

Electric goods 'should have repairability rating'

By Justin Parkinson - 23 October 2020

The government must look at forcing manufacturers to put "repairability" scores on electric devices, opposition parties have said.

From next year, a scheme in France will label 5 phones, fridges, lawnmowers and other items in this way to encourage more environment-friendly purchases.

The Liberal Democrats and Green Party want this to be tested in the UK, which has a higher 10 level of electrical waste.

Ministers promised to "make it as easy as possible" to buy re-usable goods.

The government added that it was "seeking powers" to make companies more "resource-15 efficient".

Environmentalists have long campaigned against electrical manufacturers employing "planned obsolescence" - limiting the lifetime of their goods so that replacements can be 20 sold sooner.

A report published in the summer by the United Nations-backed Global E-Waste Monitor found the UK generated 23.9kg of waste electrical and electronic equipment 25 (WEEE) per person in 2019.

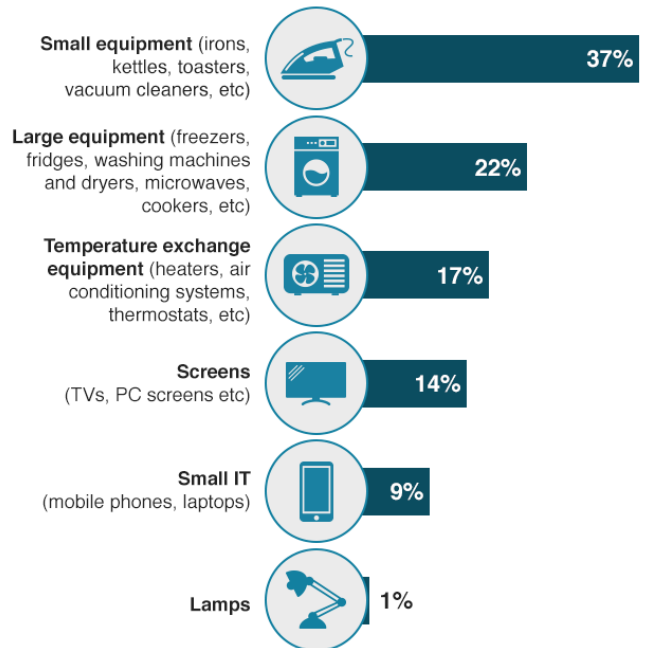
This was the second highest recorded amount in the world, after Norway's 26kg.

In an effort to cut its waste, from next year the French government will make 30 manufacturers give smartphones, televisions, laptop computers, washing machines and lawnmowers a repairability rating of one to 10 - showing consumers how easily they can expect to get them mended.

35 Liberal Democrat environment spokeswoman Sarah Olney told the BBC her party would "welcome" a similar scheme being tested in the UK.

"This is not just about empowering people to 40 make informed choices about what they buy, but also has the potential to create new skilled jobs as part of a green recovery from the Covid crisis," she added.

Global e-waste in 2020



Source: Southampton University

BBC

45 The Health and Safety Executive says more than 40% of the UK's WEEE is accounted for by large appliances such as fridges, washing machines and ovens. But households also discard "large volumes" of items such as toys, 50 computers, kettles and watches, it adds.

Electrical goods can contain hazardous substances, including arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury, which have to be disposed of carefully, whether they go to landfill or 55 recycling.

Ms Olney said: "It's not surprising most people are forced to replace items that break when repairing them is near impossible."

The Green Party is campaigning for "repair cafes" - where people bring goods to be mended - on every high street.

Deputy leader Amelia Womack argued the UK economy had "become reliant on a throwaway culture".

"We would welcome government action to put a stop to this," she said, adding that it should be a "legal requirement for companies to lengthen the life of their products and ban the practice of planned obsolescence".

Last year, the EU adopted Right to Repair standards, which mean that from 2021 firms will have to make appliances longer-lasting and supply spare parts for machines for up to 10 years.

The UK government has pledged to "match and even exceed EU eco-product regulations" in the post-Brexit era.

A Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs spokesperson said: "Replacing a damaged item with a brand-new one often feels like the easy option, even when getting it fixed or buying a second-hand replacement makes more sense.

"That's why, through our landmark Environment Bill, we are seeking powers to place greater responsibility on producers to make their items more resource-efficient and easier to re-use and recycle - making it as easy as possible for people to reduce, re-use and recycle."

The wording of the bill says the relevant authority "may impose requirements to provide information in relation to a product", including "aspects of the product's design which affect its expected life".

Source : <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-54612879>