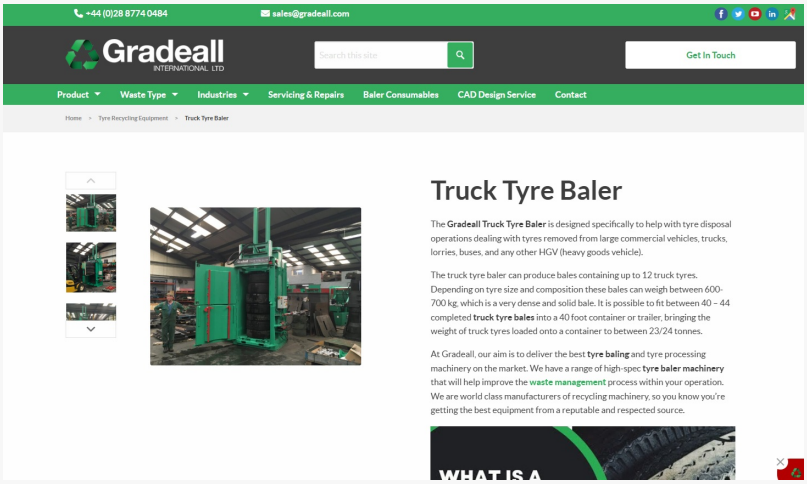
UK Parliament Debate Reveals £250 Million Domestic Tyre Recycling Opportunity

MPs call for tighter export controls as study shows domestic processing could generate 20 times current export value for British economy



The Gradeall Truck Tyre Baler is designed specifically to help with tyre disposal operations

DUNGANNON, COUNTY TYRONE, UNITED KINGDOM, January 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A recent UK Parliamentary debate has brought renewed attention to the economic opportunity presented by domestic tyre recycling, with studies suggesting that processing end-of-life tyres within Britain could generate £250 million annually—nearly 20 times the £13 million currently derived from exports. Northern Ireland tyre recycling equipment manufacturer Gradeall International stands ready to support expanded domestic processing capacity.

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> *UK Parliamentary Debate Reference*

The Westminster Hall debate, held in April 2025, saw MPs from multiple parties raise concerns about the environmental and economic consequences of current tyre export practices. Approximately 350,000 tonnes of end-of-life tyres are shipped from the UK to India each year, where GPS tracking studies have shown they frequently end up in unregulated batch pyrolysis facilities operating with minimal environmental controls.

Tessa Munt MP, who led the debate, emphasised the need to rethink waste as a resource within the circular economy framework. "We are essentially exporting economic value along with environmental problems," the debate heard. "Domestic processing would keep that value within the UK whilst ensuring tyres are handled to proper environmental standards."

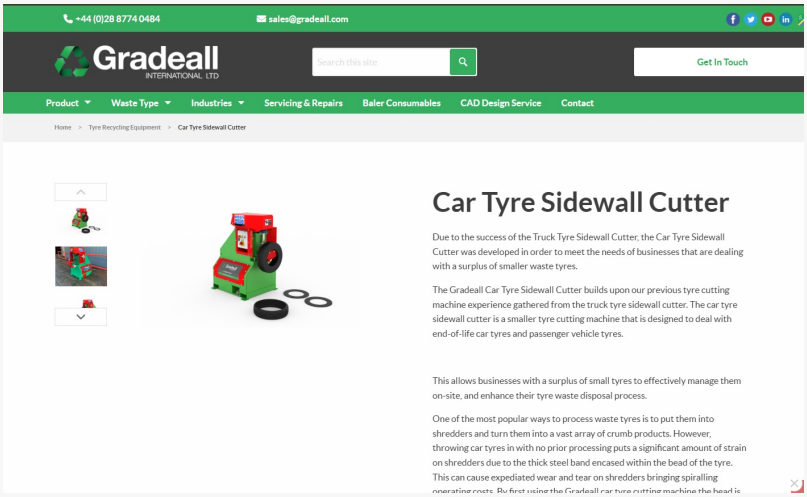
Current Export Practices Under Scrutiny

The UK generates approximately 600,000 tonnes of end-of-life tyres annually. Of this volume, roughly 350,000 tonnes are currently shipped to India, with additional quantities exported to Turkey and Morocco for use in cement manufacturing. Only a portion is processed domestically to create materials for asphalt and other applications.

The Parliamentary debate highlighted evidence that many exported tyres end up in primitive pyrolysis operations that produce high-sulphur heavy fuel oils and low-grade carbon black whilst releasing harmful emissions without adequate filtration. These facilities operate under environmental regulations far less stringent than those applicable in the UK.

