



Scottish Youth Parliament  
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# Draft Circular Economy Strategy

Scottish Youth Parliament response

# Who We Are

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## Vision

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.

## Mission

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 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.



## Our Approach

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As a youth-led organisation, we are constantly seeking the views of our MSYPs and other young people to ensure our policy positions represent their views as clearly as possible. This means that we have numerous opportunities to collect qualitative and quantitative data on a variety of issues underneath the umbrella of education. To ensure our response can accurately reflect the views of our members and the young people they represent, we pulled our information from various sources. These included:

# Our Response

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## Summary of Recommendations:

When looking at our manifesto, a successful circular economy can positively support children's and young people's rights and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring young people are meaningfully involved in the effective delivery of the Target 2030 Learning for Sustainability Action Plan
- Decision-makers taking action to guarantee that rural and island communities furthest from their rights, are not put at further disadvantage by the climate crisis.
- Young people being recognised as key stakeholders in any decisions made about tackling the climate crisis and the circular economy as they will live with the consequences of any action or inaction.
- Decision-makers raising awareness and understanding of what a circular economy means and how young people can be involved in promoting a circular economy.
- 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.
- A commitment from the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to work with young people on planning and designing green community spaces, like beaches, parks, and forests.
- Involving young people in co-designing and introducing a curriculum that highlights the importance of biodiversity, informing children and young people on the importance of nature reserves and promotes the wellbeing benefits of engaging with nature and being outside.
- More information and awareness to be given to young people about the opportunities and career paths available within the green sector.
- For public transport to be available consistently across rural, island and urban communities with better connections and routes linked up across different public and active transport methods.
- Creation of improved resources to help all young people, especially young disabled people, accurately plan their journeys and navigate public transport.
- For decision-makers to involve young people in local and national decisions to create a public transport system with equal access for all, reducing geographical inequalities and barriers to young people to access.
- Protecting the environment children and young people grow up in whilst also promoting fairness and reducing inequalities.

## **General comments:**

This response revolves around SYP's Manifesto Dear Scotland's Future, especially our policies on:

- The circular economy
- The climate emergency
- Nature and biodiversity
- Accessible transport
- It also makes references to our policies on free school meals and Article 12 of the UNCRC.

The response focuses on what matters most to young people and reflects SYP's role as a youth-led, rights-based organisation in Scotland.

- Overall, we support the strategy. SYP agrees with the vision, outcomes, policy mechanisms and priority sectors in the draft strategy. For the questions that only allow a scale response (Q1, Q4 and Q7), we selected "Agree".
- The strategy aligns well with our manifesto commitment to building a sustainable and renewable society, including reducing waste, tackling the climate emergency and protecting the environment for future generations.
- Young people want action sooner. While we welcome the long-term ambition of the strategy, when we look at the manifesto itself, young people want to see clear actions in the short and medium term, not just plans for the future.
- A key gap in is the limited focus on plastics in the strategy. Plastic pollution has serious impacts on nature, biodiversity and communities. SYP's response asks for plastics to be prioritised within the strategy.
- Fairness and accountability are key. Throughout the response, we highlight that:
  - Big businesses and industries must be held accountable
  - Responsibility should not fall only on individuals
  - A circular economy must be fair, affordable and accessible to everyone
- We broadly support all priority sectors, with stronger comments on:
  - Textiles – fast fashion, waste, labour conditions and affordability
  - Transport – making sure transport is both sustainable and accessible
  - Food systems – making sure food is both sustainable and accessible
- We strongly emphasise the importance of Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIAs). From SYP's perspective, CRWIAs should be used to make sure

children and young people are actively involved in decisions that affect their futures, not just assessed.

### **Why some questions say “No response”**

Some questions in the consultation are marked “No response” on purpose.

- **Scale-only questions (Q1, Q4 and Q7)**

These questions only allow you to choose how much you agree or disagree. We selected “Agree”, and explained our views in the follow-up questions instead.

- **Some sector-specific plans (Q8a and Q8b)**

Where we could not clearly identify how young people are affected, or where we didn’t have enough information to add value, we chose not to comment rather than guess.

- **Very technical questions (Q10a–Q10h)**

These questions focus on detailed indicators and data. While SYP supports clear and transparent monitoring overall, we did not respond to each technical indicator because:

- They require specialist and technical expertise that we would not have
- Our main concern is that monitoring is clear, public and meaningful, especially for young people

### **Response to Consultation Questions:**

#### **Q1. To what extent do you agree with the vision and outcomes for the strategy?**

##### **Selected option:**

Agree.

#### **Q2. Do you have any comments on the vision?**

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) welcomes the vision set out in the Draft Circular Economy Strategy and supports its ambition to transition Scotland towards a circular, net zero and nature-positive economy.

