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Interviewee: Campaign manager, textiles re-use

1: Interviewer

2: Interviewee

1: Can you tell me a bit about the background of [redacted] and your role within the organization? Maybe focusing more on the public engagement aspect that you've been involved in.

2: [redacted], what it says in the title really, but it's a statutory body that sits between the mayor of London and the London boroughs. It was put in place to help the boroughs achieve the mayor's recycling targets. That's essentially why they're there. I joined [redacted] in August, 2017, specifically to work on what became the [redacted] campaign. I had no background in waste management or recycling. My background was PR in different areas, but I had been studying and moving around in the sustainable fashion world before I came to [redacted].

They took me on as a PR person rather than a waste expert. That was how I got there and the [redacted] project as it became, at that point, it was part of the European clothing action plan ([REDACTED]), which was a series of activities that were happening. It was managed by WRAP, funded by the EU commission and a series of projects and activities that were happening across Europe. They specifically wanted to run a campaign targeted at young people in London and all around behavior change. That was the brief in the [REDACTED] bid as it were. I started specifically to work on that. Trying to get the messages out around sustainable fashion, to young people in London.

1: Does that remain your remit, that target group. Can you explain a bit around the thinking behind that, focusing on that?

2: I think that there wasn't a whole lot from the [REDACTED] project around that group, but mainly because they are the ones that buy the most clothing and have the most impact when they change because so much of their life is ahead of them. It was really looking at that young group to change behavior and adjust their thinking at a time when they're very into fashion. Also, hoping that those changes of behaviors stick and influence. Also, the social media, the wider influence that any young person can have now is quite impactful.

I think that's why that target group was selected, also because there was other communications projects happening that were for a much wider audience. They want you to do something specific to that younger group. We stayed as strict on that as

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we could. We have a repeating problem of the fact that more older women generally are into fashion and sustainability. We have a constant problem with, we try to stay very on message with that young group, but people who respond back to us are not necessarily in that group. We find ourselves, if we're not careful, sliding away from our target audience and we have to repeatedly work hard to bring that back.

It's a constant challenge of our campaign, but we never stopped trying to bring that back. It's things like when we work with the charities and we do the charity popups and our Instagram following. We've done a bit of analysis of our Instagram following and whilst 50% of it is under 24, there's a big chunk of it that is above. Obviously we would like 75% of it to be under 24. We have to keep working hard with our partnerships and our affiliations as we go forward to make sure that we're staying very much appealing to that younger audience. That's a difficult balance we have to find.

1: Can you say a little bit about what is the relationship between public engagement and textile recycling? Why is public engagement seen as an important part of this now going forward?

2: Well, when we say now going forward, the current climate is now very different to how it was three months ago. You want me to talk in the current?

1: I'm going to ask you specifically about COVID later on. I don't know if that would help to split it between those two questions. Answer it how you like it.

2: I'll just try and talk. Public engagement and textiles. I think, we see big problems with behavior in how people are interacting with their clothes. It starts from a consumption problem that we now, and this is going back years as to how we've got ourselves in this position where we have huge amounts of low quality, cheap clothing flooding our high streets and that there is a demand for that, but not quite the demand that warrants the amount of clothes that come out and the constant encouragement for people to buy more and the pressure to buy more.

That is something that we feel needs to be addressed. From our point of view, talking to our audience, there's mental health elements in that. The fact that the perfect storm of social media, where young people are expected to look up to date and to look different and to be wearing something new and to look affluent and all these other things that other people that they're trying to aspire to be like, you haven't had huge amounts of income and everything else. The influence is basically. I think there's a lot to be done there and fashion brands don't take any responsibility for that really, and continue to put pressure on their customers to buy more, ignoring those effects.

I think that's one big part of it. Then you have obviously supply chain. We have a planet that's natural resources can't keep up with this. That we can't keep growing cotton. We can't keep digging for oil for polyester. All the other natural resources. Every single one has a problem. The major ones there's problems with all of them. That is why we have to change behavior. Also social elements, garment workers, the exploitation of people in other countries who are making these clothes. That's

becoming more known about, but still doesn't seem at the moment to be a barrier to most people.

They're still happy to blindly buy a T-shirt with no question as to how it was made and who made it or anything else. Then the behaviors of care and looking after clothes. Again, this whole point that if your T shirt costs the same as your coffee, then you feel like it's as disposable as that and consumed in that way. When it's worn once it's not worth wearing again. That issue plus no instinct. Also, the fact that it's low-quality, you might wash it once, and it might not look as good as it did when it was new.

That comes back to manufacturing and everything else. The behaviors of people, in-use behaviors, we call them. Once it's bought and owned, in-use behaviors of washing, caring, and then disposal. The big, big point of the clothes shouldn't go in the bin, and people are we still-- There's this the last WRAP stats, 300,000 tons per year in the UK goes into the bin, instead of recycled or reused, and we have to address that behavior. Our campaign can't take on all of it so we picked our battles, having spoken to our audience and using the resources that we had. Behavior and textiles, those are the real key places where we need people to change their behavior.