MPs pointed to deficiencies in the current regulatory framework. End-of-life tyres are classified as "green list waste" under waste shipments regulations, enabling export without the notification and consent procedures required for hazardous materials. This classification, several MPs argued, fails to reflect the environmental harm caused when tyres are processed in inadequate facilities.

The Tire Recycling Process- How Does It Work



The Gradeall Car Tyre Sidewall Cutter builds upon our previous tyre cutting machine experience gathered from the truck tyre sidewall cutter.

The debate referenced Australia's approach as a potential model for reform. Four years ago, the Australian Government introduced legislation requiring waste tyres to be shredded before export, backed by strict licensing and verification schemes under the Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020. This approach has driven investment in domestic processing facilities whilst ensuring exported material meets minimum processing standards.

The Economic Case for Domestic Processing

The £250 million figure cited in Parliament represents the potential economic value of processing tyres domestically rather than exporting them as whole units. This value derives from multiple revenue streams: recovered rubber for use in surfaces and products, steel wire for construction applications, textile fibres for industrial use, and energy recovery from tyre-derived fuel.

Sarah Dyke MP highlighted local businesses already operating successful tyre recycling

operations, including facilities that recycle tyres into new rubber products. These businesses demonstrate that domestic processing is technically and economically viable with appropriate equipment and market development.
Employment creation represents another significant economic benefit. Domestic processing facilities require skilled operators, maintenance technicians, logistics personnel, and administrative staff. The recycling sector more broadly has been identified as a growth area for employment as circular economy policies drive demand for waste processing capacity.
Investment in tyre recycling equipment provides businesses with assets that generate ongoing returns through processing fees, material sales, and reduced disposal costs. Professional tyre baling machinery typically pays for itself through operational savings and revenue generation within reasonable payback periods.

Equipment Solutions for Expanded Domestic Capacity
Gradeall International has been manufacturing tyre recycling equipment in Northern Ireland since the early 1990s. The company's range addresses the full spectrum of tyre processing requirements, from initial collection and volume reduction through to material separation and preparation for end markets.

The MKII Tyre Baler produces PAS 108-compliant bales at rates of four to six per hour, with each bale containing approximately 100 car tyres. PAS 108 compliance ensures bales meet British Standards Institution specifications for use in construction applications including road foundations, slope repairs, and drainage systems. The baler reduces tyre volume by up to 80%, dramatically improving storage efficiency and reducing transport costs.

For commercial vehicle tyres, the Truck Tyre Baler handles larger dimensions whilst maintaining processing efficiency. Producing bales containing up to 12 truck tyres, this machine reduces volumes to 15-20% of original size, cutting transport requirements by up to 70%.

The Truck Tyre Sidewall Cutter addresses a particular challenge in tyre recycling by separating sidewalls from tread sections on large tyres. This separation makes tyres easier to bale and prepares them for further processing. The Car Tyre Sidewall Cutter performs similar functions for passenger vehicle tyres.
For facilities requiring maximum throughput, the Inclined Tyre Baler Conveyor integrates with MKII Balers to process up to 850 tyres per hour. The conveyor brings tyres to operators at chest height, reducing physical strain and improving productivity compared to manual loading.

Material separation equipment including the Tyre Rim Separator efficiently removes steel rims from rubber tyres, maximising recovery value from both components. This separation supports the production of clean rubber feedstock for recycling applications whilst recovering steel for construction and manufacturing markets.
The OTR Tyre Cutting Equipment range handles the most challenging large tyres from mining and agricultural applications. Off-the-road tyres can weigh several tonnes and present significant handling challenges. Gradeall's OTR Tyre Splitter and OTR Tyre Sidewall Cutter reduce these

massive tyres to manageable segments for further processing or disposal.

Circular Economy Policy Context

The Parliamentary debate took place against a backdrop of evolving circular economy policy at both UK and European levels. The UK Government has placed circular economy principles at the heart of its waste management agenda, with a Circular Economy Taskforce expected to report during 2026.

The Environment Act 2021 provides the legislative framework for waste management reform, though MPs noted that implementation of measures to close loopholes enabling waste crime has been slower than anticipated. The debate called for action rather than continued consultation on reforms that have been discussed for years.

At European level, the Clean Industrial Deal published in 2025 prioritises circularity and access to materials. A Circular Economy Act expected in 2026 aims to boost demand for recycled materials and strengthen the internal market for waste and circular materials. EURIC and ETRMA have called for harmonised End-of-Waste criteria for rubber from end-of-life tyres to support material flows across the European recycling sector.

