

# REVOLUTIONISING RESOURCES:

**Your guide to  
taking action**



**Friends of  
the Earth  
Scotland**

# SCOTLAND IS CONSUMING MATERIALS AT A RATE THAT IS WRECKING THE PLANET AND CAUSING PEOPLE TO BE EXPLOITED AROUND THE WORLD.

The progress so far, like banning single-use plastics, is a drop in the ocean. **We don't have time to change the economy one product at a time** – we must change our whole culture of consumption. This means the government needs to make businesses take responsibility for their polluting products.

We need a **circular economy** where materials are properly valued and cycled round the economy as much as possible.

We need **policies** which encourage producers to make products that last for longer, make them easy to repair and use materials that are better for the planet.

The Scottish Government is **creating a new law** to support the development of a circular economy in Scotland. A strong circular economy can help reduce Scotland's consumption of materials both within Scotland and through our international impacts, and this is a **vital part of climate justice**.

**Do you want to help us fight for this change? Then this booklet is for you.**

It covers information **about the circular economy**, **what is needed** to make the law as strong as possible, and **how you can get involved**.



Photo: Vivienne Lemay via Unsplash

**"We need to improve recyclability, but this alone is not enough. We also need to produce and consume much less."**

Jason Hickel,  
Author of *LESS IS MORE*

# WHAT IS A CIRCULAR ECONOMY?

Over-consumption by the wealthy few is **pushing our planet to breaking point**. Everything we buy, from clothes to cars, requires resources to be extracted, and now the amount of resources used is **far higher than can possibly be sustained**.

This **directly contributes to the climate crisis** by causing emissions, and it damages local ecosystems. People are being **exploited for their labour** in sweatshops and mines to get the materials we need for producing so much stuff.

The products on our shelves are often designed in a way that makes them **difficult to repair or recycle** – to make you buy more. Some of these products are used only once before being thrown away, which creates an **unbelievable amount of waste**.

In Scotland, our material consumption is **far higher than average** and accounts for an astounding 82% of our carbon footprint.

To change this, we **need a circular economy** where materials are properly valued and cycled round the economy as much as possible.

**"Inequality is not an economic necessity: it is a design failure."**

Kate Raworth,  
author of  
*Doughnut Economics*

## IN PRACTICE, THIS MEANS

- Reducing:** Taking less from nature by making products last longer and only making what we need has the greatest environmental savings of all
- Reusing:** For example, reusable cups and bottles and buying second hand clothes
- Repairing:** Electronics, equipment, bikes and toys can all be repaired if they are designed to be, and we have the right skills and tools
- Sharing:** This is a great way to access products we don't use very often from car and bike share schemes to libraries for tools, clothes, toys and more
- Recycling:** Once a product becomes waste, this is the best way to deal with it

**The circular economy law is a chance for Scotland to transform how we consume and manage resources**



# WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

All of us can have an impact on the new circular economy law and move resource use and waste up the political agenda. Here are just a few ideas! Find more resources, information and tips on our website at [www.foe.scot/circular-economy-action](http://www.foe.scot/circular-economy-action).

## GET THE WORD OUT



**Write to your MSP** asking them to back a stronger circular economy Law

Send an **opinion piece** to your local paper about the issues and possible solutions to issues around waste

Post on **social media** encouraging people to write to their MSPs

**Host a stall** to speak to people and give out resources

Hand out **flyers** or leave them in cafes, libraries and community centres

## GET PEOPLE INVOLVED

Host a **clothing repair workshop** where you can also speak to people about the Bill

Ask local young people to **draw a world** that uses resources sustainably

Host a **film screening** (for example The Story of Plastic)

Run a **community litter pick** or nurdle hunt



## GET CREATIVE



Re-use materials into a sculpture or **piece of art!**



Bristol Whales — Sue Lipscombe



Mount Recyclemore — Joe Rush

**The new circular economy law has the potential to be a catalyst for real change. Friends of the Earth Scotland is supporting people across Scotland to share ideas and get involved.**

One of the best ways we can all influence the law is by **meeting with or writing to our MSPs**. Ordinary people holding politicians to account is at the heart of our democracy and one of the most powerful things you can do to protect our future.

You can share the information in this booklet and the other resources on the Friends of the Earth website with your MSP to explain why the circular economy is important. You'll find a **step-by-step guide to lobbying** your MSPs on our website too.

If you would like to write to your MSPs to ask them to support a strong circular economy law, you can do this directly through a service such as [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com). Raising your concerns about the circular economy in your own words can be a powerful way of gaining your MSPs attention.

# LOBBYING YOUR MSPS

# SCOTLAND'S MATERIALS DEMAND

Scotland's economy is **reliant on materials that are extracted from all over the world**. Right now, these materials are often extracted without proper consideration of local communities or environmental impacts. We are calling for policies that will reduce our need for these materials.

