

# Audit Committee calls for EPR for furniture

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**The Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) has called on the government to establish an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for furniture, “to invest in technology to ensure the safe disposal of hazardous wastes”.**

The recommendation came as part of the all-party group’s report into Toxic Chemicals in Everyday Life, published this week, setting out what the committee described as “the growing problem of chemical pollution” in home furnishing items. EAC’s report focused in particular on chemicals used in everyday products, such as furniture, food and toys, and the environmental and human health problems associated with them.

The report highlighted elements of the government’s Resources and Waste Strategy, which outlined bulky waste as one of its “key areas” for EPR and also said the government would “explore how it promote a sustainable approach to chemicals through producer responsibility”.

The EAC’s report said that “it would not be possible to implement its ambitions” without a rapid transition to a more circular economy for chemicals, and called for EPR scheme for the furniture industry.

“In the Resources and Waste Strategy, the government committed to an EPR scheme for bulky waste including mattresses, furniture and carpets by 2025. This is unlikely to be consulted on before 2020,” the Committee said.

It added: “Defra is also developing a strategy with local authorities and the waste industry to divert high risk items away from landfill. The government should introduce an EPR to enable the furniture industry to invest in technology to ensure the safe disposal of hazardous wastes containing harmful chemicals such as brominated flame retardants.”

And, according to the EAC, furniture retailers have indicated that they would be supportive of such a scheme although Amazon added that it would “like the administration of the programme to involve the entire supply chain, including recyclers”.

## Incineration

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Among the other aspects of the report focusing on waste was the issue surrounding companies incinerating unsold stock.

The EAC reiterated previous recommendations in its report into the fashion industry, calling on the government to introduce legislation which prohibits the landfill and incineration of consumer products containing chemicals which may cause harm to the environment, workers and communities.

Commenting on the report, Labour MP and chair of the committee Mary Creagh said: "Most people assume that they aren't at risk from toxic chemicals but the reality is different.

"Chemical flame retardants are still being widely used in our furnishings from children's mattresses to sofas. Meanwhile the Government is sitting on its hands instead of changing regulations to ensure that the most toxic chemicals are taken out of use."