



City of Westminster
COMMERCIAL WASTE

How to apply the circular economy in your business:

A complete guide



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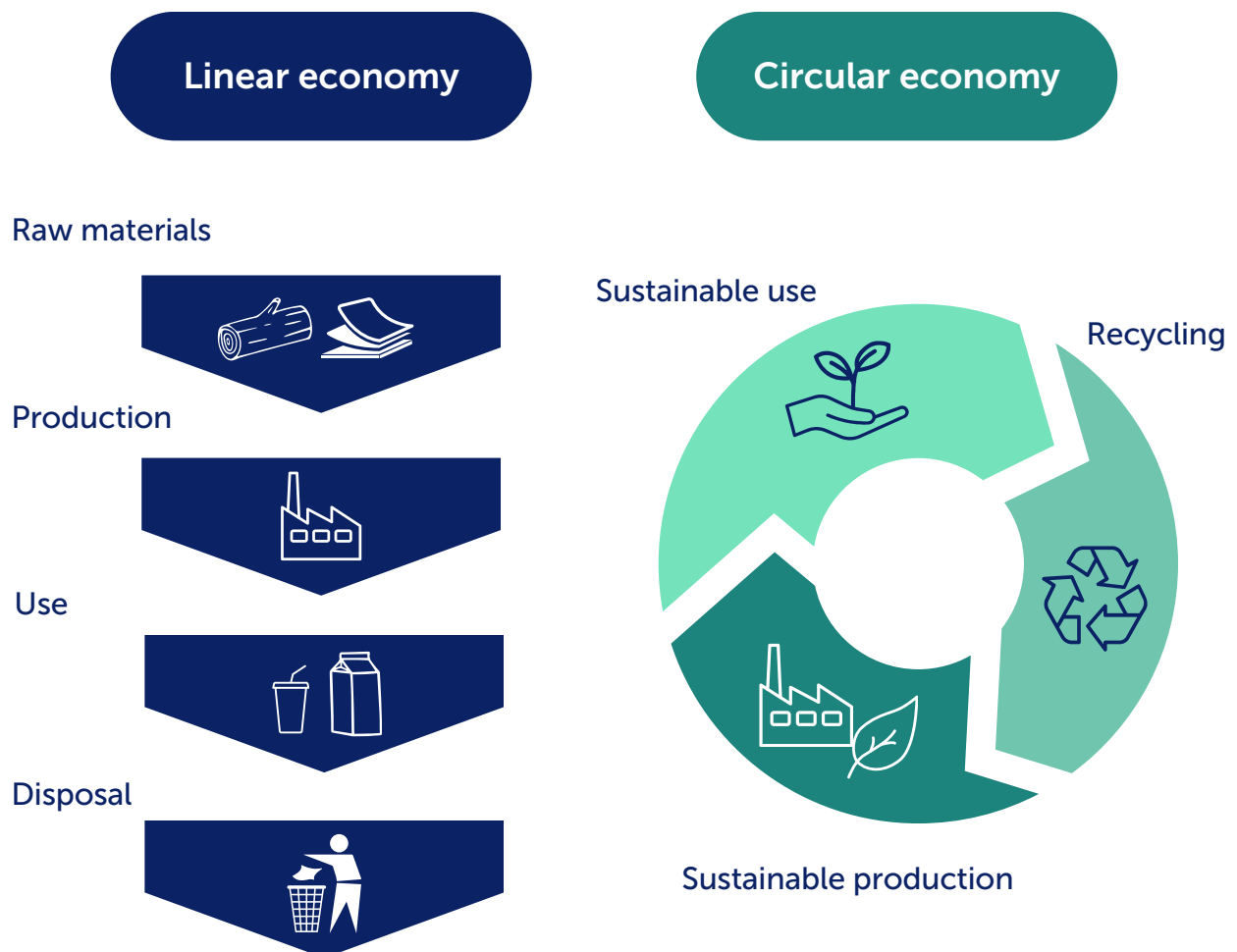
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What is the circular economy?

Essentially, it's the practice of keeping things in use for as long as possible and at their highest value.

So, instead of making, using and then throwing things away (linear system) a circular economy extends the value of things by finding ways to keep them useful (circular system). This is also known as 'closing the loop'.