SYP’s 2026-2031 manifesto contains five themes including one titled A Sustainable and Renewable Society. The policies under this theme are on the climate emergency, the circular economy, nature and biodiversity, accessible and reliable public transport, and free travel for young people. You can view the manifesto on [syp.org.uk/manifesto](http://syp.org.uk/manifesto). Collectively, the above policies cover several articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including Article 6 (Life, survival and development), Article 12 (Respect for children’s views), Article 13 (Freedom of expression), Article 15 (Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly), Article 24 (Health, water, food and environment) and Article 29 (Aims of education).

The vision of the strategy aligns with SYP’s manifesto commitment to promoting a circular economy as part of building a sustainable and renewable society. The manifesto policy states: “the Scottish Government should work with young people to promote a circular economy and ensure that businesses make improved progress towards reducing waste.” Young people consistently highlighted the needs for holding businesses to account, regulation of fast fashion, more awareness of the circular economy and how young people can be involved in promoting it,

and for opportunities to be created for young people to meaningfully participate in designing and delivering a circular economy in Scotland.

While the long-term ambition is welcome, we would also encourage clear short- and medium-term actions so that progress is visible within the lifetimes of young people in Scotland and not delayed to only apply to future generations.

### **Q3. Do you have any comments on the outcomes?**

SYP broadly supports the outcomes identified across the economic, environmental, international, and social themes. When looking at the outcomes through the lens of our manifesto:

- **Economic:** Based on our manifesto, young people want information and awareness of opportunities and career paths available within the green sector opportunities for young people to meaningfully participate in the circular economy.
- **Environmental:** The focus on sustainable resource use and reducing environmental impacts aligns with our manifesto policies around actions to tackle the climate emergency and protection of Scotland's nature and biodiversity.
- **International:** SYP welcomes recognition of the global impacts of Scotland's consumption. Young people are increasingly aware of the environmental and social costs experienced by communities and countries internationally.
- **Social:** We support outcomes relating to fairness, behaviour change and benefits to communities. A circular economy must be both inclusive and affordable, with young people being recognised as key stakeholders in any decisions made about tackling the climate crisis and the circular economy, as they will live with the consequences of any action or inaction.

### **Q4. To what extent do you agree with the policy mechanisms identified?**

#### **Selected option:**

Agree.

### **Q5. Do you have any comments on the policy mechanisms identified?**

SYP supports the range of policy mechanisms identified, particularly those focused on behaviour change, skills and education, and systems thinking.

Young people strongly believe that education and raising awareness are essential, especially in helping them to understand what a circular economy means and how young people can be involved in promoting it. Initiatives around behavioural changes should be designed in ways that are accessible and relevant to young people's lives. However, when we think of behaviour changes, we are not just thinking about young people and the wider general public but also businesses who have a role to play in waste and the circular economy. Young people also ask under the circular economy policy in our manifesto for more initiatives to be put in place to encourage businesses themselves to reduce waste, and to hold the largest polluters to account. They also ask for decision-makers to regulate ultra-fast fashion retailers to discourage single-use and poor-quality items, as well as unfair labour conditions. In relation to this policy, one young person who was consulted for the manifesto said: "Engaging youths is important as

they are often more aware of environmental issues and can bring fresh ideas and perspectives. By collaborating with young people, the government can develop educational programs and raise awareness about sustainability recycling and consumption.”

Under our manifesto theme of a sustainable and renewable society and its policies, we also encourage alignment across policies on the circular economy, climate emergency, nature and biodiversity, and public transport to ensure a joined-up approach that reflects the scale of the challenges young people face and what they care about wanting to change in terms of sustainability and the environment as a whole.

**Q6. Do you have any comments on the associated plans and priorities?**

SYP welcomes the development of associated plans and priorities to support delivery of the strategy.

Young people would welcome:

- Clear timelines and responsibilities for delivery
- Regular, accessible public updates on progress
- Opportunities for young people to be meaningfully involved in shaping and reviewing implementation and for awareness and education on the circular economy to be prioritised for young people.
- More information and awareness for young people about the opportunities and career paths available within the green sector

This would help build trust, demonstrate that commitments are leading to change and the recognition by decision-makers and young people themselves that young people have a role to play.

**Q7. To what extent do you agree with the priority sectors identified?**

**Selected option:**

Agree.

**Q8. Do you have any comments on the priority sectors identified?**

SYP broadly agrees with the priority sectors identified and recognises their significant impact on resource use and emissions.

However, we note that plastics are not clearly prioritised within the draft strategy, despite plastic pollution being a major issue within the circular economy. Stronger action on plastics would support outcomes in the circular economy. In our manifesto policy on the circular economy, young people want to see more initiatives put in place to encourage businesses to reduce waste, and to hold the largest polluters to account.

