# Recycling Paris 2024: how UK innovation is shaping sustainable olympics legacies



# What 'Made in the UK' Means in 2025: The Legacy of the Paris 2024 Olympics

As the curtains closed on the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics, questions arose regarding the fate of the vibrant flags that adorned the French capital for six weeks. The flags, which proudly displayed the location and date of the Games, were destined for recycling instead of landfill, reflecting a decisive shift towards sustainability. This initiative, part of a broader commitment by the organising committee to create the “most sustainable Olympics ever,” saw a substantial shipment of these colourful emblems processed at Project Re:claim—Britain's pioneering textile recycling facility located in Kettering, England.

Established in 2024 by the recycler and clothing manufacturer Project Plan B, in collaboration with the Salvation Army Trading Company, Project Re:claim holds promise for the future of textile recycling in the UK. With the capacity to process 2,500 tonnes of polyester annually, the team aims to double this by the end of 2025. However, challenges persist. The facility currently only handles mono-material polyester, necessitating the manual removal of blended fibres, a labour-intensive process insufficient to meet the demands of its machinery. Without improvements in the speed and accuracy of sorting technologies, the facility is constrained, operating intermittently due to the energy-intensive ramp-up needed for daily processing.

Despite these challenges, the founders view Project Re:claim as a vital pilot for industry-wide recycling methods. Tim Cross, founder of Project Plan B, established the Circular Textiles Foundation in 2021 to assist UK retailers in designing garments with recycling in mind. “We’re trying to keep a garment in use as long as possible. Then, at the end of its life, we want to get the resources back out,” he articulated, emphasising a sustainable approach to garment lifecycle management.

The sustainability legacy of the Paris Games extends beyond mere flags. Initiatives spearheaded by Parley for the Oceans illustrate how recycling and adaptability can intertwine with public art. In a remarkable collaboration, materials from Christo and Jeanne-Claude's iconic 'L'Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped' installation are being repurposed into practical structures for the Olympics. This endeavour involves transforming 25,000 square metres of polypropylene fabric and 3,000 metres of red rope into innovative tents and shade structures, as lauded by Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo. Such activities underscore the art world’s growing responsibility in climate action, showcasing a model that intertwines art and sustainable practice.

In an exemplary illustration of this recycling culture, a giant Olympic flag, originally intended for display on the Eiffel Tower but left unused due to adverse weather conditions, is finding new life. Announced by Paris 2024 President Tony Estanguet, this flag will be transformed into clothing through a partnership with Decathlon. This decision not only reflects a commitment to sustainability but also highlights the potential for large-scale events to minimise their environmental footprints through innovative material reuse.

Beyond textiles, the Paris 2024 Olympics plans to repurpose a vast range of equipment, with promises that 90% of the six million items—including sports gear and furniture—will be given a second chance rather than cast aside. This includes providing memorabilia opportunities for fans, like flags used in medal ceremonies and torch relays, all the while ensuring that temporary structures are relocated for community use in underserved areas.

The efforts embedded within the Paris 2024 framework resonate with a growing trend towards a circular economy, positioning the upcoming Games as a pioneer in sustainable large-scale events. The organising committee has laid out ten commitments focused on circularity, including reusing and recycling all temporary infrastructure and marketing materials post-Games. These initiatives not only set a new standard but also invite future events to adopt similar models of sustainability, ensuring that the ethos of recycling and responsibility extends well beyond the Olympic rings.