1: Great. Thank you. When you've been speaking to this particular audience, have you noticed anything? Because we're looking specifically at synthetics in this project and even more specifically polyester mainly. Is there anything that you would like to comment about what you've noticed around their attitude towards synthetics? This is an assumption, I imagine that polyester being such a big part of sportswear, that this is a primary material within this user group. Is there anything that you would like-?

2: I would say so. We've never asked the question directly. We don't complicate things with, down to materials and that kind of thing. I think, if you said to the people that are buying all the sportswear, this target audience, if you asked them about that and you said to them, "Did you notice it's plastic or-?" They wouldn't. I don't think there would be much awareness at all around the materials and the impact on the environment, almost definitely not. I would suggest even in that audience, even those who do have an awareness that clothing has an impact on the environment, they wouldn't have gotten nearly as far as to thinking about certain materials, they might have seen the stats about how much water it takes to make a T-shirt. That's a common stat that's out there, but there's really not much out there on polyester in terms of messaging. I would say that the awareness would be pretty much zero, I would say.

1: That's interesting. Some of our other interviewees have mentioned things like using big events to raise awareness and collect clothing simultaneously. For example, Marathons have been noted by a couple as a place where they can both collect a large volume of polyester-rich clothing because they're left behind, but also that it's a big awareness-raising within a specific group. Is there anything that you've noticed around that as particular opportunities I guess for-?

2: No. Once again, we haven't looked in that. We haven't looked specifically at sportswear. We've had conversations with a couple of sports brands who were

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interested in working with us, but it didn't come to fruition, unfortunately. There, we were talking about going into areas of London and doing clothes swaps or clothes recycling events and these were literally like estates and things like that. What we've done is, we have actually done a test with our clothes banks. We selected, worked with Peabody estate, and we've got six estates where we've put the [redacted] clothes banks. We were seeing how that was going to go.

We started that. December, the banks went in and we were planning there was going to be a contamination assessment. It's because these banks have been, sorry, to bring you back. Now, these estates had been part of a project done by [redacted] on flats, and studying recycling in flats. They've got data on textile contamination in residual waste. We were looking at getting some banks out into some other places in London. We partnered up with the team on that and we've put six banks into six estates where they have that data, put them in for six months and they were going to do another analysis at the beginning of June but obviously, because of COVID, that hasn't happened. So we don't know when it will. Two of the banks have been vandalized, we had to move them, which was a shame.

We specifically selected the estates with a higher proportion of 18 to 34. That was the demographic they had because we want to go to a young audience, but with the analysis, there will be quite an in-depth analysis. I can ask if they're going to look at materials, and see if we find-- I'll make a note of that. I don't know, I think obviously, it's more about contamination, but what we're hoping to see is that there's less clothes in the residual waste. The partner who's servicing those banks, they're being collected. They're being entered regularly when they fill up, the ones that remain the four that remain now. They're actually going to put two more banks back to more sturdier, stronger banks back out in the estates that when ours got vandalized, so because those estates want them back, they like the service.

1: Oh, okay. That's good.

2: -which is good. Their estate managers have said they've had really good feedback from residents. So they want the banks back. We're like, "We'll come back if you don't break them." We've had these-- There's bigger banks that will go out that will be less likely to be vandalized. That's [redacted] textile recyclers who are emptying the banks for us, but it will be a different company that does the waste comp analysis [redacted] are not sorting to materials level. I'm very sure of that. They're just looking at reuse and recycling.

1: I actually interviewed [redacted] so I could get back to him with a quick query about that. Perfect. Thank you. Onto the next question. You did speak about some of the broader barriers at the beginning, but the next question is about barriers and I'm wondering if you could maybe answer it in terms of what you see as the main barriers within London. We're looking at a regional perspective to achieving a circular synthetics.

2: Circular is synthetics barriers in London.

1: Well, you don't have to focus so much on synthetics if it's not appropriate or just go through the textiles I guess, and recycling of textiles within London.

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2: If we're going on a much broader level. Stepping back from the 16 to 24s and going much broader, then I think firstly, it's the Barry's recycling offering and the services that they have. Some don't take textiles at all. Some do take textiles. Then you've got the charities which are running clothes banks in certain boroughs they have agreements with certain boroughs so trade, it definitely got some East London boroughs that they have their banks in, and Salvation Army are out there as well. I'm not sure exactly who else. Then there's charity shops everywhere you can take donations.

I think the problem with it is that there's this mixed offering across boroughs. Nobody knows quite what they can do and what they can't do. Charity shops is a generally understood way of recycling your clothing. I think our audience mentioned that the most. When you say to them, "What do you do for recycling clothing?" They'll go to the charity shop. They'll go and drop it, but they don't necessarily shop. They see it as a dumping ground, and it doesn't often occur to them that they would want to buy something in those shops. That's again something that we're working on. From a circular point of view, we need people to be taking that next step to actually staying there and looking around and seeing if there's anything they like.

I think that's a major point. In terms of recycling of clothing, you would have to speak to someone else at [redacted] to understand when clothing is collected by boroughs, how it's sorted, who it goes to. I imagine each borough probably got a different reprocesses so that they work with. You may have covered that already. I don't know whether that's cohesive or a bit fragmented or how that works, because we're just about the consumer side of it. I think communication around what the options are for people, a mixed service across the boroughs I think is a problem. Also, basically the situation and flats is one thing. Recycling in general is harder, particularly clothes compared to other things that you recycle, clothes are bulky. You have to be a bit organized to recycle them, it's just the way it is.