**Q8a. Do you have any comments on the plans and priorities for the built environment?**

*No response*

**Q8b. Do you have any comments on the plans and priorities for the Net Zero Energy Infrastructure?**

*No response*

**Q8c. Do you have any comments on the plans and priorities for textiles?**

SYP welcomes the inclusion of textiles as a priority sector, recognising its significant environmental and social impacts.

Young people support measures that:

- Encourage businesses to reduce waste, and to hold the largest polluters to account.
- Regulate ultra-fast fashion retailers to discourage single-use and poor-quality items as well as unfair labour conditions.

Education and awareness-raising will be key to supporting behaviour change in the textile sector.

One young person involved in our consultation for the manifesto said: “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.”

**Q8d. Do you have any comments on the plans and priorities for transport?**

SYP welcomes the inclusion of transport as a priority sector. However, it is important to young people that while transport needs to be sustainable and environmentally friendly, it also needs to be accessible.

Our manifesto policy on accessible transport states: “Transport Scotland and public transport companies should ensure that public transport services are accessible and reliable for young people across Scotland, particularly those living in rural areas.” Under this policy, young people told us that the Scottish Government must invest in public transport to ensure better integration, better technology, and better access across Scotland. Despite free bus travel for under-22s, there are still barriers preventing every young person from having equal access to public transport, with disabled young people and those living in rural communities sharing many experiences about inconsistency and unreliability. Supported public transport is essential for young people to live their lives freely.

Young people support approaches that make public transport safe, accessible and reliable, for it to be available consistently across rural, island and urban communities, for improved resources to help all young people, especially disabled young people plan their journeys and navigate public transport and to be involved with decision-makers in local and national decisions to create a public transport system with equal access for all, reducing geographical inequalities and barriers to young people to access. One young person consulted for our manifesto said: “I live in a rural area of Scotland and public transport is unbelievably sparse and poor so much so that most simply stick to driving but there is a huge customer base for good quality public transport in these rural areas that would positively impact people’s lives and the planet.”

**Q8e. Do you have any comments on the plans and priorities for the food system?**

SYP agrees with the plans and priorities for the food system, but we would ask that food remains accessible, particularly to disadvantaged communities. In 2023, SYP carried out a campaign on the right to food. As part of the campaign, they asked decision-makers to extend the provision of free school meals to all pupils in secondary schools across Scotland; for schools and local authorities to meaningfully involve young people in decision-making about the content and quality of school meals, and in making improvements to the eating environment; for greater efforts to be made to ensure stigma associated with asking for help to access food is eliminated, and for young people to be involved in making these decisions; and for local government to raise awareness among young people about local programmes and initiatives supporting food access to increase equitable access to healthy food.

In our current manifesto, we have a policy on free school meals under the theme of Accessible, Equitable and Inclusive Education which states “Decision makers should provide universal free school meals for all children and young people in Scotland.” Young people told us that they can’t learn when they’re hungry. To give them the best start and best opportunity to attain and attend school, many young people believe meals should be offered to all young people, including those not in school. Perceptions of poverty and the cost of the school day can be a barrier to some young people reaching their potential. Ensuring all children and young people have access to nutritious food which sustains them during school days should be more embedded in the curriculum, such as having young people grow food in school. If we look at this policy from the perspective of the circular economy and the wider environment, one ask is for decision-makers to increase opportunities to learn about food, health and nutrition, and where our food comes from, in a way that is fun, engaging and safe. One young person said: “It would be better if schools had gardens where children could grow their own food to eat, as well as learn about nature and where food comes from. It is wrong to give someone something without making them work for it, it will cause them to undervalue food.”

#### **Q9. Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to product stewardship?**

SYP supports the approach to product stewardship, and we believe that it has an important role in reducing waste. Based on our manifesto policies, young people would welcome a focus on:

- Decision-makers holding large corporations accountable for their role in the climate crisis.
- For initiatives to be put in place to encourage businesses to reduce waste, and to hold the largest polluters to account.
- For decision-makers to regulate ultra-fast fashion retailers to discourage single-use and poor-quality items, as well as unfair labour conditions.

#### **Q10. Are there any changes or additions you would like to suggest to the Circular Economy Monitoring and Indicator Framework?**

SYP supports the development of a monitoring and indicator framework.

We encourage the Scottish Government to ensure that reporting is:

- Publicly and easily accessible
- Easy to understand including the inclusion of youth-friendly language.
- The tracking of all outcomes, including fairness and participation, particularly in the realm of youth participation.

