



# A SUSTAINABLE AND RENEWABLE SOCIETY

## Policy 2:

**The Scottish Government should work with young people to promote a circular economy and ensure that businesses make improved progress towards reducing waste.**

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### Endorsed by:



Scottish  
Environment  
LINK

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### What's this all about?

A circular economy tackles waste, pollution and the climate crisis by keeping products and materials in use through reusing, refurbishing and recycling them. It has three main principles: designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems. Young people told us they want environmental polluters like fast fashion, single-use items, and poor-quality products to be reduced, if not abolished completely. They suggested that collectively, everyone has a responsibility to learn about where and how products are made and to advocate for change to create a greener, more sustainable future. Young people feel this can be achieved through investment into a circular economy, and by decision makers working together with young people to promote the positive impact of protecting the planet and to increase understanding of a circular economy.

**"It's all our responsibility if we live on the land and take from it to take care of it."**

– Young person aged 14-17, Edinburgh

**"This would both help the environment and the cleanliness of our cities, which might also encourage more people to go outside and enjoy it."**

– Young trans man aged 14-17, Dundee

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## What are young people in Scotland calling for?

- Young people want to see more initiatives put in place to encourage businesses to reduce waste, and to hold the largest polluters to account.

**"We should ban fast fashion and fast food places! They are really bad for the environment but also [for] ourselves."**

– Young person aged 12-14, Shetland

- Young people want decision makers to regulate ultra-fast fashion retailers to discourage single-use and poor-quality items, as well as unfair labour conditions.

**"Fast fashion is a BIG thing just now thanks to the explosion of online shops e.g TikTok shop and Shein, Temu etc. the prices are extremely cheap which lures young people in. Good quality clothes are expensive and a lot of people cannot afford that just now. However we are ignoring the conditions these cheaper clothes are probably creating. The online spaces like tiktok shop and Shein are so difficult to avoid and not buy from all the time, the pictures show cute clothes for such an amazing price why would you not take advantage of it."**

– Young woman aged 22-26, Aberdeenshire

- Decision makers should raise awareness and understanding of what a circular economy means, and how young people can be involved in promoting a circular economy.

**"Before an MSYP came to a group I volunteer at I had no clue what this meant, I honestly still don't really [...] I think circularity and sustainability needs to be spoken about more, not just about recycling bins."**

– Young man aged 14-17, Dundee

- The Scottish Government and other decision makers should create opportunities for young people to meaningfully participate in designing and delivering a circular economy within Scotland.

**"By collaborating with young people the Government can develop educational programs and raise awareness about sustainability recycling and consumption."**

– Young woman aged 14-17, Clackmannanshire

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## Evidence and Support

- Young people through [2050 Climate Group's Climate Action Leadership Programme](#) (CALP) prioritised sustainable fashion in their [Styled to Last](#) project. Using circular economy principles, they researched the environmental impact of fast fashion and put together action-led ideas for young people to shop sustainably.
- [Research by Zero Waste Scotland](#) found that buying second hand is far more popular amongst young people than it is with older people. 88% of young people aged 16-34 shop second hand, compared with 63% of those aged 65+.

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## What has SYP done?

Previous [SYP consultations](#) include [SYP's response to The Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee pre-legislative scrutiny on emissions reduction targets \(2024\)](#) and [SYP's response to the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee's Call for Views on the Circular Economy Bill \(2023\)](#). The [SYP Policy Log](#) includes several policies on the circular economy, sustainability, the climate crisis and greenhouse gas emissions.