You might have a wardrobe clear out once a month, once every six months, and then you've got this annoying bag of stuff that you don't want and it's very difficult to know what to do with it. You can see why people would just throw things out on a piece by piece basis into their bin. That's just the nature of a city I think. You probably find that across the board.

I feel like I'm missing something else. It's not the wider culture. Also of course, cities, you've got so many more shopping opportunities. You're really close to High Streets. There's a million High Streets across London, all of them with a fast fashion brands in. I would say that definitely facilitates indulging in buying more than you need and buying the cheaper, lower quality clothing. Obviously all the designers are here too, but your average Londoner is not going to be shopping there. I think the easy proximity to the High Street is definitely going to mean more consumption.

1: That's great. If we think then in terms of opportunities within London, how are people going to be- if it's inconvenient to do it, how are you looking at incentivizing people to want to do it? Is it a case of education or are there other ways that you're looking at to kind of--

2: We're continuing on our really basic messaging, which is buy secondhand and never put clothes in the bin. Everything really stems from there. Our approach is by putting the solutions in front of people. That is banks and places where they're going not in textile recycling sent, household recycling faces, because that's not where our audience are going.

We put the banks where they are already, plaster the banks in positive messaging, and then hope that they see them and that they have a little think about putting their clothes in there instead of in the bin. Then making secondhand clothing a lot more attractive to that audience. That's our work with influencers. We find those people on Instagram that have a decent audience. We can't afford the big ones but a decent audience of younger people and we try to turn them around and get them involved in what we're doing and putting collections of secondhand clothes together that then we sell in our pop ups.

This year, we're hoping our pop up can go online. That's how we're doing that. That's the incentive. It's just trying to pop up where they're looking. Because if sustainable fashion isn't in their world and that's such a hard group to get to because their world can be so small because of social media. They only need to see what they want to see. When I was a kid, we would watch the news with our parents and we would read newspapers over their shoulders, but if you don't want to read that now you don't have to. You can get your news from Twitter. You can get your inspiration, your creative inspiration from Instagram and only from the people you want to hear from and it makes it so narrow so we have to get in there and get in- pop up in front of people either on their social media or when they're walking down the High Street or however. That's how we've got to get to them. Does that answer the question?

1: Yes, it does. I was just going to ask. With your campaigning and how you approach these issues, do you get involved at all with the brands in terms of the actual stores that are in London in terms of take-back and that sort of thing?

2: We've got a bank in [redacted]. That was one of our first banks that went out. We're unsure about it because [redacted] feel a bit like they're greenwashing and we don't feel hugely confident and happy about that. We maintain a conversation with their sustainability team when they're not on furlough and try and keep things moving forward. They're offered every opportunity to take part in other clothes recycling and there's business model workshops that have we offered and we invite [redacted] to be part of those repeatedly. The appetite for that has not really been there.

It's a difficult one because that bank is seen by hundreds of thousands of our target audience every week. From that respect, it's doing something, but the bigger brands in [redacted] themselves are a bit of a worry. We've also got the bank [redacted]. That's right next to a Primark, and is well used. We empty that bank once a week, usually. It's very much well used. We can't say it seems just by 16 to 24-year-olds, of course, it's not. It's everybody, but it's a service that's been there and it's well within a center where young people are hanging out.

London designer outlet is another one where we've got a bank. That one does really well. Truman Brewery is very target audience for us. Peckham Levels, Pop Brixton, we just had to remove that because they're reopening and they need the space for

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social distancing. They've asked us to take that one away. We're going to just keep working on these sites where we just land in front of our audience with a bank and hope that they see it and start to use it.

1: That's really interesting, thanks. Are there any other key opportunities that maybe you don't do currently, but you see it as there being some potential that you'd like to do?

2: Yes. There's so much out there. Just to go back to your question on brands another- sorry, what I've thought a bit we now need to find funding. We are planning on approaching fashion brands to work with us on campaigns. I hope that our affiliation with brands will move forward and obviously we've got a bank in in Topshop run by [redacted] so we're obviously not fussy. [laughter]

Where a Brand has shown some sort of public efforts, whether they're members of SCAP, they've got clear, not just a conscious collection. I know [redacted] are much more than that, but some of the horrible online ones who have thrown something out there for five minutes that has a bit of recycled cotton in and gone, "Yes, that's us. That's sustainability down for the year." That's not cool and we won't work with those.

We want to work with brands and we've got a few ideas around returns that we could do with brands, we've got a few we've worked up that we're going to start approaching them with. We hope our brand partnerships will get bigger in the future, because we need the funding really. I'm sorry the question that you just asked, [crosstalk]

1: That does answer the question a little bit, but I just was wondering if there was anything else that you see is like a big opportunity that maybe you're not doing currently but would be something that you'd be wanting to do if you could afford it.

