

Opinion – Covid recovery must be circular

Mayan Grace the Head of Projects at Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce writes for us about the need for the circular economy.

The development of vaccines to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic has raised hopes that an end to the public health crisis that has cost lives and livelihoods may be in sight.

As we say goodbye to a difficult 2020 and look ahead to what, we hope, will be a better 2021 then thoughts turn to the shape of our future, and in particular the shape that our economic recovery will take.

Whatever that may be, an increasing number of governments, economists and business leaders believe that the shape will have to be circular.

The pandemic and the restrictions imposed to control it have caused us to look again at many aspects of life – including how we run our economies.

For example, the existing economic model is linear, based on

“make, use and dispose.” The global economy relies on deeply intertwined, complex and often remote supply chains, sustained by more using billions of tons of new raw materials each year to meet the demand. It has been unsustainable for decades, and the complications it brings have been exposed through recent months.

A circular economy provides an alternative model, with products designed to be repurposed and regenerated, keeping materials in use for much longer.

Circular Edinburgh is an innovative programme designed to help companies who want to be sustainable and responsible in the way they go about their business – usually developing improved efficiencies and increased customer appeal as a result.

A partnership between Zero Waste Scotland and Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, the programme provides support and advice to organisations keen to break free from the make, use and dispose economy, with all of its waste and expense.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY



[The Circular Edinburgh](#) project is supported as part of Zero Waste Scotland's Resource Efficient Circular Economy Accelerator Programme, which will invest £73m in circular economy and resource efficiency projects, thanks to support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This programme provides funding and support for small and medium sized businesses in Scotland to be more resource efficient and create a more circular economy.

Despite the difficulties, many local companies have been helped, supported and encouraged through a series of digital events, seminars and meetings to take advantage of the

benefits that Circular Economy thinking can bring.

We've seen: city businesses repurpose existing raw materials "mined" from electronic equipment to create new jewellery; the development of reusable sanitary products to help end period poverty and reduce plastic waste entering our oceans; the re-use of retired climbing ropes to create designer dog leads; old linen taken in exchange for environmentally friendly new sheets used to create dog beds; and coffee grinds repurposed as fertiliser.

There have, of course, been many other examples of innovative circular economy thinking that have opened business opportunities and also created competitive advantages as consumers become increasingly interested in how the products and services they buy are created.

As we all look to rebuild our economy, we know we want it to be one that is better, more resilient and more sustainable. And that will certainly mean, more Circular.

<https://www.edinburghchamber.co.uk/circular-edinburgh/>

Mayan Grace or Lauren Ridgley can be contacted on 0131 221 2999 (option 5) or email circulareconomy@edinburghchamber.co.uk