



## **A circular economy for a fairer footprint A project by Scottish Environment LINK Final report, May 2023.**

### **1. Introduction**

The Scottish Environment LINK project, *A Circular economy for a fairer footprint*, was initially a three year project, starting in April 2018. Covid significantly impacted on the delivery, so the project was granted an 18 month extension until October 2022. An underspend enabled the project to keep running until March 2023.

Project reports were submitted to FPF in June 2019, June 2020, June 2021 and October 2022. This final report will cover the whole project, from April 2018 – March 2023.

#### **The project aims**

In advance of the project, there had been a SNP manifesto commitment to a Circular Economy (CE) Bill in Scotland and this project was developed around this opportunity to influence the shape and impact of our current economic model - from a linear model severely impacting climate and biodiversity; to a circular model with reduced raw material consumption and climate and biodiversity benefits. The project outcomes were couched in two scenarios given the lack of certainty around the expected bill.

*Outcome: An ambitious CE Act with: binding targets, effective measurement, aligned public investment, and policy levers*

*Outcome: (in the absence of a bill) Existing legislation and other policy levers are used to bring about reduction in resource use and enhance environmental sustainability*

Due to the stretched timeframe for the project, and the delay in a CE bill, the project has both influenced the CE bill process and worked to embed circular approaches into other policies.

### **2. What were the inputs to your project? Please give us a summary of the activities you engaged in, highlighting any deviation from your original plans.**

The main input to the project was the Project Officers time and the time of others with whom we worked towards shared aims. The project was regularly discussed and reviewed at LINK Economics Group meetings which were held every 2 months.

The main activities can be described over different phases of the project:

#### **Phase I, May 2018 – Dec 2018: Scoping phase.**

- Background papers produced on different aspects of circular economy.
- Establishing contacts with relevant decision makers and others with an interest in CE.

**Phase II, Jan 2018 - November 2019: Campaigning for a strong CE Bill.**

- Producing a paper calling for a strong CE bill and a comprehensive and detailed briefing to accompany this.
- Garnering support from other organisations to support this paper calling for a strong bill.
- Supporting organisations formed an informal coalition working together for CE policy.

**Phase III, November 2019 – March 2020: CE Bill consultation.**

- Encouraging coalition members and other organisations to respond to the SG consultation on their proposals for a CE bill, through an event and guide.
- LINK response to the consultation supported by 20 members.
- Carrying out a survey of public opinion to demonstrate support for CE measures and publicising findings.

**Phase IV, March 2020 - May 2021: CE bill was put on hold due to COVID.**

- Getting a CE approach integrated in COVID recovery plans and other policy areas.
- Getting commitments in Party manifestos for a CE Bill ahead of the 2021 elections.
- A blog series to raise awareness.

**Phase V, May 2021- May 2022: Campaigning for a strong CE Bill (mark II).**

- Launched the campaign film and linked petition calling for CE action.
- Updated our paper from 2019 with support from coalition members.

**Phase VI, May 2022 – March 2023: CE bill and route map consultations.**

- Responding to Scottish Government CE Bill and Route Map consultations.
- held an event and produced a guide to encourage and help others to respond.

Throughout the project, we sought to **influence other policy areas**; to embed circular economy approaches across the economy. This included input to Scottish Governments Climate Change Plans, new Economic Strategy and National Planning Framework 4.

**Developing relationships** was a key part of this project. We established constructive working relationships with civil servants working on CE, experts working for Zero Waste Scotland, other non-LINK NGOs with an interest in CE (eg Circular Communities Scotland (formerly CRNS), overseas development NGOs; think tanks (eg Commonweal, Green Alliance); MSPs and the Minister; and businesses.

The project officer liaised with LINK colleagues across the UK on CE measures, in particular with regard to EPR and the UK Environment Bill, and with colleagues in the European Environment Bureau on transposing / keeping pace with EU Directives.

**3. What were the outputs? Please describe the facilities or services you actually delivered and indicate any differences from what you set out to deliver.**

Please see the annex for a detailed list and links to the project outputs.

At the beginning of the project we researched and produced 5 **scoping papers** to inform ourselves of the territory. These were discussed at LINK Economics Group meetings in 2018.

We responded to a range of **consultations** and **evidence** requests, both directly relevant to CE, such as the banning of single use plastic items, and where we wanted to ensure that CE aims were embedded

into other policy areas, such as COVID recovery, and the Climate Change Plans. Our Calls for a Strong Circular Economy Bill and CE bill consultations were key outputs.

We worked with key people to secure specific aims, such as working with an MSP on an **amendment** to get CE included in the Objects for the Scottish Investment Bank (Bill passed Feb 2020).

