

Written evidence from Presca Sportswear (Grn Sportswear Ltd)

About us: Presca Sportswear (trading name for Grn Sportswear Ltd) was launched to make sportswear better, creating high-performance cycling, triathlon and athletic wear from recycled materials with an ethical supply chain. We pioneer ways for the performance sportswear industry to make a positive impact on our society and our planet and our ambition is that, by 2022, every product we design will be 100% recycled and 100% recyclable, through innovative research and design.

Response to Fixing Fashion Follow Up:

Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to respond to the Environmental Audit Committee's work on revisiting fashion sustainability. We submitted a response to your original inquiry through our parent company, GRN Sportswear Ltd. We have focused our response on those questions where we have most insight and have provided some additional anecdotal feedback on some of the other questions.

Question 1: What progress has been made in reducing the environmental and social impact of the fashion industry since the Fixing Fashion report came out?

Thanks to the greater emphasis that is being placed on sustainable fashion, and the light being shone on poor practice, there is some evidence that larger brands are starting to respond to consumer demands for more sustainable and ethical clothing, often working in conjunction with organisations seeking to drive change. This is a positive move in the right direction. However, in many cases, these appear to amount to pilot projects rather than fundamental change in the way that clothing is produced, manufactured and sold and so we welcome the Committee's return to this issue which will shine a light on the underlying issues that remain to be addressed.

Question 2: What impact has the pandemic had on fashion waste?

We do not have any data on this. However, the closure of charity shops for long periods of time means that there are fewer outlets for second hand/used clothing.

Question 3: What impact has the pandemic had on the relationship between fashion retailers and suppliers?

A number of reports have indicated that there has been a widely felt impact on the relationship between fashion retailers and suppliers as a result of the pandemic, which appears to have felt most deeply by the most vulnerable within the supply chain. For example, a report by the Clean Clothes Campaign, covered in EcoTextile News, found that garment workers in supply chain countries across South and Southeast Asia received 38 percent less pay than their regular pay on average at the height of the pandemic.

(<https://www.ecotextile.com/2020081026504/social-compliance-csr-news/report-pandemic-cost-garment-workers-billions.html>)

A further report by the Better Buying Institute (BBI) "has concluded that fashion brands and retailers are offloading their financial hardships onto suppliers, with a survey of 147 factories across 30 countries highlighting that since demand picked back up, brands have attempted to undercut the prices they'd typically pay to cut costs."

(<https://www.ecotextile.com/2020081726539/social-compliance-csr-news/brands-undercutting-suppliers-post-covid-report-finds.html>)

Question 6: What would be the most effective measures industry or Government could put in place to ensure that materials or products made with forced or prison camp labour are removed from the supply chain?

Increased supply chain transparency is essential to ensuring that materials or products made with forced or prison camp labour are removed from the supply chain. A number of ethical brands, including Presca, have developed supplier codes of conduct that ask specific questions around this issue and hold suppliers to account for their own workforces to ensure they are paid and treated fairly. Any efforts in this area might be best focused on increasing supply chain transparency to ensure that consumers can make educated decisions about who makes their clothes and under what conditions.

Question 7: How can any stimulus after the Coronavirus crisis be used to promote a more sustainable fashion industry?

A post-Covid stimulus package could be used to reshore manufacturing of clothing in a way that helps to rebuild the economy and supports a green recovery. At Presca, we have noticed a marked disparity in capacity, skills and technical capability between UK and offshore manufacture which could be addressed through a financial stimulus package and/or capital investment. In our opinion, a specific focus could be the investment in technology and people (training etc) for the manufacture of high value and technical garments (rather than mass production of low value garments).

The Government could also redouble investment in research and innovation. The SSPP (Smart Sustainable Plastic Packaging) Fund, for example, applies in part to textiles and WRAP'S Resource Action Fund includes textile waste. There is huge potential for world-leading innovation in textile recycling as demonstrated by the likes of Worn Again, Poseidon and others, and it is also an exciting area of academic research – for example, UAL, Manchester University, Teesside University, Leeds University and RCA, among others, are all working on sustainability in textiles. At Presca Sportswear, we have teamed up with Poseidon Plastics and Teesside University to trial an innovative recycling technology to create a closed loop recycling system for polyester fabrics. This means that we will be able to take back sportswear, break it down into its constituent building blocks ("monomers") and rebuild it into new yarns, fabrics and ultimately brand new clothing.

Government should step up investment in this area for long-lasting positive impact and to ensure the UK's position as a leader in this field.

Question 8: Is the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan adequate to address the environmental impact of the UK fashion industry? How ambitious should its targets be in its next phase?

Its targets will need to be extremely ambitious, in order to tie in directly with the Science-Based targets on climate change. Recent projections are that if we stick with the status quo the fashion industry is projected to account for 25% of the global carbon budget by 2050. We consider that small, incremental changes to the status quo are unlikely to be sufficient to make a significant reduction in the impact of the industry.

The SCAP, which has just concluded, mainly focussed on reducing the impact of the UK fashion industry through implementing existing technologies and materials. It has demonstrated the potential to reduce CO2 and water impacts in line with the targets through addressing these low-hanging fruit. Further reductions will be more challenging if the current take-make-waste model remains unchallenged. The next phase of the SCAP should have a greater focus on innovation, specifically with regards to implementation of a circular

approach to fashion and textiles throughout the value chain. Stakeholders from every stage in the value chain will need to be engaged and motivated in order to make genuine change. Two specific areas of focus of the next phase should be technological and business model innovation.

Question 10: What actions could the Government take to incentivise the use of recycled or reused fibres and materials in the UK fashion industry?

We believe that the Government should look at something similar to the Plastic Packaging Tax (2022) which applies to packaging that fails to meet a minimum recycled content standard and create a similar scheme for a minimum recycled content in clothing. This would encourage widespread change within the fashion industry. At Presca, we have shown that fabrics from recycled materials perform as well as, or better with good design than, those from virgin resources and this would encourage the wider take up of recycled fabrics within the fashion industry. It could also stimulate a home-grown market for recycled materials, helping to realise the value outlined above.

Question 11: How could an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for textiles be designed to incentive improvements in the sustainability of garments on sale in the UK?

While we are not experts on EPR we would support a tiered approach to EPR depending on the types of garments produced. In particular, we would support the Committee's recommendation (previously rejected by Government) for a garment tax but which would be scaled depending on whether garments are recyclable, the percentage of recycled content, whether a business has a take-back scheme in place etc. We believe this would encourage circular design and reduce the amount of textile waste entering the waste stream.

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