The circular economy can apply to almost anything, including energy, with solutions like Combined Heat & Power (CHP) harnessing the waste heat produced from generating electricity. It can even apply to water, as wastewater can be treated and reused as drinking water.



Circular economy in practice

There are many ways you can apply the circular economy in your business activity. We've highlighted some of the main ones here:

1. Making or buying quality things

Designing or buying products that last as long as possible and ensuring that they can be maintained, re-used and repaired.



2. Using things wisely

Using recycled materials in new products, minimising waste and/or recycling as much as possible when materials reach their end-of-life.



3. Reusing things

Capturing goods and materials at the end of their first life then using them again, for the same or a different purpose. This includes redistributing surplus goods.



3. Sharing

Maximising value from underused assets (such as space, products, vehicles etc.) by providing access to sharing platforms.



Why is a circular economy important?

Material resource use may more than double by 2050, according to a United Nations report. A growing population, higher life expectancy and increasing wealth means that people are buying (and disposing) of more and more each year.

The rising amount of waste is already placing pressure on the planet as well as the people and creatures that depend on it.

Raw resources are becoming more difficult and costly to extract and manufacture, with costs being passed down through the supply chain.

Maximising resource use not only saves money - it creates more jobs, contributes to national security and strengthens supply chain resilience.



What are the benefits?



1. Reduce your carbon footprint

Boost progress towards Net Zero goals and position your business as a conscious brand that cares.



2. Cut costs

Finding opportunities to close the loop can generate valuable cost-savings. For example, switching to recycling can help you save on disposal costs, and even generate revenue.



3. Improve resilience

Especially for materials in high demand, circular economy eliminates the risk of higher prices or limited availability affecting business continuity.



3. Optimise processes

Minimising waste and maximising resource use enables you to get the full potential of a material's useful life. This improves efficiency, particularly for manufacturers.



3. Unlock new profit opportunities

Finding new ways to unlock the value in your waste can open up opportunities for a new stream of income, by transforming your waste into resources for others to utilise, for example, green energy.

How does it work?

A closed-loop (circular economy) approach can be applied across all sectors. Here are three examples of how it can work for different types of business:

Food & beverage manufacturing



Food and drink manufacturers can make use of unavoidable food waste for the production of biogas, which is then used to generate renewable energy.

Or when it comes to food packaging, producers can increase the recycled material content and ensure it's fully recyclable for consumers. With changing regulations such as the Plastics Tax (2023), this is also an opportunity to cut costs.

Chemical



In the chemical industry, valuable solvent components can be sent separately for solvent recovery.

The returned product can then be re-used, reducing the need and cost of virgin solvent. Elsewhere, moving to a greater reliance on green energy is another step towards a circular economy.

Retail



Take-back services are becoming increasingly popular among retailers. This is especially important for WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment), one of the fastest growing waste streams in the world.

Retailers can also offer refill points and in-store recycling stations for all types of items and materials.

How can we help?

Our purpose is Ecological Transformation. This means combating climate change, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, preventing pollution and preserving natural resources - making the circular economy central to everything we do.

We provide a comprehensive range of waste, water and energy management services, all designed to build the circular economy and protect the environment. Our approach means we can provide solutions in multiple areas to help you achieve your goals.



Case study: plastics

In the UK alone, around 5.5 million tonnes of plastic bottles are thrown away every year. Some plastic types are difficult to recycle, with much of this material being used for energy recovery or sent to landfill. Thanks to our UK plastic sorting facilities, we manage a complete closed-loop solution for HDPE bottles.

Once sorted, incoming plastics at Dagenham are flaked, washed and turned into pellets - which can then be sold and turned back into bottles. This solution is truly 'bottle to bottle', and is just one example of how we're harnessing the circular economy.

Ready to get started?

Get in touch now to harness our circular economy expertise, helping your business close the loop and protect the planet. Ultimately, we understand that the circular economy needs to work for you.

Your needs, your demands, your resources, your business - we create tailored approaches to deliver a circular economy that suits you. Contact us to schedule a sustainability or waste audit, where one of our experts will evaluate your business and assist you in achieving your goals.

[Contact us](#)