

**Petition Number:** P-05-1023

**Petition title:** Welsh Government funding for recycling bins and collections in all education settings in Wales

**Text of petition:**

Presently, councils in Wales charge schools to collect recyclable waste. With limited annual funding this is a cost that schools find difficult to meet. As a result, a huge amount of recyclable waste is going into landfill as recycling bins and collection are not provided.

In April 2019, the Welsh Government declared a climate emergency, yet teachers and learners are not able to contribute to reducing their carbon emissions in their place of work or learning. Many teachers take recycling from their classrooms to recycle at home, or Eco Clubs in schools collect waste, but there needs to be consistency nationally, so that recycling becomes a habit at home and at school.

I am calling for Welsh Government to provide funding to enable this to happen across the country, to really show their motto of being a small country with big ambition.

It is a complete paradox that we are educating pupils to live more sustainably and be more environmentally conscious, but in the very places they learn about these issues, they cannot carry out these actions.

The Successful Futures Curriculum aims for all learners to be ethical and informed citizens of Wales and the World. Recycling should be achievable in all schools as part of being an ethical citizen, especially in a country that ranks second in the world for recycling household waste.

Recycling in all schools has to be an integral part of the Welsh Government's aim to be zero waste by 2050 and be part of the Low Carbon Plan for Wales.

This has to be about more than just personal responsibility and about enabling and empowering our young people to act and make positive choices and, for educators and all who work in schools to be able to follow through on the messages they are giving to our young people.

## 1. Background

Under the *Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012* local authorities have the power to charge for waste collection and disposal from non-domestic premises. Such premises include universities, schools and other educational establishments. **It is therefore at the discretion of local authorities**

**whether to charge for waste collection and disposal from schools.** It is up to schools as to whether they choose to procure their waste collection services from the local authority or from a commercial provider.

Prior to the 2012 regulations, all local authorities were obligated to collect waste from these premises when requested, but could only charge for collection, not disposal. The changes came into effect following a joint [consultation on the previous controlled waste regulations](#) in November 2010 by the UK Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the then Welsh Assembly Government. The proposals enabled local authorities to make a charge for waste collection and disposal to establishments listed under [Schedule 2 of the Controlled Waste Regulations 1992](#), including schools. The [joint government response to the consultation](#) was published in March 2012. It stated:

...our proposals to allow local authorities the power to charge educational establishments for their waste disposal received near unanimous support from respondents. As a result, we intend to legislate to treat educational establishments as commercial waste.

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government published its [Towards Zero Waste](#) strategy in 2010. The strategy set out the approach the Welsh Government would take to reach its target of Wales being a zero waste country by 2050. More recently, the Welsh Government has consulted on its new circular economy strategy, [Beyond Recycling](#). However, neither of these strategies specifically address the issue of recycling (or waste) collections from schools and other educational establishments.

In April 2019, the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government, Hannah Blythyn MS, launched a [£6.5m Circular Economy Fund](#) for local authorities and publicly funded bodies in Wales. Under the scheme, grants of up to £500,000 have been offered to publicly funded bodies to adapt their processes and to transition to a circular economy. The Minister's letter states that:

£3.7 million of funding has been allocated to date to 34 projects. In total 91 applications have been received for the second round of the Circular Economy Fund, including applications from various schools and universities. The benefits realised across the 34 projects supported to date include; improved recycling rates; improved quality of recyclates;

reduced single use plastics; revenue efficiency savings for local authorities; and reduced vehicle movements therefore reduced emissions of carbon and pollutant.

The Minister says that the petition highlights the issue of the costs of recycling and where those costs fall. She refers to work that the Welsh Government is currently undertaking on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) as part of the UK [\*Environment Bill 2019-21\*](#). EPR aims to ensure that producers bear the cost of disposal of products that they place onto the market, in line with the “polluter pays” principle. The proposed EPR scheme will make producers responsible for the full net costs for their waste management activities once the packaging has been used. More information on EPR can be found in a recent [Senedd Research blog post on the UK Environment Bill](#). The letter states that a consultation on the detailed design of the scheme is planned for 2021.

### 3. Welsh Parliament action

The issue of waste and recycling collections from schools has not been considered in the Senedd.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.