

**DEFRA Consultation on the Waste Prevention Programme for England:
Towards a Resource-Efficient Economy**

Q8. Do you agree or disagree with our choice of impacts and outcomes as the right goals for us to be aiming to achieve? *Question framed as 'if you disagree tell us why' need to check we can give a qualified agreement.*

Agree.

While we agree with the choice of high-level outcomes and impacts we think it is important that underpinning them must be a prioritisation of local services and supply chains and SMEs. That is because frequently the most environmentally-friendly approach to reuse and repair is for this to be undertaken by a local company. This will strengthen local economies as well as reducing emissions. The available evidence suggests that moving towards more circular economies can be a boon to jobs and growth (see: <https://zerowasteworld.org/wp-content/uploads/Jobs-Report-ENGLISH-2.pdf> for a global perspective)

Q9. Do you agree or disagree that our policy approach covers all the areas for action that are needed? *Question framed as 'if you disagree tell us why' need to check we can give a qualified agreement.*

Agree.

We largely agree with the proposed policy approach though we would like to see more details about how this will be delivered. We understand that this will likely come following the publication of the Environment Bill.

DEFRA and the Government more generally have a critical role to play in creating a functional and resilient market where consumers are incentivised to repair products rather than buying new. This means addressing the financial aspect of this choice as well as the considerable 'hassle factor' that comes with repairing particularly large items or items that aren't commonly repaired currently. Without considering these issues many consumers may opt to buy new rather than repair,

particularly if the cost of a new product is comparable to repairing their existing product.

Creating an effective market will also mean preventing any perverse incentive to produce products that need to be repeatedly repaired – a kind of adapted engineered obsolescence. This could involve creating warranties for individual new and replacement parts as well as entire products. This could be addressed as part of the ecodesign and resource efficiency standards being considered by BEIS.

As the policy approach is developed a sufficiently funded campaign for consumers should be undertaken to increase awareness and prompt action. It may be beneficial to roll this out through local authorities so the information is specific to a local area and what services are available there.

Energy Saving Trust has extensive experience of using consumer and industry-focused campaigns to increase awareness of programmes. We administered the Energy Saving Recommended (ESR) Scheme and the associated consumer information and awareness raising efforts for a 10-year period spanning 2000–2010. The ESR was a UK energy-efficiency product certification scheme, designed to improve energy efficiency standards in home products by showcasing the best performing products. The scheme was promoted through national marketing and communications campaign in partnership with retailers and manufacturers (online, in-store, at consumer and trade events like the Ideal Home Show and Lighting Show, national TV, radio & print advertising “look for the logo”) and supported by telephone advice and information services – national hotline and network of local advice centres). We found that taking this comprehensive approach to consumer engagement paid dividends.

Creating a web-based page where consumers can search for repair services in their area could be a useful addition to a wider campaign. Resource Efficiency Wales, funded through Welsh Government, operate an online repair directory that offers a good model for such an approach (see: <https://repairefficiencywales.co.uk/repair-directory/>).

[Designing out Waste: Ecodesign, Extended Producer Responsibility and Consumer Information] Q10. Do you agree or disagree that the measures described are likely to achieve the overall aim set out at the beginning of this chapter? Please provide details / explain your answer.

Aim: to drive change in product design so that products are made to be durable, repairable and recyclable, and can be remanufactured where appropriate.

Once again, we largely agree with the proposed measures believing that in principle they will help to achieve the aims set out at the beginning of the chapter. However, we note that many of these measures, particularly around Extended Producer Responsibility, rely upon either Environment Bill or the eventual outcomes of the BEIS work around ecodesign and product standards. We hope that the Environment Bill proves as ground breaking as has been suggested, conferring adequate powers to achieve these and other aims, and that DEFRA can work closely with BEIS on a set of ambitious ecodesign and product standards.

Part of any Extended Producer Responsibility scheme should be a commitment on the part of the producer to provide 'courtesy' products while a customer's own product is being repaired. This is a system which works well in the automotive sector and increasingly for mobile phones but could be rolled out more widely to address the 'hassle factor' of having goods repaired.

Setting ambitious standards does not have to be entirely burdensome on companies, the regulations should seek to reward those companies that are taking the lead and going above and beyond what's required. This could mean acknowledging companies that make use of waste products from production and promoting their products to consumers.

Around the issue of tackling obsolescence, as per our previous comments, we believe that this should include component parts as well as whole products so that a perverse incentive is not created to manufacture products that need frequent repair. Consumers or independent repairers should be able to disassemble, repair and replace component parts without permanent damage to products.