We held a number of **events** over the course of the project with specific aims. These included: MSP sponsored events in parliament; a roundtable with the Minister; events around the CE bill consultations; and events addressing particular topics such as CE and climate change, managing residual waste and the impacts of unsustainable raw material consumption.

From Autumn 2021 we provided the secretariat to a new Cross Party Group on CE, organizing quarterly meetings for MSPs and others. Details of these meetings can be found [here](#).

The **Circular Scotland Coalition** was a key project output. This informal coalition was formed around organisations supporting our 2019 paper calling for a Strong CE bill. We contacted a wide range of organisations whom we thought might share our main aims and succeeded in getting a broad church of bodies supporting our call - businesses, social enterprises, waste groups, academics, professional associations, international development bodies, unions and thinktanks. This added weight to our asks. We invited coalition members to provide guest blogs, worked with them on messaging, kept them updated on policy developments, and encouraged them to use and share our guides to responding to consultation responses.

The project officer, Phoebe Cochrane, spoke at and **contributed to a number of events and working groups** during the project, including: LINK event: A strong CE bill for Scotland, August 2019; event organised by CRNS for their members about the CE Bill (2019); LINK/ SCCS/ FoES event [Scotland's response to the climate emergency \(2020\)](#); [Sea Scotland](#) conference June 2021; event organised by the Just Transition Partnership on the draft Energy Strategy (2023).

Phoebe Cochrane also gave evidence to Scotland's **Climate Assembly** on 'How should Scotland manage its materials and resources to tackle the climate emergency in an effective and fair way'. The evidence sessions can be viewed on the Climate Assembly's [Youtube channel](#).

In terms of working groups, the Project Officer sat on a Government working group on putting a charge on single-use cups (2022) and a Government working group on Sustainable footprints (2022 - 23).

We carried out a **public survey** in 2020 which demonstrated strong support for CE measures. The findings provided useful material for comms. In 2021 we commissioned a **campaign film** which we used to promote a **petition** which was presented to the Minister for Biodiversity, Circular Economy and Green Skills.

#### **4. To what extent did you begin to achieve any of your target outcomes or did any fail to progress?**

*Outcome: An ambitious CE Act with: binding targets, effective measurement, aligned public investment, and policy levers*

The initial proposals for a CE Bill, consulted on in 2019, fell well short of what we were campaigning for. An analysis of the responses to that consultation showed significant support for our asks amongst respondents and officials noted that our asks were very visible, reflecting well on our work. This bill was never brought forward due to COVID.

After COVID, with a new Government, including a new Minister for Circular Economy, Biodiversity and Green Skills; government decided that, instead of bringing forward the CE bill based on 2019 proposals; they would introduce new proposals. Although this meant a more lengthy process, we were happy with this given the inadequacies of the original proposals. In 2022, the government consulted on new proposals for a CE bill and a draft CE route map. Together, these offered a much more comprehensive approach to CE policy in Scotland. They propose statutory consumption based targets and a statutory CE plan which had been central to our asks. However, the targets are proposed to be set in the future and there are other areas where there is a lack of ambition. Our consultation responses to the [bill](#) proposals and [route map](#) give more detail. The analysis of responses to the bill consultation once again show strong support for CE measures. There is a commitment to present the bill to parliament before summer recess, June 2023. The final route map is expected before the end of 2023.

*Outcome: (in the absence of a bill) Existing legislation and other policy levers are used to bring about reduction in resource use and enhance environmental sustainability*

The moratorium on new incinerators and recommendation to ban the burning of plastics have been welcome steps. Despite continued pressure from LINK members, there have been frustrations with repeated delays of Scotland's Deposit return system which has latterly been held up by UK Government considering Internal Market Act implications. The forthcoming CE Route Map will complement the forthcoming CE Bill with all the non-legislative CE policy measures.

As mentioned, the project also sought to influence other policies to embed circular approaches across public policy. We were reasonably happy with the prominence given to CE in the Climate Change Plan update / COVID recovery Plan (2020) and also with the CE approaches in the National Planning Framework 4 (2022). We were disappointed with the new National Economic Strategy, which, although it does contain high level aims around climate, nature and circularity; fails to follow through.

This reflects partial success in awareness of the importance of CE (as a way to reduce our consumption of raw materials and climate and biodiversity impacts) across Government.

**5. Were there any unexpected outcomes? These might include influence on other bodies, impact on policy, securing funding to sustain the work, etc.**

**6. Did you generate any media interest?**

[Let's make sustainable products that last – or the planet won't](#), Scotsman, 28 Feb 2019

Our response to SG CE proposals, 7 Nov 2019 in [Holyrood Magazine](#).

