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Opinion

Join the fashion for quality clothes and recycling

Unwanted clothes in our homes are worth an average £1,000 per household, and we buy more than any other European country. Glastonbury stars, including Sheryl Crow, Johnny Marr and Kylie, gave clothes to Oxfam in support of using charity shops, saying: "Chucking perfectly good clothes in landfill really has to stop."

I agree: 'Buy less, choose well and make it last', as punk icon Vivienne Westwood says, but government support for this is dire. Its environmental audit committee's report *Fixing Fashion*

made 18 recommendations, including a 1p levy on each garment to help pay for its recycling.

But the government rejected them all, except those that are voluntary for the fashion industry, which globally has a bigger carbon footprint than aviation and shipping combined.

Sometimes unwanted clothes become wanted again, if they're cleaned, altered or repaired.

I stopped wearing a pair of trousers because they had bad oil stains. After searching how, I gave them a good scrub, soak and wash and now I love them again.

If you're not into repairing, you could book an item into one of our repair cafés, where an expert repairer will fix it with your help for free. Check out circularcambridge.org or use one of the professional repairers in the directory there.

Or, if you really don't want it, can you sell it or follow the Glastonbury stars by passing it on to someone who would, by donating it to a charity shop.

If it's really worn out, please do not put it in a household recycling bin. Wrong items in household bins cost local council taxpayers about £10,000 a month.

Instead, clothes and shoes need to go to one of the many council recycling points – search on your council website for details about recycling.

Twelve of these recycling points are run by SOEX, a European-leading recycler, which will find buyers for most clothes and shoes that they collect, and can turn most of the rest into useful raw materials. You can find more details about all this at circularcambridge.org/unwanted-clothes.

About 70 per cent of people would like to buy fewer clothes, but of better quality. Can you join them?

A Swish event at the Sustainable Fashion Festival allows unwanted clothes to find a new home

