



MSP Policy Briefing Paper:

Scottish Government Debate: Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, 23rd June 2026

Circular economy and climate change

Our linear economy, that is based on the extraction, consumption and disposal of materials, is driving the climate crisis.

- Globally, the extraction and processing of material resources account for 55% of greenhouse gas emissions, 40% of particulate matter in our air, and 90% of total land use related biodiversity loss.¹
- Scotland's carbon footprint is increasing², and around 80% of it is made up of things we consume.³
- Over 98% of Scotland's material use comes from virgin resources.⁴

The Circular Economy (Scotland) Act⁵ was passed in June 2024 with unanimous cross-party support. It recognises the importance of consuming differently, using resources efficiently, and transitioning to a circular economy, benefiting both the environment and the economy.

The actions required by the Act must be implemented in the early part of this session of Parliament and focus on moving the way we deal with materials to the top of the waste hierarchy, particularly supporting increased levels of reuse and repair.

Like many other climate policies, measures to drive the transition to a circular economy would also create jobs and benefit the economy: adding to the over 80,000 roles that already exist and the £7bn the sector currently contributes.⁶

¹ <https://wedocs.unep.org/items/3ec5991f-1ab2-4d54-9000-c9d3cee81d16>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-carbon-footprint-1998-2022/>

³ <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/resources/carbon-cost>

⁴ <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/resources/circularity-gap-report>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2024/13/contents/enacted>

⁶ <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/resources/state-circular-economy-report>

Suggested points to raise in the debate

- When will the Scottish Government publish the consultation on circular economy targets, which are required under the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act to be set by 2026?

The Circular Economy (Scotland) 2024 Act requires Scottish Ministers to prepare and publish a circular economy strategy and to make provision for circular economy targets. An ambitious National Reuse Target should be part of this framework. Backed by suitable resources and an implementation plan, a National Reuse Target would drive resource efficiency, reduce environmental impact, spur economic growth, engage the public and build capacity in the community reuse sector. All of these elements are crucial for achieving Scotland's long-term sustainability and circular economy ambitions.

Ireland has already set the ambitious target of reusing 20kg of materials per head of population per year. Work should be commissioned to baseline current reuse levels in Scotland and a similar, appropriate and ambitious target set for Scotland.

- Bearing in mind the significant climate impact of our current levels of resource use, how will the Scottish Government make it easier for people to reuse, repair and share products rather than buying new, and support community organisations offering these services?

The recently published Circular Economy Strategy for Scotland⁷ commits to “consider how best to mainstream existing local authority, producer and waste management initiatives to expand reuse, repair and redistribution, reducing the impact of disposal and providing opportunities to address the cost of living, such as tool libraries, repair cafes, and reuse hubs.”

Our most recent impact report⁸ highlighted that together our members brought £966 million in social value to communities, saved 131,772 tonnes of CO₂ and provided over 2,500 jobs and nearly 8,500 volunteer positions. Additional support for these organisations, and for new initiatives to be set up, would increase these benefits further.

About Circular Communities Scotland

[Circular Communities Scotland](#) is a membership body that supports and represents over 270 reuse, repair and sharing charities and social enterprises across Scotland. Our members address over-consumption, prevent goods from entering landfill, create local jobs, develop economic opportunities, and help promote social and environmental justice.

Further contact and questions:

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⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/circular-economy-strategy-scotland/pages/7/>

⁸ circularcommunities.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Circular-Communities-Scotland-2025-Impact-Report.pdf