Launch of cross-sector coalition of orgs supporting strong CE Bill, 28 August 2019 was featured in [Holyrood magazine](#), Good Morning Scotland (BBC radio) and [The Herald](#).

Launch of Call for a strong CE Bill, 12 June 2019 was featured on Central FM and STV.

Scotsman [article](#), 11 June 2019

Scotsman article - [Here's our chance to stop wasting earth's resources](#) – Dr Phoebe Cochrane

There was coverage in the [Herald of our survey. June 2020](#)

[Need to rethink our relationship with plastic](#) – 28<sup>th</sup> June 2020

'Circular economy is the way forward for Scotland', Scotsman, 21 September 2021

['The best and worst council performers as Scotland fails to reach 60% household waste recycling target'](#), Herald, 12 Dec 2021

['Scotland's Circular Economy Bill: Ravenous consumption of natural resources is trashing the planet. Here's how to stop'](#) – Scotsman, 26 April 2022

## 7. Have you identified any lessons that will be useful to you in future or which might be useful to others?

The process of coalition building (and maintaining) was extremely fruitful. It enabled us to show that it was not only environmental NGOs who wanted a more circular economy, and to share expertise and contribute to each other's agendas. It provided the project with a resource base on which to draw for meetings with officials and other decision makers.

## 8. How much did you spend in total, including our funds and how did you fund any gaps that emerged?

Please see separate financial report attached.

### ANNEX

#### OUTPUTS

##### Internal scoping papers (2018)

*The Circular Economy: Main players and programmes;*  
*Statutory Instruments and powers;*  
*Targets and metrics;*  
*The circular economy and LINK; and*  
*Research and development funding for the circular economy.*

##### Consultations / evidence

[LINK Consultation response to a Deposit Return Scheme for Scotland](#) (September 2018)  
[ELUK letter](#) on Single-Use Plastics and Energy and Resource Efficient Products (November 2018)  
evidence on the [construction sector](#) to the Economy, Energy and Fair Work committee (February 2019)  
evidence on [Scotland's progress on UNSDG 12](#) to feed in to the UK Voluntary Review of SDG delivery (February 2019).  
[Scottish National Investment Bank bill consultation response](#) (May 2019)  
ELUK [response](#) to UK Extended Producer Responsibility consultation (May 2019)  
ELUK [response](#) to UK Plastic Packaging Tax consultation (May 2019)  
[Call for a strong circular economy bill for Scotland](#) (June 2019)  
[A strong circular economy bill for Scotland – Briefing](#) (June 2019)  
[A circular economy a way to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies together](#) (Infographic)  
[A 20 minute guide: How to respond to the circular economy consultation](#) (December 2019)  
[A 5 minute guide: How to respond to the circular economy consultation](#) (December 2019)  
[LINK response to Scottish Government consultation on Circular Economy bill proposals](#) (Dec 2019)  
[Circular economy evidence to ECCLR on green recovery](#) (August 2020)  
[Circular economy proposals for Scotland's Climate Change Plan](#) (Oct 2020)  
[A circular Scotland: briefing paper](#) (Nov 2020)  
[A Guide to responding to the Scottish Government consultation on banning single-use plastic items](#) (Dec 2020)  
[Consultation response: Introducing market restrictions on problematic single-use plastic items](#) (Dec 2020)  
[Consultation response: Draft Environmental Protection \(Single-use Plastic Products and Oxo-degradable Plastic Products\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#), (April 2021)  
[Five things you need to know about the Circular Economy](#) (May 2021)

[ELUK Consultation response on Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging](#) (June 2021)  
[Circular economy and the National strategy for economic transformation](#) (August 2021)  
[Review of the role of incineration in the waste hierarchy – LINK evidence](#) (February 2022)  
[Marine litter strategy for Scotland – consultation response](#) (March 2022)  
[National litter and flytipping strategy – consultation response](#) (March 2022)  
[Call for a strong circular economy bill for Scotland](#) (April 2022)  
[Guide to responding to the circular economy consultations](#) (July 2022)  
[Circular economy route map consultation response](#) (August 2022)  
[Circular economy bill consultation response](#) (August 2022)  
[Breaking new ground? Developing a Scottish tax to replace the UK Aggregate levy. Consultation response](#) (December 2022)

#### **Survey and public poll**

[Survey report: Public attitudes on circular economy](#) ( May 2020)  
[Scottish public want a less wasteful economy](#) (press release, June 2020)

#### **Film and petition**

Campaign film linked from our website <https://www.scotlink.org/link-campaigns/a-circular-economy-for-a-fairer-footprint/> Linked petition supported by nearly 2000 people calling for robust CE measures (2021).

