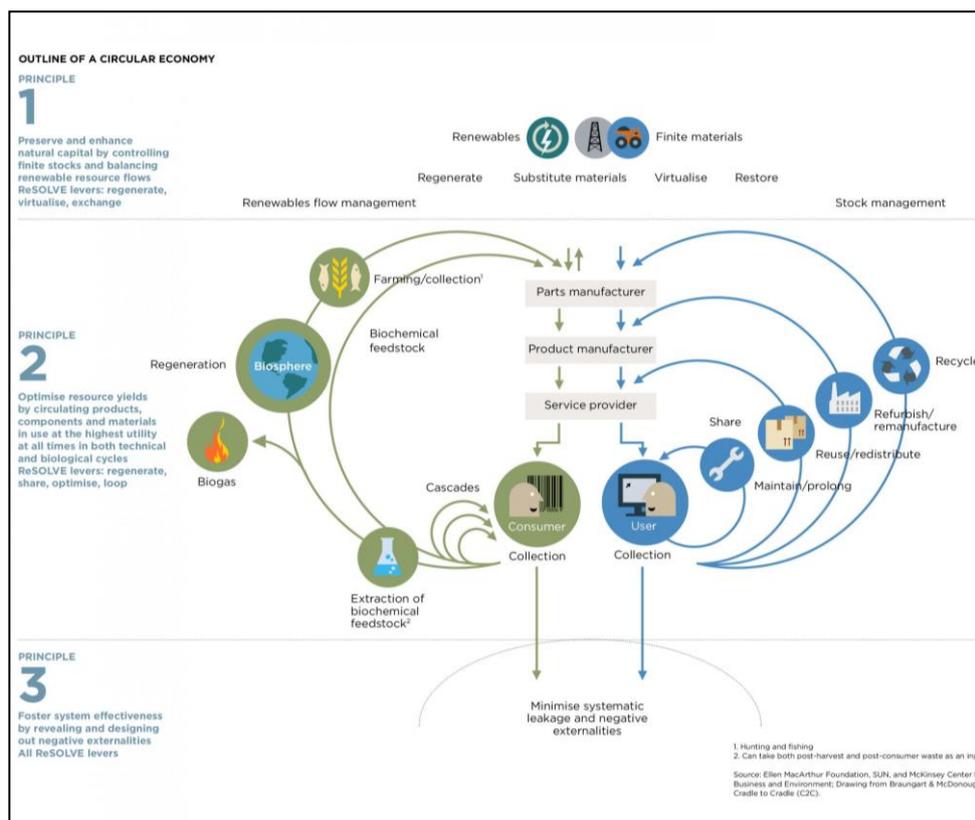


The Circular Economy

A circular economy (CE) is an alternative to a traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) in which we keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life. The concept has been embraced by the EU and in Scotland, with Scottish Government winning a global award in 2017 for its work.



This diagram taken from Ellen MacArthur Foundation is widely used to show how the circular economy works.

The Scottish Government published its strategy on the circular economy, [Making Things Last](#) in 2016 and the concept is a significant part of the Manufacturing Strategy (2016) and mentioned in the Economic Strategy (2015). The circular economy features in the draft Climate Plan (2017) with regard to driving emissions reduction in business and industry. The Government agency, Zero Waste Scotland, is leading circular economy work in Scotland, with many reports and resources on their [website](#).

Circular Economy policy development

LINK commissioned a study, [The Circular Economy: Implications for the Environmental Movement](#) which informed our response to the SG consultation on a more circular economy (2016). The resulting SG strategy on the circular economy, [Making Things Last](#), reflected some of our input and gave more emphasis to the environment.

LINK's position on the circular economy

LINK's report, [*The Circular Economy: Implications for the environment movement*](#), informed our position on the circular economy:

- LINK welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to pursue a CE as a step in the right direction;
- The main aim of a CE should be a reduction in the impact that our economy has on natural resources and associated biodiversity;
- The material footprint (or raw material consumption) should be adopted as a key indicator;
- There should be comprehensive application of the concept across all areas of the economy;
- Policies and actions needed to move us to a more circular economy should be spelled out, committed to and resourced.

Reflections

The opportunity to engage in development of the SG CE Strategy was a valuable learning exercise and it is pleasing that some of our points were reflected in the SG final strategy. There is a Government commitment for a Circular Economy Bill in this parliament. It will be important that environmental NGOs press for overall reduction in natural resource consumption as part of this bill. Current targets in *Making Things Last* are to reduce waste and increase rates of recycling. Whilst these aspirations are positive, there is a concern that overall consumption of raw materials, and the associated environmental degradation, could still continue to rise without the target to reduce resource consumption.