**Circular economy Bill consultation**

**Quakers in Scotland**

Quakers are a faith group committed to working for peace, equality, truth, and simplicity and sustainability. Quakers promote these values across Scotland through practical action and advocacy. As Quakers we recognise that economic systems profoundly affect culture. We believe that humans “*do not own the World and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will” Advices & Queries 42.* We all have responsibilities for all that we have been given and all we have taken from Mother Earth. In the face of overwhelming evidence of rapidly increasing destruction of the Earth we are called to work for a World that prioritises ecological repair and wellbeing. We can all make a contribution but without significant, committed government intervention it will never be enough. While we welcome progress that has been made, including the Climate Change Act 2019, the picture remains extremely challenging in terms of what it is vital to achieve during this decade.

**The Purpose of the economy**

While the current economic system has provided many material benefits, those benefits have been unequally shared and many of them have been brought about through the over-exploitation of the Earth's natural resources. We believe that until we create an economic system that values human wellbeing, fairness and sustainability above profits it will be very difficult to move beyond the existing linear and consumptive systems. We have previously written about this more extensively in our [response](https://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Response%20to%20the%20consultation%20on%20the%20National%20Strategy%20for%20Economic%20Transformation%20-%20Final%20%281%29.pdf) to the government’s consultation on the National Strategy for Economic Transformation where we outline a number of the principles we would like to see underpinning economic transformation within Scotland. While we appreciate that much of this broader consultation lies outwith the scope of the Circular Economy Bill, we would nonetheless encourage radical consideration of the function or purpose of the economy as it is our suggestion that the operation of the economy will largely reflect its function, or in-built priorities. We understand that the Scottish Government is already exploring this space with its proposals for a wellbeing economy and we are following these developments with interest. In this area we would also commend Kate Raworth’s work on Doughnut Economics and particularly the key concept: human economies need to operate within the zone that enables human flourishing while not exceeding the planetary boundaries beyond which natural systems begin to collapse. It is our general view of the Bill that it should refer to and indeed be grounded on these principles.

Nonetheless, here we also offer some narrower comments on the Bill. In offering these comments, it should also be noted that Quakers in Scotland are members of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS). SCCS are submitting a response to this inquiry, and as active partners in the coalition we wholeheartedly endorse their response. Here our submission is additional, and complementary to that of SCCS.

**Key points**

* **The Bill feels too skewed towards influencing consumer behaviour with little focus on manufacturing and production.** At present the Bill has a disproportionate focus on consumer choices and waste, which feature at the end of the linear economy. In some ways this is reflected in the Bill’s use of the maxim “reduce, reuse, recycle” which present this issue primarily as one of personal choice without recognising, and therefore tackling, the larger systemic causes. We believe that the Bill would be more effective if more attention was given to measures that governed the production of goods. Consumer choice is disempowered by the weakness of regulation further back in the supply chain – plastic packaging being a clear example.
* **The Bill needs to take account of Scotland’s raw material consumption and consumption based carbon emissions.** To ensure that the measures in this Bill have genuine impact, and don’t just externalise Scotland’s problems elsewhere, it is important that the Bill is underpinned by binding targets both in the form of raw material consumption and consumption based carbon emissions. This year the 19th of May marked the UK’s “Earth Overshoot Day”, when we used up all the resources that we could regenerate within a year. The material footprint target allows a measure of the economy’s overall circularity. The carbon footprint ensures those materials which are required in smaller amounts but which are carbon intensive (such as critical materials like lithium and neodymium, which are required for the energy transition) are not overlooked. Friends of the Earth Scotland have outlined more on this [here.](https://foe.scot/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Circular-Economy-in-Action-around-the-World-1.pdf)
* **The Bill gives some areas of the economy alarmingly little attention.** While areas such as municipal waste and recycling, textiles and electrical goods receive good coverage within the draft bill, other areas such as construction and agriculture receive very little attention.We would like to see greater attention given to circularity within Scottish agriculture and food production and within the built environment. In both these areas, circularity is not just a case of ensuring that materials are reduced, reused and recycled, but that the materials themselves are sustainable and that the processes and products utilise a level of biomimicry that works with and supports natural systems.
* **The Bill needs to be careful to make existing costs apparent rather than introducing new penalties.** Under “proposal 10: incentivizing waste reduction and recycling” the consultation document explores the possibility of “disincentivise or reduce residual waste production and collection”. We take this to mean the possibility of introducing financial penalties. While we recognize that high performing recycling zones often do utilize such measures we are concerned that such measures could further disadvantage those already experiencing economic hardship. We would encourage the government to explore this proposal with groups with lived experience of poverty, perhaps using such networks as the Poverty Alliance and the Poverty Truth Community, before embarking on this.

This is a significant moment for Scotland, as it is for all nations. As we recover from the pandemic and respond to the climate and ecological crisis. We urge the government to be bold in its response and to lay the foundations for a society in which all life may flourish. We believe that the Circular Economy Bill could play a significant part in this foundation, but that greater ambition is required.