## LITHIUM

Mainly comes from the "lithium triangle" in South America (Chile, Bolivia and Argentina), and Australia

Global demand is expected to grow by 600% by 2030

Used in batteries for electric vehicles and consumer devices

Lithium mining has consumed 65% of the water in the Atacama region in Chile, leaving little for Indigenous communities and nature

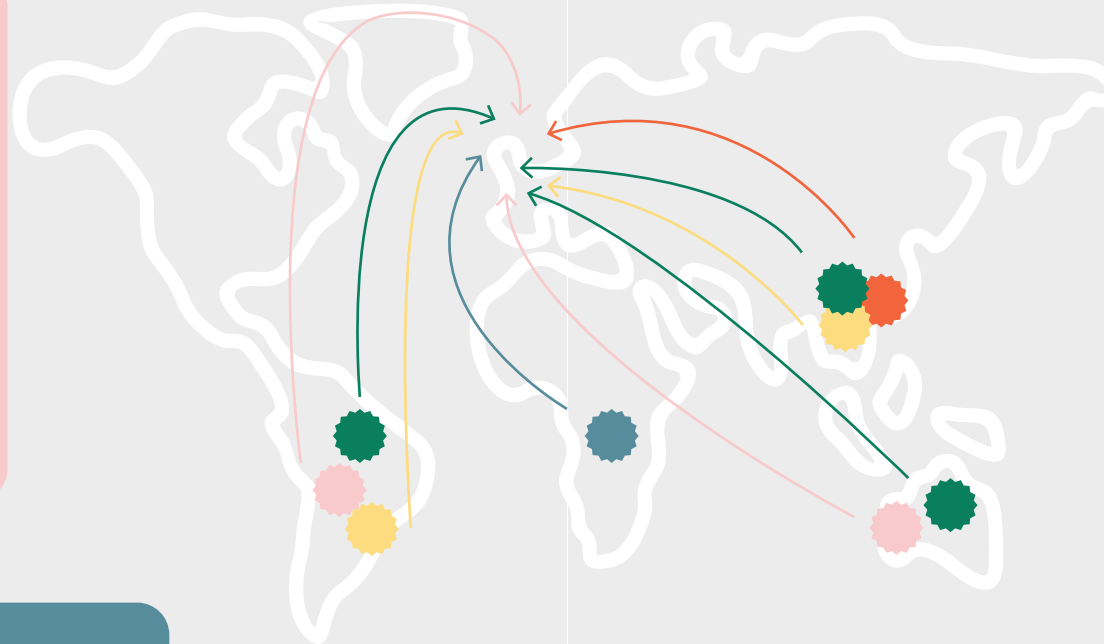
Less than 1% of lithium is recycled

## COBALT

Over 60% of the world's cobalt comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where 40,000 children work in mines

By 2040, demand will be 5 times higher than 2010

Used in batteries for electric vehicles and consumer devices



## IRON ORE

Used to make steel. Australia, Brazil and China supply two thirds of the world's steel

7% of global emissions come from steel production

In Brazil, two major dam failures from iron ore extraction sites within four years of each other have resulted in "immeasurable" damage, including the deaths of hundreds of people

## RARE EARTH ELEMENTS (REE)

76% comes from China, production expected to more than double by 2030

Used in magnets, essential to electric vehicles and wind turbine production

Huge toxic waste lakes created by REE production are poisoning people and wildlife

## COPPER

UK sources mainly comes from South America and China

By 2050, we will need more copper than is available from mines and recycled materials

Used in wiring, power generation and transmission and electrification

In 2018, the International Institute for Sustainable Development said "Of all the metals, the aggregate potential for damage to human and environmental health is the greatest for copper"



# THE PROBLEM WITH SCOTLAND'S WASTE

Today, we live in a **'take-make-dispose'** society, where we don't value materials or where they come from. This is incredibly wasteful – In 2021, Scotland produced 9.6 million tonnes of waste.

Our household recycling rate has been stuck at around 43% for the last decade. Over the same period, Wales has dramatically increased its recycling rate from 44% to 65%. They did this by **investing and standardising their bin systems** so that everyone has access to the same service. This needs to happen in Scotland too but recycling is only part of the story.

Rather than making waste and then recycling it, **it's much better for the environment if materials don't become waste in the first place**: fewer disposable products, products designed to last for longer and requirements for standard designs will all help this. Making these changes would require us to throw out the 'take-make-dispose' approach to materials and start valuing them properly.

Government needs to step up and lead this level of system change. The Scottish Government must **make companies change the design of their products to make them less polluting or pay for clean-up costs**. We need to see more investment and planning for embedding reuse organisations across our society too. And that starts with a strong and ambitious circular economy bill.



25 kg of litter is collected in Scotland every minute

Photo: Antoine Grier via Unsplash



One of the most important elements of a circular economy is making sure that the costs of managing waste and pollution are paid by the producers that are creating them rather than from the public purse. **There are lots of examples of this happening from around the world, and in the UK it's been the case for many years that producers of electronics are required to pay for their disposal.**

The **deposit return scheme** which is being introduced to Scotland is another way that this will happen. **Consumers will pay a 20p deposit** on single-use drink containers made of plastic, metal or glass. They get their 20p back by **returning the empty packaging** to any shop participating in the scheme and the can or bottle is recycled. DRS has **proven to be extremely successful** at raising recycling rates, reducing litter and saving carbon emissions in over 50 locations globally.