The ability for consumers or independent retailers to repair products more easily could be enhanced by implementing the following:

- Improving the availability of spare parts, including:
 - Duration of supply – all spare parts should be available during the average product lifetime, i.e. 12 years after the last unit is supplied.
 - Maximum delivery time – A maximum delivery time of one week for spare parts should also be specified.
 - Prevent bundling of spare parts
- Ensuring that spare parts can be replaced and appliances dismantled with commonly available tools
- Making repair and maintenance information freely available

As well as taking a stand against the premature obsolescence of physical products it is our view that this should encompass software updates. Currently many electronics become hard-to-use or even completely obsolete because the company no longer provides software updates for older models (see: <https://www.ft.com/content/40496fb7-73c9-47fa-8fce-56f6b03cc6ca>).

Considering software products in terms of energy and resource efficiency may seem counter-intuitive but the energy requirements of different software packages, especially after upgrades, can be a significant determinant of how long a consumer will retain a given related hardware product – impacting on durability and resource efficiency. This approach has already begun to be considered under the '[Blue Angel](https://www.blauer-engel.de/de/produktwelt/elektrogeraete/ressourcen-und-energieeffiziente-softwareprodukte/ressourcen-und-energieeffiziente-softwareprodukte)' programme (<https://www.blauer-engel.de/de/produktwelt/elektrogeraete/ressourcen-und-energieeffiziente-softwareprodukte/ressourcen-und-energieeffiziente-softwareprodukte>) which seeks to minimise the energy requirements of software and provides a blue angel label for high-achieving software.

We welcome the proposal for a consumer information campaign. In our previous role as manager of the government-backed Energy Saving Recommended scheme and our continued work around labelling (ie supporting industry and consumers with the switch to the new labelling regime through the Label2020 programme) we know the value of these approaches in terms of consumer awareness and engagement. The consultation document suggests that DEFRA's

“Product requirements and consumer information *may focus* on durability, reparability and recyclability , amongst other things, with scope to include other criteria where appropriate (for example water usage during production, release of microfibres or embodied carbon)” – we believe this wording should be strengthened. Though it may not be possible to immediately incorporate this information into product standards or consumer campaigns we should at least be looking to include them as part of a future ambition given their importance to the climate and our environment.

On water usage specifically, we recently undertook some work around water efficiency labelling for specific products which we would be happy to share and discuss further. This work found that there was a strong case to include both an energy label and a water label, with the water labelling covering a wide range of domestic water uses. There is considerable international experience in both separate and combined energy and water labels, and this should be used to determine best practice and maximise effectiveness. The full report on our modelling can be found here: <https://waterwise.org.uk/knowledge-base/water-labelling-taps-and-showers-only-comparison-est-2020/>

As well as being more ambitious in our desire to include the suggested elements of sustainability above we should also look to include a label or mark that identifies when products or materials are made from recycled content as well as being recyclable themselves. Many producers market their products by referring to this information but there is no universal system for verifying these claims.

As well as adopting a precautionary approach to chemicals to guard against future bans the UK and DEFRA should be looking to be leaders in the adoption of sustainable chemicals with low environmental impacts. In the case of refrigerants low Global Warming Potential (GWP) alternatives already exist and could be adopted in the UK as standard.

On the issue of refrigerants, there is an excellent opportunity for the UK to go beyond the existing EU regulations on high GWP refrigerants with significant potential to reduce / avoid CO₂ emissions by incentivising the uptake of the existing alternatives on the market. Current EU regulation sets out a manufacturer

bonus for those who reduce the GWP refrigerant content of their devices. The uptake of this bonus has been minimal. Much of the regulation regarding these compounds looks set to be covered in the EU by the provision for F-Gases. We believe that ecodesign measures in this product class could complement similar F-Gas regulation in the UK. Uptake of alternative refrigerants has been slow for both fixed and portable AC, illustrating that the mix of incentives and regulation is not currently effective. In practice this means that the GWP of AC units is higher than it needs to be given that suitable alternatives already exist. Not taking measures to address this and encourage an early transition to alternatives will mean high levels of high GWP refrigerants will persist in the market, negatively impacting consumers who will face high maintenance costs due to their increasing scarcity – this may encourage consumers to dispose of otherwise functional units earlier than necessary, contributing to poor resource efficiency. We suggest that the manufacturer bonus be enhanced with a sliding scale of bonus so that those manufacturers who show ambition and take the lead are rewarded more. It should also be made clear to consumers which products are using natural refrigerants and/or low GWP (<150 GWP) refrigerant via a pictogram on an energy label.