2: Yes. A big one is merchandise and this is very much our audience and polyester. Everyone does merch now. There's something, every event you got to, you can get a T-shirt or a hoodie or something like that. They're coming up on everything, even non-events. We found out that [coughs] sorry, a textile recycler has- you'll know that there are partners so this is confidential but they've got a whole stash of merchandise that they have been asked to take away and destroy. These are well made embroidered hoodies and T-shirts. I've got one in my locker at work and really heavy fabric and they were selling them for £65, £70 a go and they have given or sold very cheaply, thousands and thousands of these to our textile recycling partner, telling them to trade them. Luckily he has a conscience and it's just gone, oh, I don't want to do this but obviously he signed an NDA, all this other stuff it's really, really difficult.

We would love to crack that at some point. How you debrand it. Some of it, this stuff like these ones, these can't be debranded, there's no way that it's embroidery and then it's also stuff stuck on all these embellishments that are really complicated, so really hard to pull apart and it's the only way that you could resell that is with the permission of the people that made it and they made something like 50,000 more

than they want to. This is the problem in that they want to sell exclusive small drops to keep the value high, the perception of value high.

They can't have 50,000 and they can't have them being sold for less because then that devalues everything else that sold onto this influencers name and that's just one. This will be happening hundreds and hundreds of times over and over again. This is actually a company that is they're an agent for the influences and they do the merch. If they are two companies in one, so as soon as you an influencer on their books that gets to a certain level, they're going to start saying, "Right it's time for you to get into merch. Let's make you some more money," and off they go and start making it. It's really, really unsustainable and quite criminal and this is it and this is just, we know it's everywhere. If we can find a way we would love, we've made a huge amount of money and a team of five people.

1: Do you think, is this particular to London or do you feel like it's something--?

2: No way. I think it's probably more London. Merchandise is nothing new, you go to see it, you go to a gig and buy the T-shirt. We were approached by somebody working for [redacted] who wanted to come up with a solution on the merchandise because they felt not happy with how it was going. Merchandise is not a new thing, but I do think the fact that everyone's jumping on this bandwagon to make an extra buck is really quite damaging and it's not going to go away, I don't think.

1: Actually this is one of the things that have been highlighted through the case study that we're working with because it's not the same thing, but it's a similar thing in that they deal a lot with big athletics teams, speak schools and it's all logo, personalized, not just salable. It's maybe slightly different because sometimes that will be then well-worn, but I imagine a lot of it won't be.

2: It's those kind of brands as well do so many of these collaborations with influencers and sports people and it's what's that, planned obsolescence that they're actually made to only last a very short time before the next one comes along and for it not to be cool to be wearing that name on top this year when that came out last year, you see what I mean? You're supposed to get the next one and those sports brands and particularly bad to that I think, they've got constantly turning over those collabs as they call them but it's very much the way it works now.

1: That's interesting, okay thank you. Then the next question is about COVID and we hadn't planned to ask everyone this, but obviously given the situation, it comes up as an important or quite opportunistic thing to ask people about. There's two sides of it. How has COVID changed your operations, but also how do you think it's changed or will it have changed how people behave?

2: Operations-wise we've had to cancel events, obviously. There was a big event at Truman Brewery end of April that we didn't do and we were also going to be at graduate fashion week with a popup job and that didn't happen either. That was end of May. Those were big events that had to be parked. Then lockdown happened and we quite quickly came up with some social campaigns across social media. The first one we did was we were starting to see suddenly [redacted] and everybody all

started releasing lounge wear edits and drops of tracksuits and hoodies and stubble, all the lounge wear stuff.

They were on it in weeks, two weeks and these collection starts not even that, this collection started coming out. We suddenly went, "No, no, everyone's going to buy them", because they feel that we know an issue it was like, "Oh, this is great. Now we can go shopping", but now everyone was now shopping for these awful tracksuits online. We jumped on that with something called, what do we do, the big try-on, which was about-- We were seeing as well, these piles of, I think the Daily Mail did a piece one day with photos of clothes banks overflowing, but overflowing meters-and-meters, you couldn't get anywhere near this bank because of the mountain of clothes that was in front of it.

They were saying everyone's clearing out wardrobes and stuff. The big try-on was about looking at what you thought and making you out without things that you hadn't worn for a while, not like sewing and stuff, but like matching old clothes to new clothes, just retrying it all on, seeing what fits now, what doesn't fit now, what you're likely to wear in future and then holding onto it, putting it all, we had influencers, the suitcases going, just put it in a suitcase. You're not going on holiday so put it in that suitcase and then when we reopened, take it down to the charity shop. All that kind of thing. We had six influencers that did us some video on that.

They videoed themselves going through the wardrobes and styling themselves and stuff, which was really good. That got quite a big take-up. Then we followed that a couple of weeks later with lockdown, dress up, which was one of those do something, nominate three people. The Do something was put on something really glamorous that you can't wear because you've got nowhere to go and just walk down the road, go to the park, go to the supermarket, whatever in something really fancy, whatever it was.

We brought in all the charities on this because it was donate £3 to one of our partner charities or a charity of your choice. We weren't limiting it and then nominate three people to do the same thing. We got all the charities on board, we started it off, they all picked it up. They were trying to get their patrons and influencers. They had connections with to take parts and it chugged on for about three weeks in the end with people nominating more people and everything. That went quite far.

