

# BREAKING BAD HABITS: MOVING TOWARDS A ZERO WASTE SOCIETY



## GOVERNMENT

Adopt a clear policy framework.

Implement the targets in the EU's Circular Economy Directives beyond 2019 and go further.

## MANUFACTURERS

Make it easier for consumers to do the right thing.

Ensure sustainable design and commit to creating an effective model for Extended Producer Responsibility.

## RETAILERS

Accept waste prevention is good business practice.

Embrace environmental charges and engage customers in waste prevention.

## LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Inspire the public to waste less and recycle more.

Deliver services with effective communications that motivate residents to improve their waste management.

**The clock is ticking. On August 1st 2018, in just seven months, the earth had used up a year's worth of the planet's resources, two days earlier than in 2017. Despite the best intentions of governments, businesses, and consumers, we continue to use resources at an ever-increasing pace and then waste them. Together, we are creating more and more waste; waste we are not dealing with, and which ends up as litter on our streets, parks, beaches and seas or as mountains of landfill. This is our legacy to our children. Keep Britain Tidy believes we need to act now if we are to avert the environmental disaster we are creating.**

As a nation, we use around 570 million tonnes of resources each year, a staggering 8.9 tonnes for every person in the UK. In turn, we create more than 200 million tonnes of waste a year. Though the majority of waste is created by the construction and demolition sectors, UK households produce in excess of 27 million tonnes of waste every year, not helped by the fact that we throw away 25% of all food and drink bought for consumption.

We are little better when it comes to recycling. Even with a comprehensive and widespread household recycling service, we still recycle less than half of our waste. And Keep Britain Tidy's latest National Litter Survey illustrates that an increasing number of sites are

unacceptably littered, with local authorities spending almost £700 million cleaning our streets, while also dealing with more than 1 million reported incidents of fly-tipping a year.

It's clear that we need to replace our current linear model of consumption and things are looking up for a more circular economy - on paper at least - with several government strategies and plans published in the past year that point to an encouraging direction of travel.

For Keep Britain Tidy, tackling litter and waste go hand-in-hand. Litter is misappropriated resource. By wasting less and recycling more we could realise our ambitions to reduce litter and create a better environment. A country that manages its resources

effectively will become one that is less littered.

We continue to work with local authorities around the country, door-stepping thousands of properties, exploring local attitudes to recycling and developing evidenced interventions that improve recycling rates and reduce contamination. We campaigned successfully for the introduction of the single-use carrier bag charge and our award-winning Centre for Social Innovation is at the forefront of research into waste prevention and recycling.

In this action plan we explore what is required from key stakeholders in the resources and waste value chain to create a more sustainable, cleaner and healthier future.



## THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

**To develop a cohesive set of policies with strategic aims aligned across government departments.**

Following a period with little or no coherent government policy on waste, it's promising that we now have a range of strategic plans, all pointing towards the development of a more circular economy.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the Clean Growth Strategy seek to achieve zero avoidable waste by 2050, the Industrial Strategy aims to double resource productivity by 2050 and the National Infrastructure Commission Report emphasises recycling over incineration as a means of dealing with our current levels of residual waste. With the Government due to publish its much-anticipated Resources and Waste Strategy, the opportunity for real progress is tangible.

We applaud the Government's lead in bringing the value chain together and providing a real sense of direction. Of course, what is needed now is the detail.

As a starting point, we believe that the EU's Circular Economy package and the

targets and actions enshrined within the various supporting directives must be translated fully into UK law, in particular ensuring that, through well-designed Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), producers cover the entire costs of waste management for any products they place on the market.

We also believe that government should consider going further. The recent decision by the Chinese Government to ban mixed recycled imports and introduce stringent contamination thresholds, provides the UK with a clear opportunity to develop a world-leading waste prevention, reuse and recycling system. Government should give consideration to: setting national waste prevention targets, exploring virgin material taxes, introducing a comprehensive deposit return scheme, minimum mandatory recycled content targets and consumer-facing charges for single-use items. Treatment options such as Energy from Waste and

Anaerobic Digestion have their place in the waste hierarchy but should not take precedence over the need for prevention, reuse and recycling.