The proposal to adopt a systematic approach to identifying products for which it is appropriate to regulate as described is welcome. As part of this systematic approach consideration should also be given to incidence of products ending up in landfill. Those products which are most often thrown away and have the shortest shelf life should be prioritised for action and regulation alongside those products which take the longest to breakdown or cannot be recycled at all.

When it comes to designing the first pilot studies on either furniture, textiles or construction materials some lessons could be learned from the existing mandatory French repairability index label which covers washing machines, TVs, laptops and electric lawnmowers. [DG Justice's behavioural study on consumer engagement in the circular economy](#) describes how effective resource efficiency labelling could be in shifting purchasing decisions towards products with greater durability and reparability.

If other product classes were to be considered for pilots electronic equipment would be a worthwhile consideration. As well as the software-prompted obsolescence we discussed above many component parts of electronics are serialised so that they do not work in older models. There is also a strong public engagement angle to this, personal electronics are the most expensive thing that consumers regularly replace and there is already a real awareness of the premature obsolescence issue. An ambitious pilot study in this area is likely to engage the public to a greater degree than elsewhere.

We note your proposal to work with stakeholders on identifying the most effective approach for pilot schemes linked to ecodesign and/or producer responsibility measures for different product groups. We would welcome the opportunity to engage further with you in this area and share our experiences and expertise.

This is a complex area covering many Departmental responsibilities and so it is welcome to see a commitment to working with BEIS on this. DEFRA should also seek to work closely with DfT and MHCLG from an early stage if pilots are planned that will cover car parts and construction materials.

[Reuse, Repair, Refill, Remanufacture: local services and facilities] Q11. Do you agree or disagree that the measures described are likely to achieve the overall aim set out at the beginning of this chapter? Please provide details / explain your answer

Aim: to ensure there is a well-functioning system of public, private and third sector organisations and services operating at the local level that facilitate reuse, repair, refill and remanufacture of products.

We feel that more detail and ambition should be shown across the proposed measures. These proposals should address several key barriers that people face when looking to responsibly recycle or dispose of their products.

While we are in favour of local authorities taking a lead and innovating in the areas of reuse, repair, refill, remanufacture this must be paired with sufficient funding and support. Local authorities have competing demands on resources and would struggle to take on these extra responsibilities without additional support. It is likely that a redoubling of efforts towards repair and reuse will require an expanded workforce, which is welcome given our commitments to a green recovery and the creation of more green jobs, but will mean addressing the skills gap and recruiting and training staff. It would be positive to see efforts to support local authorities in addressing this at the local level.

While improving the data collection on reuse and recycling in local authority areas is worthwhile from a consumer perspective, consumers are concerned that recycling is being sent overseas and in some cases not being recycled at all as has been illustrated recently with waste shipped to Turkey and then incinerated. This perception risks harming the incentive for people to responsibly handle their waste. When we talk about exploring improvements to regulatory policy this issue must be a priority. As a principle we should be seeking to responsibly handle and recycle our own waste rather than shipping it overseas wherever possible, with transparent reporting of where our waste goes.

When it comes to encouraging local authorities to pilot circular economy hubs some best practice should be learned from Wales which has the third highest rates of recycling in the world. Ensuring some degree of uniformity across local authority schemes would also be beneficial. Currently, domestic recycling provision is a postcode lottery where your location determines what can and cannot be recycled (see: <https://www.suez.co.uk/en-gb/our-offering/communities-and-individuals/recycling-in-the-uk>). There are also persistent issues around recycling facilities for flats and houses of multiple occupation.

[Data and Information: from industrial symbiosis to research & innovation] Q12.
Do you agree or disagree that the measures described are likely to achieve the

overall aim set out at the beginning of this chapter? Please provide details / explain your answer

Aim: to ensure there is better access to information as to what secondary materials, including by-products and products, are in the economy, facilitating increased use in manufacturing, and providing for access to knowledge to drive change

Agree.

