging, suggesting the majority of young people are generally supportive of restrictions on the supply and use of single-use packaging items in Scotland. However, **young people's support for charges for environmentally harmful items appears to be relatively low in comparison to other measures**, as outlined below.

Our 2019 *Pack it up, Pack it in* report (available [here](#)) 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. The report asked respondents a number of questions relevant to this proposal.

In response to the question 'What would encourage you to use environmentally friendly alternatives more often?', **a small 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%)**. On the other hand, the vast majority said they would use environmentally friendly 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%).

In response to the question 'what, if anything, would encourage you to start recycling, or to recycle more?', a small 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%)**. On the other hand, the vast majority of respondents who answered this question said they would be encouraged to start recycling, or to recycle more, if there were better or more facilities for recycling. 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 third of respondents (33.7%) would be encouraged to recycle if they could recycle more types of litter in their area, and one fifth said recycling bins should be emptied more often (20.4%). Just over one tenth (12.7%) would like to see more recycling centres in their area, and a further tenth would recycle if there was a recycling bin in their house (10.4%).

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.

**13. Do you have any further comments on how a charge on environmentally harmful items should be implemented?**

Although the introduction of a circular economy in Scotland has the potential to support young people's right to a clean environment (UNCRC Article 24), young people who responded to our *Pack it up, Pack it in* consultation expressed concern about the cost of non-plastic alternatives. The high cost of sustainable packaging alternatives, and the implementation of a charge on environmentally harmful items, may have a negative impact for some young people - particularly those living in or at risk of poverty. Our report calls on retailers and the food industry to ensure reusable packaging is affordable, more readily available, and easy to use, to reduce the reliance on single-use packaging and plastic items.

Furthermore, our 2021 *From Scotland's Young People* manifesto (available [here](#)) states 'the food and retail industry should:

- **make it possible to recycle and reuse packaging.'** - 94% agree
- **avoid using too much packaging in their products.'** - 91% agree
- **make it possible for people to rely less on packaging made out of plastic.'** - 89% agree
- **make it possible for people to rely less on packaging that can only be used once.'** - 86% agree

We therefore call on the Scottish Government to **ensure support is available for businesses to enable them to reduce their reliance on single-use packaging and to avoid passing on any additional cost to consumers.** This is particularly important in light of the rapidly increasing cost of living, to ensure those living in or at risk of poverty are not negatively impacted by the implementation of charges on environmentally harmful items.

**Proposal 6: Mandatory reporting of waste and surplus**

**15. The previous consultation showed broad support for the proposal that food waste should be a priority for regulations. Is there any new context or evidence that should be taken into account in relation this proposal?**

The Scottish Youth Parliament is supportive of this proposal.

**'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.'** - 85% agree - *Members' Motion passed March 2017*

SYP's March 2020 #WhatsYourTake online survey was open from 21st February until 25th March 2020, gathering 287 responses from young people aged 12-25 across Scotland, from 31 local authorities, our 11 national voluntary organisations, and various others representing a diverse range of communities of interest and lived experience (including youth voice organisations, student unions, a range of cadets, and various sports clubs).

Two questions focusing on the Scottish Parliament Environment Climate Change and Land Reform committee’s work on Just Transition were asked in our March 2020 survey.

The first question we asked was ‘*In order to reach our climate emission targets, as a society we need to look at how we create a food system which lowers emissions whilst ensuring a fair society for those who produce and consume products. Based on what you think you can do now to achieve this, please rank the below actions.*’ Young people were asked to rank eight actions based on what they think they could do now to achieve this goal. The actions were ranked as follows:

1. Reducing and recycling food waste.
2. Buying locally sourced produce.
3. Buy less processed and packaged food.
4. Eating more seasonal fruit and vegetables.
5. Buying organic and sustainably approved options.
6. Growing your own fruit and vegetables.
7. Advocating for carbon labelling of all food products.
8. Eating less animal products (e.g. meat and dairy).