**Q10a. Do you have any comments in relation to the indicators proposed for outcome “The economic value derived from material use is maximised without increasing our environmental impacts”?**

*No response*

**Q10b. Do you have any comments in relation to the indicators proposed for outcome “The Scottish economy is more resilient to disruptions in global supply of materials, including critical raw materials”?**

*No response*

**Q10c. Do you have any comments in relation to the indicators proposed for outcome “Business and entrepreneurs have opportunities to develop circular economy innovations”?**

*No response*

**Q10d. Do you have any comments in relation to the indicators proposed for outcome “Non-renewable resource extraction is minimised, and renewable resource use is sustainable”?**

*No response*

**Question 10e: Do you have any comments in relation to the indicators proposed for outcome “The negative environmental impact of our production, consumption and disposal is minimised”?**

*No response*

**Question 10f. Do you have any comments in relation to the indicators proposed for outcome “The negative impacts experienced internationally from production, consumption and disposal are reduced”?**

*No response*

**Q10g. Do you have any comments in relation to the indicators proposed for outcome “People and communities engage in and benefit from circular activities in a fair and inclusive way”?**

*No response*

**Q10h. Do you have any comments in relation to the indicators proposed for outcome “Circular behaviours are the norm across business and society”?**

*No response*

**Q16. Please provide any further information or evidence that should be considered in the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment.**

SYP is a rights-based organisation, using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the basis for our vision, mission and values. 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 message of Article 12 have profound importance for our work.

SYP strongly believes that Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIAs) are a vital aspect of child and youth participation. They are not only important for assessing impacts on children and young people, but also for supporting meaningful participation for children and young people in decision-making. From SYP's perspective, CRWIAs should be used to ensure that the voices of children and young people are actively listened to and reflected in policy. This applies to the Circular Economy Strategy, which will shape the future of young people growing up and living in Scotland.

When we look at our manifesto policy for Article 12 under the theme Empowering Young People to Claim their Rights, it states: "The Scottish Government and other decision-makers must uphold the right set out in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to respect the views of children and young people in all decisions that affect them". Under this policy, the asks of young people are as follows:

- Decision-makers must recognise young peoples lived and living experience for their expertise, and for power to be given to young people when deciding what will make Scotland the best place to grow up.
- Decision-makers should implement accessible, inclusive and meaningful models of participation that ensure young people are involved in the right way, where they are respected, their dignity is upheld and inclusion is equal.
- The Scottish Government should create more awareness of young people's human rights and how young people can access information about their rights, including how to complain about their rights being breached.

One young person said: "Nothing about us without us" while another said: "Why should decisions that young people are capable of making be made by adults? No one knows children and the issues they face better than children themselves".

During our manifesto consultations, young people consistently raised concerns about the long-term impacts of the circular economy, the environment and climate change on their wellbeing and future opportunities.

As mentioned in Question 2 of this consultation response, our manifesto policies on the theme of A Sustainable and Renewable Society collectively cover several UNCRC articles: Article 6 (Life, survival and development), Article 12 (Respect for children's views), Article 13 (Freedom of expression), Article 15 (Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly), Article 24 (Health, water, food and environment) and Article 29 (Aims of education).

When looking at our manifesto, a successful circular economy can positively support children's and young people's rights and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring young people are meaningfully involved in the effective delivery of the Target 2030 Learning for Sustainability Action Plan
- Decision-makers taking action to guarantee that rural and island communities furthest from their rights, are not put at further disadvantage by the climate crisis.
- Young people being recognised as key stakeholders in any decisions made about tackling the climate crisis and the circular economy as they will live with the consequences of any action or inaction.
- Decision-makers raising awareness and understanding of what a circular economy means and how young people can be involved in promoting a circular economy.

- 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.
- A commitment from the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to work with young people on planning and designing green community spaces, like beaches, parks, and forests.
- Involving young people in co-designing and introducing a curriculum that highlights the importance of biodiversity, informing children and young people on the importance of nature reserves and promotes the wellbeing benefits of engaging with nature and being outside.
- More information and awareness to be given to young people about the opportunities and career paths available within the green sector.
- For public transport to be available consistently across rural, island and urban communities with better connections and routes linked up across different public and active transport methods.
- Creation of improved resources to help all young people, especially young disabled people, accurately plan their journeys and navigate public transport.
- For decision-makers to involve young people in local and national decisions to create a public transport system with equal access for all, reducing geographical inequalities and barriers to young people to access.
- Protecting the environment children and young people grow up in whilst also promoting fairness and reducing inequalities.

SYP encourages continued engagement with young people to ensure that children's rights and wellbeing are considered throughout the implementation of the strategy. We are happy to be contacted for further information/discussion on the CRWIA or youth participation more generally if needed.

**17. Do you have any views on whether there are likely to be any positive or negative environmental impacts from the draft Environment Strategy that have not been identified in the Strategic Environmental Assessment?**

*No response*

**Contacts:**

If you would like more information on this response, please contact Roisin Hunt, Policy Officer ([roisin.h@syp.org.uk](mailto:roisin.h@syp.org.uk))