If an effective materials datahub can be produced that would make a significant impact on industrial and construction efficiency and on the achievement of circular economy principles. We recognise that this will prove challenging and the funding sources and architecture of such a scheme needs to be finalised. It is our view that the details of this scheme should be consulted on as soon as possible. A similar approach is underway in the Netherlands where coarse material passports tied to a materials database have been created by the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research/Nederlandse Organisatie voor Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek (TNO) (see: www.tno.nl/en/focus-areas/circular-economy-environment/roadmaps/circular-economy/circular-building/online-database-of-circular-building-materials/). The creation of an all-encompassing product database linked to passports or certificates appears to be the most efficient end goal (though initially setting up such a scheme will require some consideration). Such a scheme would incorporate, for example, information needed for effective ecodesign and labelling, safety marking, recycling and reuse services. Lessons here could be learned from the recently-launched European Product Database for Energy Labelling (EPREL). Consumer organisations we liaise with support the idea of product passports, noting that they go further than the ecodesign and labelling legislation.

We would support, as a starting point, introducing product passports as part of the proposed ecodesign and consumer information pilots.

Adopting a systems-based approach to industry and industrial by-products is also welcome. The consultation document gives the example of steel slag being used in cement manufacture though there will be numerous opportunities to

achieve greater industrial symbiosis. It is our view that BEIS should be more closely engaged in this area. We note in the consultation that they will be considering the potential role of industrial symbiosis in reducing industrial emissions but would like to see this commitment strengthened and for BEIS to work more collaboratively with DEFRA in this area.

[Construction] Q13: Do you agree or disagree that the measures described are likely to achieve the overall aim set out at the beginning of this chapter? Please provide details / explain your answer

Aim: to reduce construction waste and increase the reuse of construction materials at their highest value. This means designing buildings for adaptability and deconstruction, increased reuse of components, use of materials that can be reused and recycled, and improved demolition systems.

Agree.

We would direct DEFRA to our response to the previous question as much of this is also relevant here. Achieving the kind of circularity that we discussed in the previous response will require some proactive thinking around how buildings are constructed with deconstruction in mind. For this reason it is great to see these issues addressed within the overall aim of the chapter.

Upskilling in the construction sector is required to achieve the uplift in build quality needed to build the high quality, sustainable and affordable homes we need. Building high quality from the outset is preferable to building lower quality homes that do not perform as intended and need to be repaired or improved after only a few years (or months in some cases).

We welcome the suggestion that MHCLG will look to encourage local authorities to take action through the planning process to promote sustainable resource use in new construction. It would be good to have some clearer guidance on when these changes are likely to come into force and what DEFRA's role is likely to be in designing any guidance to local authorities. Some consideration will also have to be given to the question of how local authorities will be funded to undertake this

work and monitor standards as well as how consistency of outcomes can be achieved across different local authority areas.

[Electrical and Electronic Products] Q16: Do you agree or disagree that the measures described are likely to achieve the overall aim set out at the beginning of this chapter? Please provide details / explain your answer

Aim: to increase levels of collection of Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment, increase reuse, repair and remanufacture of electronic and electrical products and develop options to design out waste using ecodesign principles.

Agree.

An imminent review of the regulations around waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) is welcome. We hope that this review is wide-ranging and considers a number of different policy options and both incentives and disincentives. Throughout the priority should be to encourage the reuse rather than the recycling or remanufacture of WEEE in the first instance. We look forward to engaging further with the government on these new regulations.

The efficient remanufacturing and recycling of WEEE could be supported through mandatory and standardised marking of products containing rare earth metals. We recommend introducing an information requirement on the presence of rare earth materials in products, their localisation, as well as their extraction process allowing safe and cost-effective reuse or recycling.

Organisations could be incentivised to pass or sell on their old equipment to other organisations rather than recycling it. At the household level it can be difficult to pass on electricals as most charity shops will not accept used electricals and selling WEEE on privately represents a significant investment in time. Households should be able to easily pass on old electricals without sending them to landfill.

[Road vehicles] Q17: Do you agree or disagree that the measures described are likely to achieve the overall aim set out at the beginning of this chapter? Please provide details / explain your answer

Aim: to explore means of increasing reuse, repair, and remanufacture, in addition to design considerations such as light-weighting, to reduce waste in this sector and contribute towards Net Zero by 2050

Agree.

The range of measures proposed in this chapter are very welcome. Here, as in many of the sectors described in this consultation, we think care should be taken to align future work with the outputs of other departments (ie the Transport Decarbonisation Plan) and to work as closely as possible with DfT (and other relevant partners).