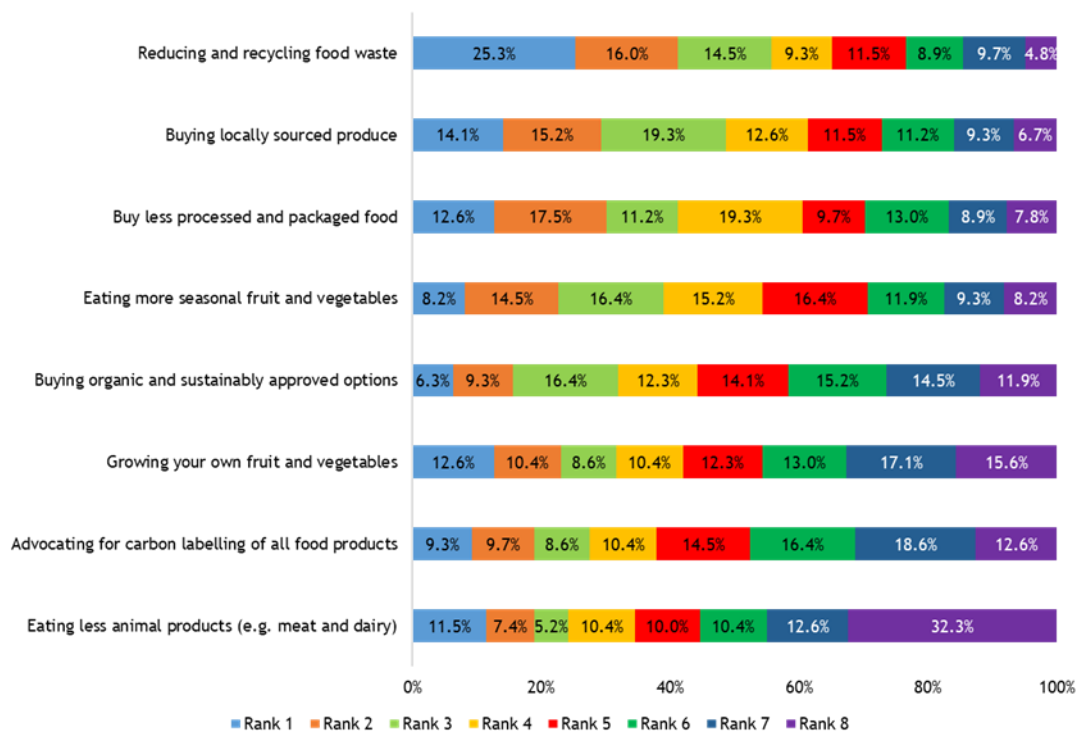



Figure 1 - responses to: ‘*In order to reach our climate emission targets, as a society we need to look at how we create a food system which lowers emissions whilst ensuring a fair society for those who produce and consume products. Based on what you think you can do now to achieve this, please rank the below actions.*’

Respondents were asked to detail any other suggested actions they could take. 19 young people responded, and a selection of their comments is shown below:

- ‘...people could go into stores to buy food instead of ordering it as it will cut down on fuel usage ...’
- ‘Buying things in smaller amounts to reduce food waste, shops offering things loose and in smaller amounts for people living alone.’
- ‘I think that there has to be a form of taxation or price increase for the customers that are purchasing food or goods with high air miles and/or large amounts of plastic packaging.’
- ‘Buying locally sources is good however, it is often difficult for low income families.’
- ‘Recycling to end food poverty - Recycle  drink cans and plastic bottles in the machines at Sainsbury’s and use the voucher/money you receive to buy food for foodbank’

Based on these responses, the Scottish Youth Parliament recommends:

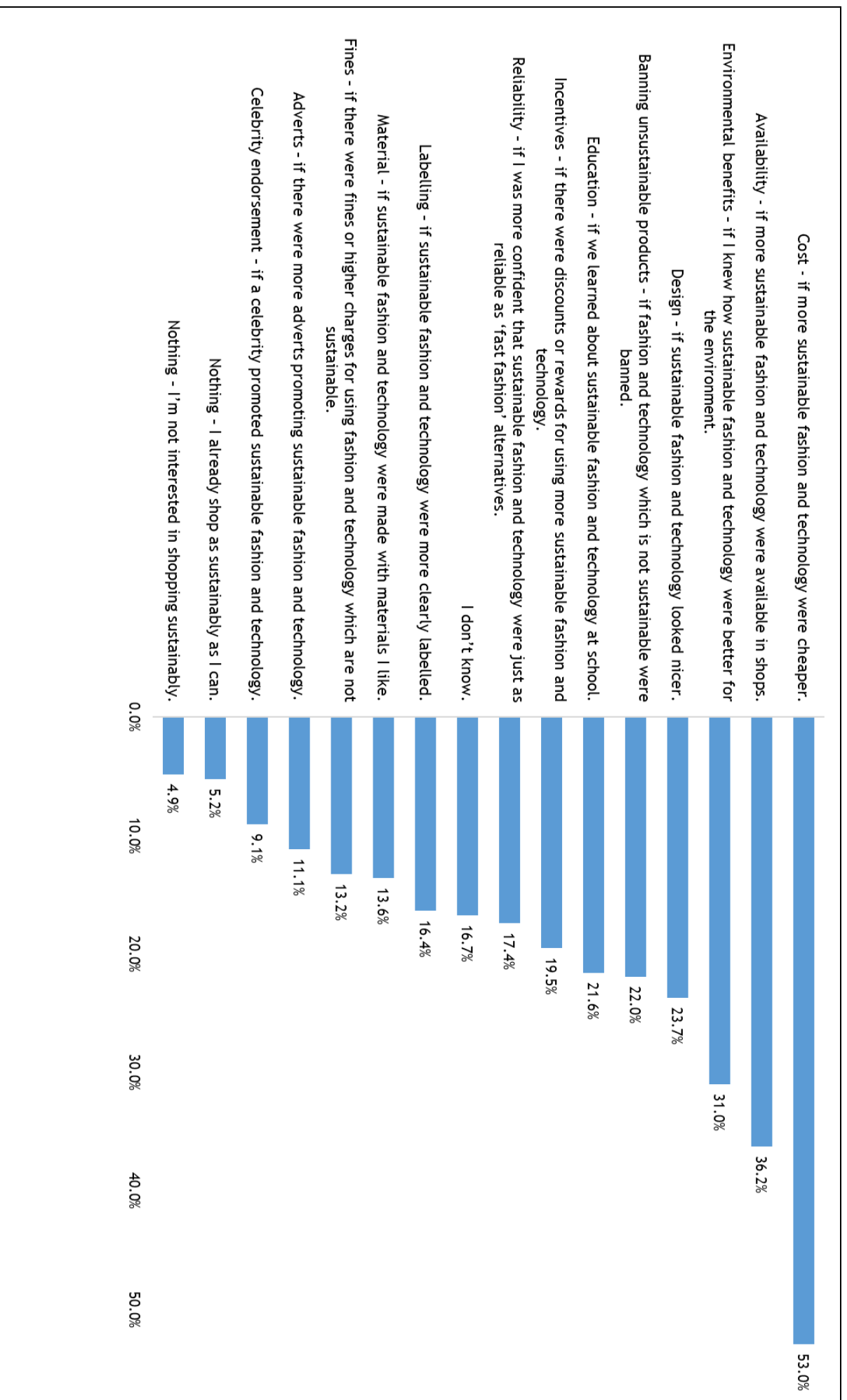
**‘Steps should be taken to support suppliers and consumers to reduce and recycle food waste.’** - Recommendation from SYP’s #WhatsYourTake report: *Just Transition - ‘Feeding Scotland Sustainably - March 2020* (available [here](#))