I don't think it made a huge amount of money, but it just kept this whole looking after what you've already got to wearing what you've got thing hopefully taking over and all the sustainable fashion crew on Instagram got in on it and started sharing it around. That was quite good. That's how we changed initially. Now we're opening up. The next thing is our charity pop-up shops that we've done every year, last few years in November, we're now working on moving that online. That's going to be very different and quite difficult, but we're working on it, I've got a meeting with the charities tomorrow where we've written up a document proposal for it.

They [inaudible 00:49:11] and then we have a chat tomorrow and they tell us if they're in or out really. That's how we're testing that one. Then what else? We're doing quite- we're doing audience insights work. We want to try and bring on a group of young people that we regularly can go to around the campaign for their feedback

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to make sure we stay on that arena talking to them. There's repair week is coming up. That'll be something we'll do around that in October, pop-up in November. Then we just have to sit tight. We did have some other things that we were talking to retailers about. We've been in conversation with Westfield, but that was obviously they then shut down and they are just focused on getting people back and at a time where they don't really have that luxury I think. We'll hopefully start up those conversations again and all this time, just looking for funding for the projects we want to do probably next year. I think everyone's, we've got to, well, me particularly, I've got to just put ambitions for the big stuff aside for now because just the climate is going to make-- and it's just okay to tick over and do what we can for this year and then take a deep breath probably December, if we're not all sick again and try and carry on from there.

1: Do you think that-- seen any evidence, perhaps you've not been talking to people so much, but have you seen any evidence that maybe people's attitudes are changing through this or do you think it will be back to business as usual in terms of how people behave with their clothes?

2: I think there is this-- I don't know, I have hoped for it, whether it applies to our audience I don't know, but people keep talking about, I read a stat this morning about the percentage of the population that want to come back greener, this all, "Let's do it better." I think people's lives have got smaller and they might take some time to-- and there may be some reluctance to go back to how lives were before. That will mean less going out to shop, but at the same time, everybody is ramping up their online offering now.

There's more clothes online. They're making online more exciting, there are free returns, unlimited returns, all that kind of stuff it's being flashed up and obviously sales now as those brands try and get rid of their spring-summer stuff, it's all so massively discounted, I think. There's been big campaigns to not go back to [redacted] and go back to charity shops instead.

Again, you can't blame people, there's people who are on a low income and they want new clothes and they're going to go to [redacted]. I know the environment is obviously a huge thing, but to try and preach that at this time when everyone's suffered in one way or another to different degrees, I think it's a bit difficult to try and-- we wouldn't want to try and preach that and say, "Do what you've got to do, but just look after it and don't throw it in the bin."

1: I think it's quite easy to revert to stereotypes, isn't it, and just to assume that? I think one of the studies we did for one of the projects-- we didn't do the study, but it was a consumer behavior, I think it was Copenhagen Business School did it, and they found that actually it wasn't necessarily the people buying at cheap clothes shops that were most wasteful. It was often, the behaviors are not always as easy as that, that, actually people buy their clothes cheaply sometimes and they hold onto them because they can't afford to throw it, so there are nuances in it, aren't there?

2: That's one thing we've had from [redacted] in the past that they don't like that-- They think their clothes are good quality, whether they are or not, in the grand

scheme of things, but they say you can wash our t-shirts 10 times and they will still look good.

1: 10 times, that's not enough, is it?

2: Exactly, you should be able to wash it 100, 1,000 times. They do say that. We've had a couple of campaign ideas with that in mind really of, wear it five ways and getting a brand, but people think they're going to last five minutes, but then try and prove that they can be worn a lot more than that, how successful that'll be, I don't know. I think that there's going to be-- I don't know, in terms of how it will all come out the other end. I think some people will probably decide that life has been slightly better and quieter and calmer and they haven't needed as much. There's definitely that, that keeps coming out in opinion polls and things. They're up against these fashion brands that are-- and the government saying, "Come and buy, get the economy back on its feet. Buy, buy, buy." That's not going to work, but I do think they say things like having seen what happened, well, the textile recycling industry being in the dire situation that it is, with closed markets, they can't sell it abroad at the moment, all this other stuff. That's definitely ramped up the conversation on extended producer responsibility. Defra, I know are going to start looking at that a bit more and trying to find ways to support the textile recycling industry so they do survive and that we don't end up drowning in all our clothes because we need that industry.

1: Do you think this is then, or do you see evidence, that this is shining a spotlight even more so on the textile waste issue? Are you seeing anything from the situation that hard evidence that Defra are more interested or more doing more work or--?

2: Last Monday they announced some amendments to a fund that is for the textile recycling industry-

1: Yes, I saw that.

2: -so they've taken away matched funding, they've made more immediate funds available, a crisis response, really, it looked like. I think [redacted] are going to try and get involved with that. They've got some plans for changing the recycling system in London. I don't know if [redacted] mentioned it to you, but they are thinking about how they can change their operations to fit a new system. Hopefully, Defra will support that kind of initiative. The changes to that fund are a definite sign.

Extended producer responsibility is a much bigger thing, but I do I think it will be pushed through. I'm just concerned about the government and whether that it would get past the government in the end. Of course, it came up with Mary Creagh and the - I can't remember what the name of her report was - but yes, that was where it first became big and now I think it will get another push.