As we look towards 2025, the discussion of what 'Made in the UK' signifies will increasingly incorporate themes of sustainability and innovation. The endeavours surrounding the Paris 2024 Olympics offer a blueprint, illustrating that with collaboration, creativity, and commitment, industry-wide shifts toward a sustainable future are not merely aspirational but entirely achievable.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiqAFBVV95cUxQM29lalBoTjAydjlXSHBWM1Rua01aOFpCaU16Uk01RGgtUHF2MVU4NU5sdC01RE93QWtfVEtEYzVqYnNwU0VkcFM2VXU5aks5VHhxVExjMXNFelp2N3lZQmdzNlRNcmp0RUk3SFM0X1o4ZTBYSXRkdTRRVjBKLWtOc2h6akg4NF9mQlB5RTVvczVzblZScFhwTFlrVy1SWDMzMEtpY3lfZ1M?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en), [[6]](https://www.circularonline.co.uk/case-studies/paris-2024-olympics-a-new-standard-for-circular-economy-events/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiqAFBVV95cUxQM29lalBoTjAydjlXSHBWM1Rua01aOFpCaU16Uk01RGgtUHF2MVU4NU5sdC01RE93QWtfVEtEYzVqYnNwU0VkcFM2VXU5aks5VHhxVExjMXNFelp2N3lZQmdzNlRNcmp0RUk3SFM0X1o4ZTBYSXRkdTRRVjBKLWtOc2h6akg4NF9mQlB5RTVvczVzblZScFhwTFlrVy1SWDMzMEtpY3lfZ1M?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en), [[2]](https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2023/09/19/christos-wrapped-arc-de-triomphe-paris-2024-olympics)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://specialtyfabricsreview.com/2024/01/01/materials-from-public-art-display-upcycled-for-olympic-tents/), [[5]](https://english.mathrubhumi.com/sports/news/paris-olympics-equipment-heads-for-second-life-1.9807730)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.sortiraparis.com/en/what-to-do-in-paris/sport-wellness/articles/257520-paris-2024-the-giant-flag-of-the-eiffel-tower-soon-to-be-recycled-as-clothing), [[5]](https://english.mathrubhumi.com/sports/news/paris-olympics-equipment-heads-for-second-life-1.9807730)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.circularonline.co.uk/case-studies/paris-2024-olympics-a-new-standard-for-circular-economy-events/), [[7]](https://biodesignuk.com/paris-2024-olympic-collections-champion-eco-friendly-materials/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiqAFBVV95cUxQM29lalBoTjAydjlXSHBWM1Rua01aOFpCaU16Uk01RGgtUHF2MVU4NU5sdC01RE93QWtfVEtEYzVqYnNwU0VkcFM2VXU5aks5VHhxVExjMXNFelp2N3lZQmdzNlRNcmp0RUk3SFM0X1o4ZTBYSXRkdTRRVjBKLWtOc2h6akg4NF9mQlB5RTVvczVzblZScFhwTFlrVy1SWDMzMEtpY3lfZ1M?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2023/09/19/christos-wrapped-arc-de-triomphe-paris-2024-olympics> - This article discusses the recycling of materials from Christo and Jeanne-Claude's 'L'Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped' installation for the Paris 2024 Olympics. The project, led by Parley for the Oceans, involves repurposing 25,000 square meters of silvery-blue polypropylene fabric and 3,000 meters of red polypropylene rope into tents and shade structures for the Games. Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo praises the initiative as a prime example of the art world's adaptability to climate challenges. The effort also includes reusing wood and steel components through collaborations with local cooperatives and companies.
3. <https://specialtyfabricsreview.com/2024/01/01/materials-from-public-art-display-upcycled-for-olympic-tents/> - This article highlights the upcycling of materials from Christo and Jeanne-Claude's 'L'Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped' installation for the Paris 2024 Olympics. The environmental organization Parley for the Oceans is leading the effort to recycle 25,000 square meters of silvery-blue polypropylene fabric and 3,000 meters of red polypropylene rope into shade structures and tents for the Games. The initiative aligns with the artists' commitment to recycling materials from their installations and demonstrates a sustainable approach to large-scale public art projects.
4. <https://www.sortiraparis.com/en/what-to-do-in-paris/sport-wellness/articles/257520-paris-2024-the-giant-flag-of-the-eiffel-tower-soon-to-be-recycled-as-clothing> - This article reports on the recycling of a giant Olympic flag, measuring 5,800 square meters, that was intended to be displayed on the Eiffel Tower during the Paris 2024 Olympics. Due to strong winds, the flag was not deployed, and Paris 2024 President Tony Estanguet announced that the flag would be recycled into clothing by sponsor Decathlon. This initiative reflects the organizing committee's commitment to sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint of the Games by repurposing materials used for the event.
5. <https://english.mathrubhumi.com/sports/news/paris-olympics-equipment-heads-for-second-life-1.9807730> - This article discusses the Paris 2024 Olympics' innovative recycling plan, focusing on the repurposing of equipment used during the Games. The organizing committee has confirmed second-life plans for 90% of their six million items, including sports equipment, uniforms, and furniture. Initiatives include providing opportunities for fans to purchase souvenirs, such as flags used during medal presentations and torches made for the relay. Additionally, temporary structures like swimming pools, climbing walls, and skateboarding parks are set to be relocated to underserved areas in the Seine-Saint-Denis suburb northeast of Paris.
6. <https://www.circularonline.co.uk/case-studies/paris-2024-olympics-a-new-standard-for-circular-economy-events/> - This article examines the Paris 2024 Olympics' commitment to sustainability and the circular economy. The organizing committee published ten commitments to achieve a 'more circular games,' including repurposing 100% of furniture from venues and all temporary infrastructure after the Games. Additionally, 90% of marketing and signage products will be redeployed, reused, or recycled. These efforts reflect Paris 2024's dedication to minimizing environmental impact and setting a new standard for sustainable practices in large-scale events.
7. <https://biodesignuk.com/paris-2024-olympic-collections-champion-eco-friendly-materials/> - This article highlights the use of eco-friendly materials in the Paris 2024 Olympic collections. Ralph Lauren partnered with NFW to produce Team USA's Villagewear collection polo shirts made from 100% recycled cotton using NFW's CLARUS® technology. Finland's official outfitters, Luhta Sportswear Company, collaborated with material innovators Spinnova and Pure Waste to create sustainable uniforms for Team Finland. These initiatives showcase the potential of recycled materials in high-quality sportswear and demonstrate a commitment to sustainability in Olympic apparel.