#### 16. Are there other waste streams that should be prioritised?

**‘Funding should be available to support the development of sustainable fashion and technology to make this an accessible and viable option, and to enable young people to shop in a more sustainable way.’** - Recommendation from SYP’s #WhatsYourTake report: *Circular Economy - ‘Disposing of a Disposable Society’ - March 2020* (available [here](#))

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In relation to a circular economy, young people were asked *‘Thinking about the definition of a ‘circular economy’, what would encourage you to shop in a more sustainable way?’* Respondents were asked to select their top three choices from a list, as shown below. Over half of the young people who responded to this survey would be encouraged to shop in a more sustainable way if sustainable fashion and technology were **cheaper**. Around one third of respondents would be encouraged to shop in a more sustainable way if more sustainable fashion and technology were **available**, or if they knew how sustainable fashion and technology were **better for the environment**.





## Part 3: Recycle

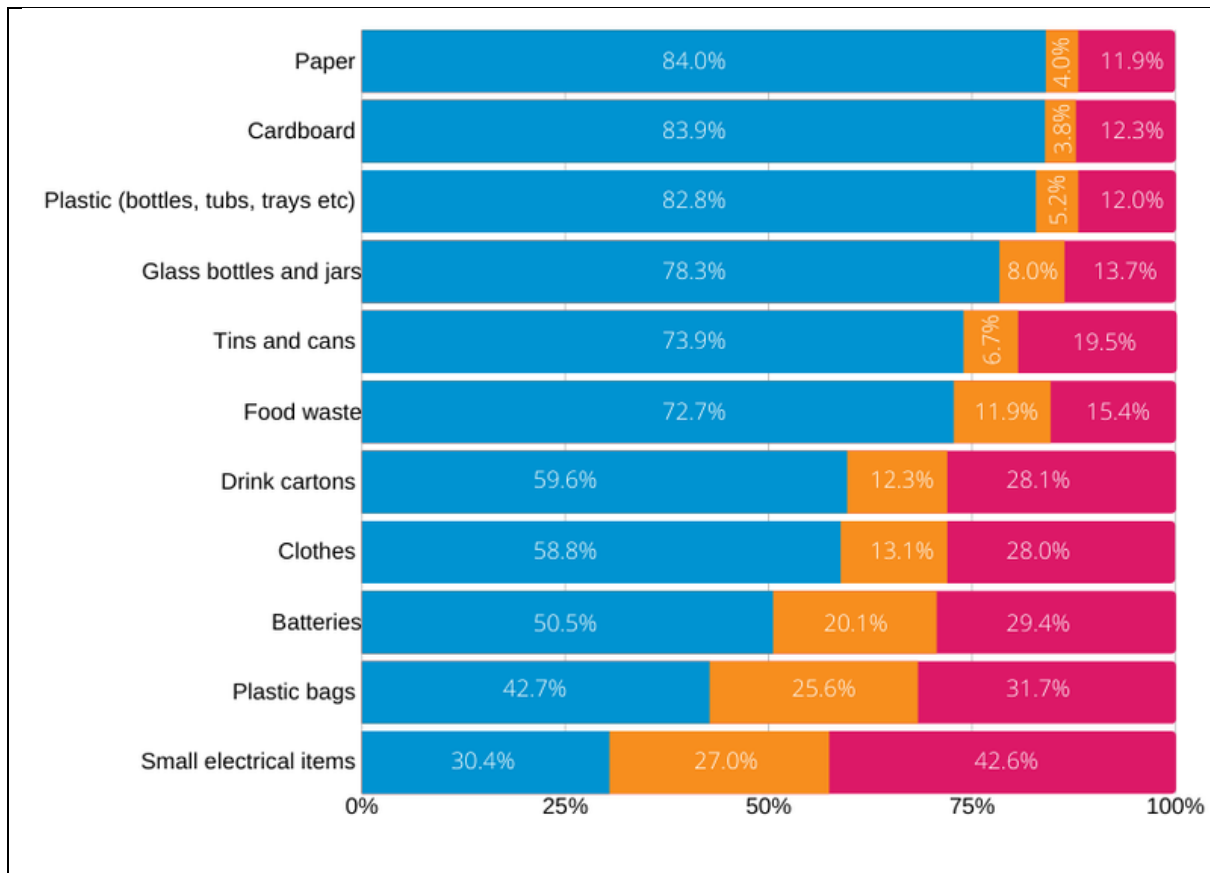
### Proposal 7: Strengthening approach to household recycling collection services