1: That's positive.

2: Yes, hopefully.

1: I'm just going to post this link now into the chat because we're racing through our time and if you could just click through to the Google Docs and then we'll just spend

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a little bit of time on these slides just to see if you have any thoughts on these specifically. Do you see those?

2: Yes and [crosstalk] now?

1: Yes. These are just two garments that our case study produce. They're more or less 100% polyester, although obviously, they are the leggings are likely to have elastane and the zips on the fleece/hoodie. Well, I don't think it has a hood actually. They have the branding on them and quite often they'll have additional logos as well as we discussed before. From your perspective and I guess from the point of view of behavior because that's your specific focus, how do you see these garments being treated now currently?

2: Bought by consumers, probably worn, I mean they're exercise gear, right? The leggings look like they're running-

1: Yes.

2: -or figure or something. Then the hoodie more so. Bought by consumers, used for exercise, I would hope. Those black leggings would be very generic so exercise and casual wear. I think the leggings would probably get the wear that they're intended because amongst our audience, black leggings are very much worn over and over again, it would depend on if they kept their shape.

If you got baggy knees or a baggy bum, they'd be in the bin. Quality and elasticity would be very important there. For the gray top, again, I think that would stay in wardrobes for a while because it's not like, for want of a better word, it's a classic, I suppose, in that it's pretty basic. Obviously that's seasonal, so it's only going to be worn in colder weather. It will go to the back of a wardrobe for the summer and then come out again. By that time, for a younger audience, they'll want a new one.

1: That's interesting. I hadn't thought that.

2: I think, it'll be worn for one winter and then that's probably it, so it'll stay in the wardrobe a year, and then it'll be got rid of. The leggings could go longer, again, if they're good ones. People will do what they do when they throw away clothes. Hopefully, if they're not wearable, if no one's going to want to wear them again, they go in a bank. Or a charity shop if they're still wearable.

1: You think that people mostly throw into a bank, things that are not wearable? and mostly take things to charity shops if they're wearable?

2: I don't know of the stats on this.

1: I'm just wondering about your impression I guess.

2: My impression is that, if people can't be bothered to sort, it all goes in a bank, but then I know charities get a load of crap as well that they don't want. Some people just throw everything in a bag for the charity. What the ratio is for that, I'm not sure.

1: It's quite interesting, isn't it? About how [crosstalk]--

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2: Sorry.

1: It's quite interesting, isn't it? That whole idea like you were saying before about, we actually just need people to know that they shouldn't throw textiles in the bin, but how people would perceive these different options as for different items that they're going to throw away, or not throw away, but pass on.

2: I think most people have a look at it, and I think there's a bit of a pride thing with the charity shop, but it might just be me, but I would never put something that I didn't think someone would want to wear again into the bag for the charity shop because I know someone is going to sort through that. Maybe the person that I hand it over to might sort through it and then judge me because I'd put something stained in there. That would be why I wouldn't do it. Obviously, I understand about recycling so there's lots of other reasons I wouldn't do that, but I think people who are just trying to get rid of stuff, get it out of their lives, I don't know. I don't know what the ratio is of people that sort their clothes that they don't want properly.

1: It's fascinating, isn't it? Because actually when you look at-- I'm getting a sense from talking to quite a few different people that actually there isn't a whole lot of difference between what goes to the charity shop and goes to the bank in terms of how they're treated. I know in the charity shop, they often sort them by hand, but they actually sort the stuff that goes in the bank by hand. It's just someone else, just not in a shop.

2: Exactly, if it's in the charity shop, people do hope that they care about cancer, for some reason, that they hope that they're going to make some money for the cause. That's always going to be something that leads you to the charity shop I think.

1: Yes, "What is the cause?"

2: That would then make you even less likely to put rubbish stuff in there because you don't want to give them more work to do.

1: It's like the human face of it, isn't it? I'm guessing now, I think while you're talking, maybe people don't see so much of the human face behind the bank.

2: No, of course not, no. That's why I do think it's just, "Out of my life, go. All of it in one go. I don't want it anymore." I've been through, many times, I've been at LM Barry and sorting through stuff for if we're doing a clothes swap or something like that. It's funny, you can tell from the first-- you'd pull off a bag from one of the cages and I was looking for good stuff for a clothes swap and I had a shocking hour where it was just all socks and rubbish. Then there was one bag and I opened it and the first thing I pulled out was a pair of pristine white Zara trousers and I just was like, Oh, okay, this is going to be a good bag, and it was. I got almost everything for the swap from that one bag.

1: Okay, that's interesting.

2: It was all good brands in good condition. It's really interesting how people think it through.

1: I've just put in there-- because you mentioned it before that they don't go to the charity shop to buy their clothes though. It's just actually just raised for me something quite interesting. It's like they go to one place to dispose of their clothes, but they don't necessarily-- if that association, isn't it? They don't want to then buy clothes from where they dispose of clothes.

2: Yes, that's a good point, yes.

1: I wonder if there's some potential, somehow, for charity shops to divide up their operations. You take your clothes here, but then there's like a much more glamorous glossy, something else somewhere else.