While considering the lightweight design principles some consideration should also be given to disincentivising the purchase of the heaviest and most resource intensive personal vehicles. The second-largest driver of increasing carbon emissions between 2010 and 2018 was the growing preference for SUVs, offsetting most of the efficiency gains achieved over the same period (see: <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/growing-preference-for-suvs-challenges-emissions-reductions-in-passenger-car-market>). Appliances already provide information on the label about capacity which gives the consumer an indication of whether the product is suitable for their needs. In our response to the BEIS energy-related products consultation we suggested that this labelling regime could be enhanced with some indication of the typical size an appliance should be (eg for a family of four). Similar logic could be applied to vehicles with some indication of the 'use' of the vehicle e.g. city commuting, rural terrain/inclement weather etc.

As the UK approaches the 2030 phaseout date for new petrol and diesel vehicles and recent survey data suggest that a quarter of UK households plan to buy an EV in the next five years action should be taken now to ensure that mechanics have the right levels of knowledge to repair EVs. A central database detailing where

consumers can go to have their EV repaired by an accredited mechanic would be beneficial. This issue around mechanic knowledge and skill goes further than EVs with most modern cars now containing some elements which can only be repaired by the vehicle manufacturer. This has the potential to reduce competition and harm SME mechanics. All personal vehicles should, within reason, be repairable by a trained mechanic not necessarily affiliated with the vehicle manufacturer.

We note DEFRA's desire to "explore the possibility of developing a specific standard/quality mark for second-hand parts". We would welcome this approach having seen how effective similar standards and quality marks have been in improving the quality of other product classes. Given our experience managing and working on various standards and labelling schemes and our ongoing work with DfT we are well-placed to assist in the creation of such a standard or quality mark.

It is great to see the commitment to improving battery resource efficiency through the £318m Faraday Battery Challenge. The reuse, remanufacturing, and eventual disassembly of batteries offers a significant growth opportunity for the UK to capitalise on. In a relatively short amount of time it is likely that the majority of personal vehicles will be EVs and battery storage for renewable energy will be commonplace. Making the use of these batteries as circular and efficient as possible must be a priority and could create thousands of jobs across the UK. Recent estimates of the value of EV battery recycling suggest that in 2030 materials with a value of €408 million in current prices could be recovered with this rising to €555 under more ambitious scenarios and increasing rapidly as we approach 2050 (see: https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/sites/default/files/circular_economy_impacts_batteries_for_evs.pdf).

We should safeguard the finite resources required to manufacture our renewable generation and battery storage assets by preventing these resources from going to landfill. As well as the recommendation we made in our response to Question 16 for mandatory and standardised marking of products containing rare earth metals (eg EV batteries), it should become common practice for EV batteries

nearing the end of their life on the road to be repurposed to store electricity generated by small solar arrays or to be used in smaller vehicles. To assist this some universal design principles for batteries would be beneficial so that they can be easily transferred to new machines.

[Monitoring and Evaluation] Q20: Do you agree or disagree with the described approach to monitoring and evaluation of this Waste Prevention Programme? Please provide details/explain your answer

Disagree.

The macro-level metrics proposed for monitoring the Waste Prevention Programme are welcome and will certainly help to measure how much waste is produced and give indications of progress against resource efficiency and carbon targets as well as employment and green growth-focused data. However, there are no proposals for compliance monitoring for organisations that will have actions imposed on them. Issues around compliance already exist within the current regulatory regime and there is no reason to suspect that this will differ with the addition of new regulations and sectors. In our view surveillance and monitoring for compliance is essential. Of course, we recognise that it is challenging to set out an approach to compliance monitoring before we know which sectors will be complying with what regulations but we think that as a minimum a 'holding' statement should be set out which states that a regulatory and compliance system will be introduced to monitor the actions of regulated parties with the details of such a system reviewed once the regulatory system has been decided upon.

As well as greenhouse gas emissions an ambition should be set out to measure other environmental pollutants produced through waste and waste products, this could build on metrics already in existence. For example, estimates already exist for the quantity of farmyard pesticides polluting our waterways each year. Given that we can't manage what we can't measure efforts should be made to account for the full spectrum of pollutants. This is a climatic as well as environmental issue as damage to our environment and its biodiversity directly impacts upon the rate

of carbon sequestration and accelerates the degradation of our peatland and soils, exacerbating the climate crisis.

As far as possible the proposed macro-level metrics should be collected at local authority level to help identify best practice and areas in need of greater support. This will also help to create a more joined up waste prevent programme given the earlier proposals within the document that suggest a heightened role for local authorities in delivering this programme.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage further with DEFRA on any expansion of the metrics used to track progress in the circular economy.