

How to progress circular economy in Yorkshire and the Humber: community perspectives

Everything has to become “circular”, from agriculture to manufacturing and our high streets, from our world of work to how we live our daily lives, how we move around, how we shape our communities, and how we stay healthy. In short, circular economy has to be embedded into all areas of governance. This policy brief shares views from community representatives, outlining how they want to be involved by local governments and how to develop a collaborative network for a flourishing circular economy in Yorkshire and the Humber.

On 17 March 2022 a session was held at the Yorkshire Circular Economy Festival, inviting communities to share their views about what they believe is needed to progress circular economy in Yorkshire and the Humber region. They could speak with local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships. The session included an introduction to the draft circular economy framework strategy, and offered a vision on what this means for communities in our region. Participants reacted to the vision, and shared their circular economy ambitions and ideas for turning these into a reality. Further discussions were held on how to move circular economy forward in our region.

Towards a circular economy strategy for Yorkshire

In 2021 the Yorkshire Circular Lab facilitated the co-production of a draft framework strategy for circular economy for Yorkshire on behalf of the Yorkshire and Humber Local Authority Chief Executives net-zero subgroup and in close collaboration with the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, who continue to develop the strategy including:

- 1. Measuring progress:** monitor and evaluate progress and benefits of moving towards a sustainable circular economy. *Example action: Establish a measurement framework using a ‘six capitals’ approach to capture progress and impact.*
- 2. Circular demonstrator projects:** Enable the development and delivery of innovative circular projects. *Example action: Establish a regional fund for collaborative circular economy projects.*
- 3. Circular cities, town and communities:** Create the conditions for circular cities, towns and communities to thrive. *Example action: Promote the Circular Towns Guide to create a network of circular communities across the region.*
- 4. Business support:** Support businesses and key sectors to realise circular economy opportunities. *Example action: Establish sector-specific networks to support adoption of circular economy principles and enable collaboration/sharing of best practice.*
- 5. Employment and green skills:** Develop skills for circular economy and create new job opportunities.

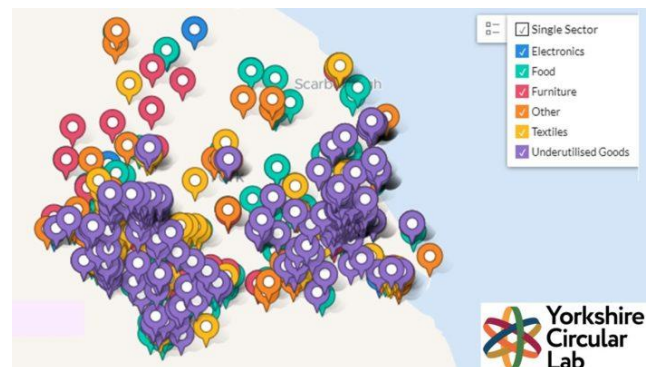
Example action: Establish a network of repair cafes across the region to improve repair skills.

- 6. Market and supply chain development:** Develop circular supply chains and markets. *Example actions: Empower citizens to demand more circular products and services; Establish forums to enable collaboration for supply chain development.*
- 7. Finance, investment and procurement:** Embed circular economy approaches into finance, investment and procurement. *Example action: Convene public sector organisations to embed circular economy principles in procurement policy.*
- 8. Strategic planning and policy:** Develop local policy and undertake further planning. *Example action: Assess regional circular economy assets and identify areas for development.*

Circular economy initiatives in Yorkshire and the Humber

In 2022, civic initiatives were mapped in five sectors: Food, Textiles, Furniture, Digital and Electronics, and Underutilised goods (e.g. tools; party equipment). Yorkshire and the Humber is home to nearly 800 circular economy community initiatives, from repair cafes and food banks to libraries of stuff and more.

The map shows that in Yorkshire and Humber circular economy is no longer a niche activity, offering high potential to learn from existing initiatives. The region is ready to scale up circular economy. Local government plans should build on existing initiatives.



Circular economy community initiatives map.
Access the map [here](#).

Bridging “circular” actions by government and community

The overriding recommendation from the circular economy community in Yorkshire and the Humber is that **local government must work more closely with communities**, because they are part of the solution.

Involve communities

Inform: 1) With an awareness campaign on circular economy; 2) By encouraging people to value resources, e.g. reuse/share things, use less plastic and explain what can be recycled; 3) By showcasing community initiatives at local authorities/community centres and encouraging people to use the initiatives.

Listen and consult: More and earlier conversations between communities and local authorities about sustainable waste strategies. Be open and listen carefully to understand people's everyday challenges.

Co-produce: Support those that are doing, those who are implementing circular economy, and join them to **do more and talk less**. Support with funding/using local circular economy initiatives.

Citizen control: Map initiatives to help them support each other. Let community groups keep ownership and ask what they need/want.

Participation through networks

Communities can be involved through networks with the following characteristics. The Yorkshire Circular Lab can help to facilitate such network.

Facilitate conversations between communities, business and local authorities.

Build up trusted relations to develop ideas together and make it easier for community groups to do good things for circular economy.

Provide guidance on how to contact local government. Links could include relevant email portals for communities, residential newsletters on e.g. net-zero, community hubs linking initiatives and government, and openness about relevant subject leads either directly or via a facilitator.

Collaborate across silos within local government on e.g. economic regeneration, procurement, climate action, environment, waste; ideally supported by a team to connect officers across local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and other organisations.

Create an ideas hub.



Video compilation with suggestions from twelve circular economy initiatives about how local governments could better support them. Watch it in full on [YouTube](#).

Building a flourishing circular economy

Make the most of networks by collaborating in the following ways:

Recognise successes informally, by sharing what is being done, and formally through accreditation.

Remove barriers, reduce bureaucracy.

Be a customer through local procurement and offer public bodies' equipment for reuse in communities.

Funding access is challenging for community initiatives and social enterprises. Support with seed funding, bid writing and attracting large capital grants. This requires steady availability of skilled staff.

Build on...regional culture of being prudent with money and caring for the environment and each other. Build on regional heritage and existing initiatives embedded in communities.

Make circular economy the norm by: 1) Working together; 2) Replicating initiatives for repair, libraries of things and reuse, making them a common sight on the high street; 3) Working with small businesses and other organisations to share best practice and make circular economy and sustainability everyday practise.

Skills support to (re-)embed circular economy in our daily lives and to access green jobs, e.g. in repair, through schools and community spaces.

Infrastructure to make circular economy easy to join: 1) Better coordinated drop-off points for reuse e.g. for clothing, electronics, paint, tools; 2) Reduce plastics by offering refill points; 3) Recover/ redistribute food. The role that local authorities play in sustainable waste management is changing by moving away from a strong focus on incineration, landfill and export.

Embed circular economy in local and regional government strategies and plans.