#### **Blogs**

[Finding our way to circularity](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, Feb 2019)  
[Let's make sustainable products that last – or the planet won't.](#) (Article by Dr Phoebe Cochrane, published in the Scotsman June 2019)  
[Time to rethink our relationship with plastics](#) (June,2020)  
[Why a more circular Scotland needs to be part of the economic recovery](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, July 2020)  
[Educating Scotland's school children for a CE](#) (Mary Michel, July 2020)  
[Scotland needs to embrace re-use as we seek to recover from Covid 19](#) (Michael Cook, July 2020)  
[Turn Greed to Green](#) (James Curran, Sept 2020)  
[Can we shift from 'fast fashion to a more circular textiles industry](#) (Rob Snaith, Sept 2020)  
[Incineration of waste continues to soar – is this the right direction?](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, Oct 2020)  
[Why repair is a key part of a circular economy and a green recovery](#) (Sophie Unwin, Oct 2020)  
[Are repairs making a comeback?](#) (Carla Worth, Dec 2020)  
[Scotland must follow EU lead in consumption reduction](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, February 2021)  
[Sunak's Plastic Packaging Tax is good news, but government must do much more to reduce waste](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, March 2021)  
[Reusable nappies and how they can address Scotland's single-use plastic challenge](#)(Guy Schanschieff, Chair of Nappy Alliance, April 2021)  
[Wiser use of materials holds the key to mitigating climate change](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, July 2021)  
[Circular economy is the way forward for Scotland](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, September 2021)  
[Goodbye to single-use plastic cutlery and plates](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, November 2021)  
[Circular Economy proposals to be announced in May – will they be up to the job?](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, March 2022)  
[Wake up call](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, April 2022)  
[Materials matter: have your say on a circular economy for Scotland](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, July 2022)  
[A nature positive economy needs to be circular](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, January 2023)  
[Is Scotland being left behind in the transition to circular economy](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, March 2023)  
**Press release /press**  
[Cross-sector coalition calls for a strong circular economy bill](#) (Press release, August 2019)  
[Let's make sustainable products that last – or the planet won't.](#) (Article by Dr Phoebe Cochrane, published in the Scotsman June 2019)  
[Circular economy proposals need top-level targets says Scottish Environment LINK](#) (press release, November 2019)

[Scottish public want a less wasteful economy](#) (press release, June 2020)

[Wake up call](#) (Phoebe Cochrane, published in the Scotsman, April 2022)

#### Events

- **Pathways to a Circular and Resource Efficient Economy.** February 2019. Seminar [report](#) and [blog](#)
- **A Strong Circular Economy Bill for Scotland, August 2019.** In parliament.
- **Circular Economy Bill proposals consultation** event, December 2019. To hear about and discuss the SG proposals for a CE Bill.
- **Circular Economy priorities for Scotland,** Jan 2020. This event was held in the Scottish Parliament sponsored by Angus MacDonald MSP. A [summary report](#) is available with a link through to the presentation slides. The event was filmed and videos are available to watch – [Professor John Barrett](#), [Dr Richard Dixon](#), [Penelope Vincent-Sweet](#), [Questions and Discussions](#).
- **Residual waste – bury, burn or banish,** Nov 2020. Speakers: Janet McVea, Scottish Government: [Plans for 2025 targets and beyond](#); Michael Lenaghan, Zero Waste Scotland: [The carbon impact of waste incineration](#); Enzo Favoino, Zero Waste Europe: [A bridge strategy for optimised management of residuals](#); Jane Cherrington, Clean Green Future: [Taking an ‘all Wales’ approach to reducing residual waste](#).
- **The role of Material Use in Mitigating Climate Change,** June 2021. Organised by Scottish Environment LINK and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. This event heard from experts and explained why a focus on materials is important, which materials and products have the biggest impact, how these might be addressed and how climate change policy needs to broaden out if we are to really ‘end our contribution’ to climate change by 2050. **Speakers:** Prof. John Barrett, University of Leeds: [slides](#) , Matthew Fraser, Lead, Circularity Gap Reporting Initiative: [slides](#) , Kim Pratt, Zero Waste Scotland: [slides](#)
- Roundtable event discussing the question: **How to deliver reductions in Scotland’s material footprint and the approaches and policies / legislation needed.** March 2022. [Summary note](#)
- **Materials Matter – A Circular Economy bill for Scotland – have your say.** June 2022. Joint LINK and Friends of the Earth Scotland discussing the Scottish Government proposals for a circular economy bill and route map. [Slides](#) and [summary report](#).