The circular economy bill needs to encourage this **producer responsibility** more widely, from clothing to wind turbines. The Scottish Government needs to **make companies pay for their polluting choices**, such as unnecessary packaging and products which are designed to be single use or non-recyclable. This will encourage them to reduce costs and the **funds raised can be used to pay for the harm** their products create, such as litter.

## GETTING THE POLLUTERS TO PAY

Photo: Nick Fewings via Unsplash



## WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN SCOTLAND'S CIRCULAR ECONOMY LAW?

To be as **strong as possible** the circular economy law must include:

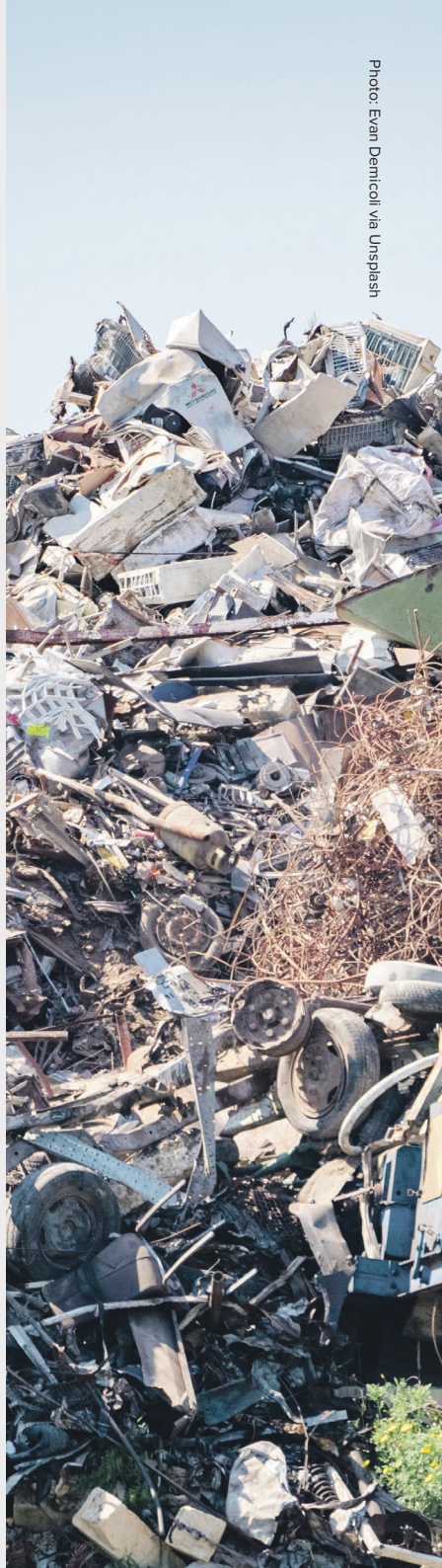
- 🌱 Targets to reduce the carbon and material impacts of our consumption to sustainable levels by 2045. These need to be **based on science and should match our existing domestic climate targets** and ensure Scotland's climate reduction plans are real on a global level.
- 🌱 An **independent public body** to advise the Scottish Government on progress and make sure that the circular economy being created in Scotland is **fair and sustainable**.
- 🌱 Meaningful consideration of a just transition: **supporting Scottish people and communities** as the economy changes and ensuring that our impacts for resources globally do not come at the expense of the human and environmental rights of people in the global south.
- 🌱 A circular economy strategy and resource plans **for every sector** to guide change right across the economy.

### CLOSING THE GAP

Scotland's existing climate targets **only cover emissions in Scotland** – the products we import don't count.

The proportion of our carbon footprint which comes from imports is rising – **imports now make up 58% of our carbon footprint emissions**. We need to close this gap to make sure our efforts to fight climate change have a real impact on a global level. Consumption targets do include imports, that's why we need them in the new Circular Economy Law.

Photo: Evan Demicoli via Unsplash



## WHAT NEXT?

Friends of the Earth Scotland will be campaigning for a **strong circular economy law at every stage as it moves through parliament**.

We hope you will **get involved** using some of the ideas in this booklet. This booklet is part of a **pack of resources** available on the Friends of the Earth Scotland website. You can **download and print any of these resources** to use when talking to other people about the circular economy.

Whatever you do to show your support for a strong circular economy law, please **share your success stories** with us and others.



### SHARE YOUR PHOTOS!

Remember to share any photos, videos or news of your actions and calls for support with us by:

🌱 Tag us on Twitter **@foescot**, Instagram **@foescot** and Facebook **@foescotland**

🌱 Use hashtags **#circulareconomyinscotland**

🌱 Email **info@foe.scot**





[www.foe.scot/circular-economy](http://www.foe.scot/circular-economy)

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