17. The previous consultation showed broad support for the proposal that Scottish Ministers should have powers to place additional requirements on local authorities in order to increase rates and quality of household recycling. Is there any new context or evidence that should be taken into account in relation to the proposal?

**‘Local Authorities and the Scottish Government should continue to raise awareness amongst young people to help them understand what can be recycled, and when recycling is collected, in their communities.’ - Recommendation from SYP’s *Pack it up, Pack it in* report - November 2019 (available [here](#))**

Our 2019 *Pack it up, Pack it in* report (available [here](#)) 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. The report asked respondents a number of questions relevant to this proposal.

In response to the question ‘which of these items can currently be recycled in your area?’, 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. 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.



**Proposal 8: The role of targets to support recycling performance**

*No response*

**Proposal 9: The Duty of Care for households**

*No response*

**Proposal 10: Incentivising waste reduction and recycling (households)**

*Responses to question 26 and 27 have been combined*

**26. Are there further powers, if any, for Scottish Ministers, and/or local authorities, that should be considered in order to incentivise positive household behaviours, to support waste reduction and increased recycling in Scotland?**

**27. Are there any other legislative measures that you consider Scottish Government should take to strengthen recycling and reuse at a household level, helping accelerate the rate and quality of household recycling in Scotland?**

Our 2019 *Pack it up, Pack it in* report (available [here](#)) 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. The report asked respondents a number of questions relevant to this proposal.

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Of those young people 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.

**‘The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that all schools should have an appropriate recycling system in place which ensures all single-use plastic is recycled, and a ban on single-use plastic bottles, to reduce the harmful effect on the environment.’ - 79% agree - Members’ Motion passed October 2019**

**‘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 - November 2019 (available [here](#))**

Although school recycling systems are not covered by this proposal, schools and other educational institutional establishments are important for supporting children and young people to develop behaviours which may influence household behaviours. Improving environmental awareness and access to recycling facilities within education settings are two ways we believe these behaviours can be developed.

**‘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.’ - Recommendation from SYP’s Pack it up, Pack it in report - November 2019 (available [here](#))**

In response to the *Pack it up, Pack it in* consultation question ‘How does litter affect young people in your area?’, over one quarter (28.5%) of respondents said litter has a negative impact on the way they and others view their area. In particular, responses suggest young people feel litter makes their area look dirty or messy. Some young people expressed concerns that litter will put tourists off coming to visit their area, while others said litter puts them off spending time outdoors or using recreation spaces such as parks and sports fields.

Young people who responded to the survey were particularly concerned about the environmental impact of litter (11.5%). Respondents predominantly identified the impact of litter on animals; water pollution; and damage to ecosystems and habitats.

Over one fifth of survey respondents felt the existence of litter in their area has a negative impact on attitudes towards both litter and young people. Of these, 8.2% suggested people feel it is more acceptable to drop litter in an area where there is already litter, with a further 7.5% saying the presence of litter increases the feeling of apathy towards litter - the sense that people just don’t care. There is also a feeling that the existence of litter portrays a negative image of young people, with 6.1% respondents feeling young people are often blamed for littering.

<b>Proposal 11: Business recycling collection zoning</b>
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<i>No response</i>
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#### Part 4: Littering and Improving Enforcement

<b>Proposal 12: New penalty for littering from vehicles</b>
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<i>No response</i>
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<b>Proposal 13: Seizure of vehicles</b>
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<i>No response</i>
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