

Zero Waste Scotland

Supporting circular economy in cities and regions

Business support and funding to develop circular economy at different scales

Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS), supported by the Scottish Government and EU funding, is partnering with businesses, communities, and other agencies across Scotland to realise the country's to become a circular economy.

Core to the approach being taken by ZWS and partners is the development of CE opportunities within Scotland's diverse cities and regions. Developing opportunities at the city (and regional) scale is bringing dividends in part because the population and resource density in smaller geographic area, cities are an ideal location for new circular business models.

'This approach, in addition to supporting key sectors [across Scotland], will allow us to encourage responsible production where we 'make, use, remake' as opposed to 'make, use, dispose'.

Iain Gullard, CEO Zero Waste Scotland.

This approach also encourages cross sectoral collaborations in sectors that are most relevant for each specific region or city, events management in Glasgow for example, or tourism and food in Edinburgh.

The scale of the investment

ZWS Cities and Regions programme is funded through the Scottish Government and European Structural Funds Programme. The £73 million Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Accelerator Programme provided a range of funding, support and guidance for businesses in Scotland. A proportion of this funding, £18 million, has been allocated to the

Circular Economy Investment Fund which provides grants (£50,000 to £1 million) to small and medium sized enterprises to develop CE approaches. Activity in the cities and regions is delivered through wider, national programmes, covering resource efficiency, circular economy and the Climate Challenge Fund.

In addition to the city scale, place based support and funding, ZWS continues to focus on supporting SMEs in: Built environment; Food systems; Bioeconomy, Energy infrastructure; Heat and energy, and Waste.

Key drivers for the initiative: cities' readiness for change

In 2015, Zero Waste Scotland's CEO Iain Gullard, was exploring options for a more place based approach to embedding circular approaches with Guido Braam, then of Netherlands-based Circle Economy. This coincided with Glasgow Chamber of Commerce's desire to support Scotland's net-zero ambitions by extending its support and awareness raising activity around the potential benefits from a circular economy in the City. A partnership emerged that built on both organisations' expertise, and Glasgow became the country's first Circular City.

Delivering a circular economy at city and region scale

ZWS's Circular Cities programme started with four cities and regions: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Tayside and NE Scotland. In each place, ZWS works to support businesses, public and third sector organisations to find opportunities to expand and embed CE. Box 1 shows illustrates some of the ways this has been achieved in Glasgow, the flagship Circular City.

Since 2020, the programme has extended to new regions, including 'Circular Highlands and Islands' in partnership with in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the Scottish Government's economic development agency, and also to towns.

Mid-sized Scottish towns and smaller cities such as Perth, Leith, Bute and Dunbar are now developing

Individual plans that fit with the aims and ambitions of the communities and businesses in those individual places. In Dunbar for example, the focus was on supporting local schools that previously did not recycle to set up systems that would work for them. The scheme involved some innovative ways of engaging people including role play and animation and setting up three reuse hubs. Within the first year, there was a 50% reduction to landfill.

A place based, collaborative approach leading to success

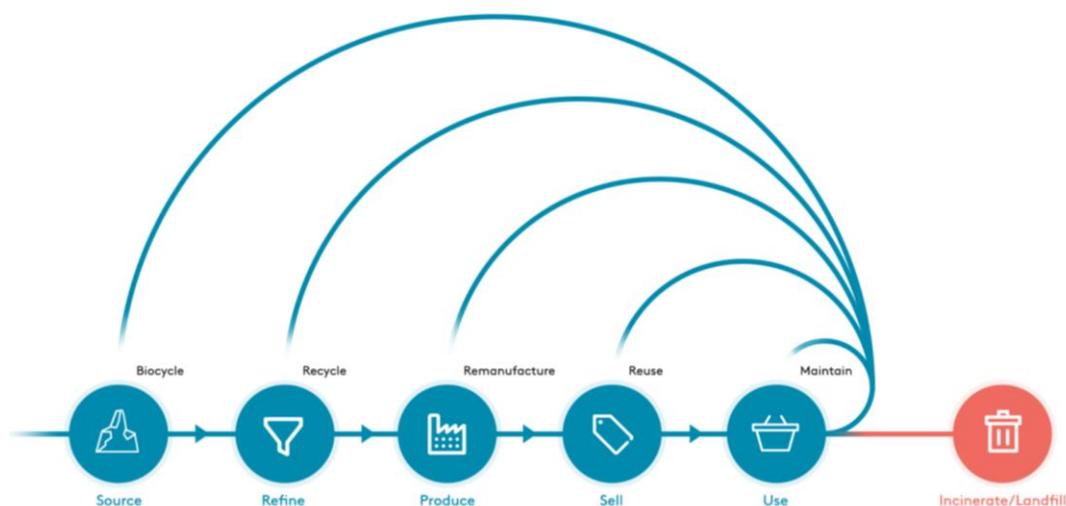
Supporting and funding projects at city and regional scale is believed to work because it allows for practical, collaborative approaches that provide solutions to place based challenges. In each place ZWS is working closely with other agencies, business groups, and communities and using their connections, networks and expertise to help develop place based solutions.

For Glasgow, circular economy is promoted as a viable alternative to current unsustainable ways of operation. The City promotes CE internationally, for example by being a CE Hotspot as a means of becoming a more competitive and resilient city.

Circular Glasgow aims to build best practice and capacity on circular economy across Glasgow businesses. Support and funding is offered to help businesses identify and implement circular ideas. This has been facilitated by:

- Workshops and events - a series of knowledge sharing business to business networking events;
- Circle Assessments – an innovative online tool which helps businesses understand opportunities to become more circular;
- Circle Lab - an online 'hackathon' event to find a circular solution to a local challenge. Circle Lab sought solutions to make Glasgow's event industry more circular. From over 200 contributions, three winning ideas were a deposit-based re-use system for food and drink containers, circular designs for event marketing and branding, and a scheme that will repurposes organic waste into energy and fertilisers. Producing infographics (see below) and resources to raise awareness and share learning. ZWS and Glasgow Chambers of Commerce both have high social media presence, and they are using this to raise awareness and promote circular economy.

The Circular Economy



Importantly, the city scale provides a good testing ground for the CE business model. Adaptations are encouraged and learning shared within places and then joined up nationally (and internationally) via ZWS.

Challenges and how they are resolved

For some places, the specific geographic and economic makeup of the area presents challenges for the expansion of CE approaches. In the Highlands and Islands for example large distances between population centres, limited access to markets and skilled workforce, and an aging population have been identified as challenges. However, the partnership approach being adopted in places means that local expertise and understanding of specific challenges is being employed to find new opportunities. ZWS Circular Highlands & Islands project is working with HIE to explore and take advantage of the specific, place based opportunities that a circular economy presents for the region to focus on key sectors of food & drink, tourism, life sciences, energy, creative industries, and technology & advance engineering.

Emerging benefits

Beyond specific project by project impacts (for example, improved resource efficiency, reduced waste to landfill, new businesses being established), by concentrating effort on a specific geographical area, ZWS reports an increased 'awareness of the benefits of a circular approach' and has been able to build relationships with local stakeholders to increase their support in 'horizontal' sectors. This in turn is creating opportunities for CE to be embedded in other relevant activity taking place on a regional and local level, for example, City Region Deals, regional economic development priorities, sustainability goals.

Next steps: embedding circular economy at different scales

ZWS's cities, regions and now towns programmes continue to expand, and nationally, CE is being embedded into three major strategies: The Future of Cities, The Future of Consumption, and The Future of Work.

W: <https://circulareconomy.leeds.ac.uk/>

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