2: That's a good point actually. I suppose they want to make it easy for people to do both things, I think that that's-- Obviously, in London you've got the Mary Portas' Giving for Save the Children, they're quite nice fancy shops, and there's other. Everyone's sort of got their fancy ones.

1: Fancy-- What would you call that?

2: Barnardos, when we've got an influence of working with Barnardo's, they always take them to the Brixton shop because that's got the coolest stuff.

1: Fancy charity shops, is the Mary Portas one a charity shop, is it for charity? Or is it just--

2: Yes. It's Save the Children.

1: Oh, it's Save the Children. Fancy charity shops and everything in between.

2: It depends what you're after though because the Mary Portas' whilst they're great. We're talking to Save the Children at the moment, but we're not going to work with those shops because they're aimed at an older female. They're not aimed at our audience, so they're not right for us, but they've got some cooler shops which we will think about, but it's all about the audience really and which ones we go to.

1: Do the influencers have their own charity shops with all the stuff that they don't want anymore. That's kind of the wrong way around, isn't it?

2: That would be a really good idea. A shop that's simply supplied by influencers. Imagine, that would be really-- like a permanent one.

1: Yes, that would be funny.

2: I'm going to write that down. I'm going to see about the charity doing that one day.

1: The influencers thing is really interesting because it's not something that anyone else has talked about, so that's quite nice. Moving onto the second slide, so it's the same thing, but this is just to kind of think what ideally would it look like in the future?

2: Sorry, next slide, hang on.

1: It's exactly the same slide. It's just about a future this time. The first slide was what's happening now. What would ideally happen in the future, from the point of view of how these people are engaging with their clothes or with the way that they are recycled?

2: Am I talking about these specific garments again now?

1: I guess so. I would say so, yes.

2: What ideally you want is all-- sportswear, so the leggings, I don't think are likely ever to have many owners. I think because of what they used for and the fact that they are a real basic, that someone is going to likely-- it can go with so many different things. I think one or two owners would probably and assuming they're not brilliant quality, I think one or two owners would probably use them to the point where they're not really wearable again or they're not looking good anymore. Therefore, what you want is for those to go into a bank, to a textile recycler that will send them on to be broken down so recycled polyester. That's what you want to happen to those. To a recycler that will sort and send them on to somebody like Worn Again who can break them down.

1: Then we're talking about chemical recycling.

2: Yes, exactly.

1: If these were fancier leggings or I don't know-- do you have an idea of a different type of garment in sportswear, which would have a different outcome? Or do you think that all sportswear's going to have this kind of outcome because of what it's used for?

2: The more designer stuff, I think with a collab or a drop or a particular design, I think that can have a different outcome and could maybe have more wearers if it's quite obviously the kind of sportswear there isn't going to be worn to actually do sport.

1: It's catch-22 because you almost want people to have more basic stuff and use it for longer themselves, but then it's going to become worn out more quickly. Whereas the more kind of like designer-ish and stuff, you almost don't want people to do that a lot, like buy things and then move it on quickly, but then it's going to get more re-used perhaps, it's a bit of a difficult-- I'm just talking--

2: I do think with our audience when gyms are open again, the gym is not just for exercise. I think that's when you're more likely to be wearing the fancy stuff to sort of jog on a treadmill, but not actually get sweaty, just look good. I think this age group, the gym is a social thing as well as actually exercising so there will be--

1: Do you think that it's inevitable, we're never going to be, the way you're talking, that we're not going to be able to stop people from buying fancy things and then passing them on before they're worn out. There is a need for a solution to the more of designer novelty, I'm going to say, items.

2: Yes, I think sportswear and casual athleisure sort of wear is always going to-- I think you see so much of that going through the recycling because people don't think anyone else is going to want to wear it again.

1: That's interesting. So it goes into the banks?

2: I think so, yes. I remember looking through in [redacted] and seeing loads of it, absolutely loads of it comes through.

1: Because as well, [redacted] and a couple of the others said that actually the light sportswear, again, it's really, really popular in the African market. I guess if it's reusable, re-wearable, then it could go there. Obviously, that's not ideal.

2: You really don't see much of it hanging in charity shops. I guess that's because they don't sell it because people are like, "Oh, do I want to wear someone's old running leggings?"

1: I don't know. This is a difficult picture. I can't remember who I interviewed who said that, actually, sportswear sells really well. I don't know if maybe I didn't drill down into whether they meant locally or abroad. I think it's a complicated picture. There's not very much, obviously, people are not drawing out that specific data. There isn't very much concrete data to go with that.

2: When I think through our collections in the charity pop-ups that we've done, there'll be things like jackets, sports jackets, not leggings and stuff. T-shirts, but they're not necessarily exercise-y kind of t-shirts, they're you're kind of '90s and Y2K vintage stuff.

1: That's stuff that's collected, do you mean?

2: Yes. It's stuff that the influencers have put on their mood boards, and so it's been pulled out for the collections. It's often down to brands, so Champion, Kappa, all those are the '90s brands that are now vintage and cool vintage, so their stuff comes out. It's t-shirts or those shellsuit jackets, they're the popular pieces.

1: That's interesting. Anything else that you would put on there in terms of what you would like it to be like in the future?