In support, we want to see government departments work seamlessly in delivering on this ambition. Defra, MHCLG, BEIS and HM Treasury must ensure that policies, targets, industrial sector plans, financial incentives and taxation are aligned to drive the whole of the value chain towards a more circular economy and a more sustainable future.

**Keep Britain Tidy calls on government to enshrine all the targets in the EU Circular Economy package in UK law and actively explore how we might go further. In particular, Keep Britain Tidy's Centre for Social Innovation will support the research and insights needed to ensure that measures are relevant, targeted and impactful.**

## THE ROLE OF MANUFACTURERS

**We are great believers in the idea that if you make it easy for people to do the right thing then, by and large, they will.**

It follows that manufacturers of the goods and packaging put to market every day have an opportunity to support consumers in making sustainable choices. Indeed, we believe it makes good business sense to do so.

The EU have estimated that around 80% of the environmental impact of a product can be positively influenced at the design stage and yet too often we find manufacturers creating

products that require replacement or upgrade on too frequent a basis; products that can't be easily recycled and packaging that is out of proportion to the product it encapsulates.

We want to see manufacturers embrace fully the potential afforded by the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility, working with government to ensure that any scheme:

- Covers 100% of the ultimate costs of collection, processing and treatment of waste
- Rewards good design for durability and support for repairability
- Provides tangible financial incentives for increasing the level of recycled material in products
- Effectively prohibits hard-to-recycle materials from entering the marketplace



**Keep Britain Tidy calls on manufacturers to champion the development of a more circular economy, working alongside government in the design of a comprehensive Extended Producer Responsibility scheme that incentivises and normalises design for sustainability. We will work with government and manufacturers to support the development of such a scheme.**

## THE ROLE OF RETAILERS

**With almost 200,000 registered retail businesses in the UK, retailers have a critical role to play in the development of a circular economy through the millions of direct interactions they have with customers on a daily basis.**

Already we've seen retailers taking action, such as the light-weighting of own-brand packaging, discounted pricing to encourage sustainable purchasing or reducing their reliance on single-use plastic. However, there is a substantial opportunity to go further and develop a more consistent approach to the way in which retailers influence the purchasing habits and behaviour of their customers.

In particular, we want to see the retail sector embrace charges

and progressive taxes on single-use items with the purpose of fast-tracking behaviour change and switches to more sustainable alternatives.

We also encourage the sector to use its marketing and communication expertise and channels to develop the story of sustainability and circularity as related to the customer journey and experience, helping to normalise the concept of sustainability and a circular economy on the high street.

**Keep Britain Tidy calls on the retail sector to work closely with government in the creation of harmonised charges or environmental taxation that works across the retail sector in encouraging waste prevention through sustainable purchasing. Additionally, Keep Britain Tidy will seek partnerships with forward-thinking high street and online retailers to support development of creative, customer-focused communications, amplifying the drive towards a more sustainable retail experience.**

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

### Local authorities can play a unique role in helping people waste less and recycle more.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that the public are confused when it comes to managing household waste, having to contend not only with a complex array of packaging materials but also a bewildering landscape of collection systems comprising multi-coloured boxes, bins and bags. It is perhaps not surprising that our recycling rates have flat-lined.

We want to see the development of a standardised national recycling system,

collecting a consistent set of easily recycled packaging materials. Such a system should be designed to maximise recycling, while minimising contamination, and provide for separate food waste collection as a means of driving up recycling rates and providing a feedstock for anaerobic digestion, delivering greener energy.

We also believe that local authorities can play a key role in developing innovation in waste management, in particular

through exploring concepts such as Pay As You Throw, which evidence suggests can encourage waste prevention and greater recycling. Keep Britain Tidy's work with local authorities, engaging residents in creative and impactful local recycling campaigns, has also been shown to prevent waste and boost recycling rates and we will continue to offer our expertise to authorities around the country.



**Keep Britain Tidy calls for a harmonised national recycling system. In particular, local authorities should consider how the potential for investment into the sector from Extended Producer Responsibility could allow them to transition their waste collection services to a new national system over an agreed timeframe. We will support local authorities through targeted research and by developing the campaigns needed to allow the public to play their full part in waste prevention and increased recycling.**



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