These policy developments create a supportive environment for investment in domestic tyre recycling capacity. Businesses establishing processing facilities now will be positioned to benefit from strengthened circular economy frameworks and growing demand for recycled materials.

Environmental Benefits of Proper Processing

Beyond economic considerations, domestic processing addresses significant environmental concerns associated with current export practices. Properly managed tyre recycling prevents the pollution caused by primitive pyrolysis operations and eliminates the transport emissions associated with shipping tyres to distant processing locations.

The risks associated with improper tyre disposal are well documented. Abandoned tyres create breeding grounds for disease-carrying mosquitoes, with a single tyre capable of producing thousands of larvae during rainy conditions. Tyre stockpiles pose fire risks, with tyre fires capable of burning for months whilst releasing carcinogenic compounds into air and water.

Tyre wear particles have been identified as one of the largest sources of microplastic pollution in ocean environments. Whilst this pollution primarily results from tyre use rather than disposal, proper end-of-life management prevents additional environmental contamination and enables material recovery that reduces demand for virgin rubber production.

Professional tyre recycling transforms an environmental liability into useful products. Recovered rubber finds applications in playground surfaces, athletic tracks, road construction, and moulded products. Steel wire recovered from tyres supplies construction and manufacturing sectors. These applications displace virgin material production and support circular material flows.

Industry Response and Investment Readiness

The Tyre Recovery Association has welcomed Parliamentary attention to the sector, calling on Government to further tighten export controls, end T8 exemptions that enable waste crime, and actively support circular economy development. The Association suggests 2026 could represent

a crossroads for UK tyre recycling policy.
Equipment manufacturers including Gradeall International report growing enquiries from businesses considering investment in tyre processing capacity. The combination of regulatory pressure on exports, economic opportunity from domestic processing, and circular economy policy support has created favourable conditions for infrastructure investment.
Gradeall's manufacturing facility in Dungannon, County Tyrone, produces the full range of tyre recycling equipment for both domestic and international markets. The company has been building tyre balers and processing equipment since the early 1990s, with machinery now operating at customer sites worldwide from Iceland to Australia.
After-sales support includes service engineers operating across the UK and Ireland, with remote monitoring capabilities enabling health checks on machinery at any location. Service and preventative maintenance contracts provide ongoing support throughout equipment lifecycles.

Looking Ahead

The Parliamentary debate has placed tyre recycling firmly on the political agenda. MPs from multiple parties expressed support for reforms that would drive investment in domestic processing capacity whilst ensuring environmental standards are maintained throughout the tyre lifecycle.
Whether Government responds with legislative reform or continues the consultation approach that has characterised recent years remains to be seen. However, the economic and environmental case for expanding domestic tyre recycling capacity appears increasingly compelling.
Businesses considering investment in tyre recycling equipment can draw confidence from the policy direction of travel. Circular economy frameworks are strengthening, export loopholes face growing political pressure, and demand for recycled materials continues to grow. Facilities established now will be positioned to benefit as these trends develop.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What did the UK Parliament debate about tyre recycling?

The April 2025 Westminster Hall debate addressed concerns about UK tyre exports to countries with lower environmental standards, the economic opportunity of domestic processing, and potential reforms to waste shipment regulations. MPs called for tighter export controls and support for circular economy development.

How much could domestic tyre recycling be worth to the UK economy?

A study cited during Parliamentary debate suggested domestic tyre processing could generate £250 million annually for the UK economy, compared to approximately £13 million from current export practices. This value comes from recovered materials, processing services, and employment creation.

Where are UK tyres currently exported?

Approximately 350,000 tonnes of end-of-life tyres are exported annually from the UK to India, with additional volumes going to Turkey, Morocco, and other destinations. GPS tracking studies

have shown many exported tyres end up in facilities with limited environmental controls.

What is the Australian model for tyre exports?
Australia introduced legislation in 2020 requiring waste tyres to be shredded before export, backed by strict licensing and verification schemes. This approach has driven investment in domestic processing facilities whilst ensuring exported material meets minimum standards.

What equipment is needed to start tyre recycling?
Basic tyre recycling operations require a tyre baler to compress tyres into manageable bales. Larger operations may add sidewall cutters for processing truck tyres, rim separators for material recovery, and conveyor systems for increased throughput. Equipment selection depends on tyre types, volumes, and target end markets.

Is tyre recycling profitable?
Professional tyre recycling can be profitable through multiple revenue streams including processing fees, recovered material sales, and avoided disposal costs. Equipment investment typically generates returns through operational savings and material value recovery. Market conditions and operating efficiency affect individual business results.

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