2: I suppose for the fleece again, just that those are going either to charities to be worn again by someone. The main thing is that they end up being in chemical reprocessing for recycled polyester. That's where we want them to end up.

1: I don't know if you have an opinion on this and I'm not going to put on here because I'm putting words into your mouth, but there is a feeling that polyester fleeces probably shouldn't exist in a way, because of the fiberglass. Do you have any ideas or opinions about that?

2: It would be great if they could be phased out, from a fashion point of view. I'm just thinking from the vintage and the Depop and everything, they're around, but they're not a big thing at the moment. If nobody ever brings them back, that would be ideal.

1: Just because perhaps they could be phased back from a fashion point of view. I guess, yes, with your user group, or the group that you focus on, then that's definitely a possibility. Still, fleeces are really popular in more functional sportswear, aren't they? Brands that are looking at functionality will still [crosstalk]?

2: I don't have enough knowledge, but from what I'm learning, and this is from [redacted], this point that whilst polyester microfibers are a huge problem. that it's the viscose and the cellulose fibers that are leeching all these horrible toxins into the waterways because they decompose more quickly.

1: I think the jury's still out a little bit, [crosstalk]--

2: I thought that was so interesting when she talked about that.

1: I think that's raising awareness, the fact that it's not just plastics, it is all sorts of fibers.

2: Just from a fleece point of view, trend-wise, that would be brilliant, but people are always going to want warm, soft, fluffy clothing. It's always going to be really, really popular. I'm sitting in front of three pieces of fake fur which are quite old. Hopefully, most of their microfibers are gone, flown. I don't know enough about the technology and what's coming. How on earth could you have a fabric of that consistency that isn't going to shed? Or that it's going to shed harmlessly. Is that wool? I don't know.

1: It's wool without any harmful dyes in it and chemicals. I'll go back to my dad. My dad used to have this sheep's wool pullover that he used to wear because he was a gardener, and it had zero. It was just straight off the sheep. In fact, he might as well have been a sheep. That's like really going the complete opposite way because it was really smelly.

2: That's the thing, isn't it? We've got to a point where consumer's demand for those lovely, big, fluffy, warm pieces of clothing that feel so nice. Then, if you take them away, you've got to replace them with something. I don't know what that would be.

1: Moving on to slide 3 now, this is just a basic roadmap, for the next 5 to 10 years, template. I'm just wondering, what would be your big things that you think need to happen to make circular textiles, and specifically synthetics a workable solution?

2: It's brands on board. There's a lot of targets around this, which is good. I don't know the specifics, but I've seen the target of 100% recycled cotton or 100% BCI cotton by 2025, 2030. Brands are throwing that out as part of their sustainability commitments all over the place. Polyester seems less easy, there's not a lot of targets around that so that brands to step up on polyester. More commitments to not using any virgin materials, really. If somebody would be prepared to pledge no virgin materials, that feels that would be really impactful. It means they might have to increase prices. We need some input into the recycling, the chemical recycling, and the recycling technology. There needs to be a big injection of money into that, I think, and scaling up.

1: Chemical recycling tech.

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2: I know there's issues with chemical recycling, and other technologies, that mean that brands can deliver collections that will keep customers, but not at the expense of the environment. If Primark can buy 100% recycled polyester for the same price as virgin polyester, then there's no reason why they shouldn't be able to make that change and meet that commitment.

The other thing they need to do, and this is brands, brands need to embrace reuse, and invest time and money into that. Reselling of returns, upcycling of deadstock. I mean it's EPR really, but seeing the value in the clothes once they've left the shop and trying to capture that for themselves. I know there's brands looking at this, but by getting a lot more involved in it. The EPR is really important, I think.

1: Okay. Anything else that you would like to see more long term perhaps? Or are those the biggest?

2: Well I think it's people like us that have to keep chipping away at consumers and trying to reduce the consumer that's buying online five times a week. Just keep chipping away at them and trying to get them buying less and looking at alternative brands, as in second-hand. We're not expecting that everyone's suddenly going to have loads of money and be able to buy sustainable brands because they're not, but we just have to keep saying that second-hand is an option as opposed to fast fashion.

1: What struck me from what you were talking about earlier is the visibility of the option almost. That seems to be your real approach if you like, seems central.

2: Yes.

1: Perfect. Okay. Great. Thank you and then just this final-- sorry I'm keeping you after the time, I know.

2: No, don't worry. I'm okay.

1: Just this definition. I was just wondering if you have any kind of things which stand out as not right or anything you would add?

2: Circular synthetic fibers. Okay. [silence] No, I think that makes sense.

1: Okay.

2: Minimizes-- no to social-environmental impact. Yes. Yes. I read through this before and thought, yes, that seemed very sensible. The way one leads to the next. Future textile sorting, deconstruction, and reprocessing. Yes, and design. Yes, I'm happy with those. Again I'm not a technician in this area so what you guys write I will go with.

1: Okay. Thank you. Okay. Great. I will leave it there then. Thank you so much for spending this time and sharing all your insights with me. Really really useful. We don't have anyone else looking at the consumer side so it's really nice to have that perspective as well.

2: Good.

[END OF AUDIO]