Kickstarting your circular community

STP SCOTLAND'S TOWNS PARTNERSHIP

ZERO WASTE SCOTLAND

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Zero Waste Scotland

zerowastescotland.org.uk

Zero Waste Scotland exists to lead Scotland to use products and resources responsibly, focusing on where we can have the greatest impact on climate change.

Using evidence and insight, our goal is to inform policy, and motivate individuals and businesses to embrace the environmental, economic, and social benefits of a circular economy.

Scotland's Towns Partnership

scotlandstowns.org

Scotland's Towns Partnership is the voice of the country's towns - championing their place at the heart of the nation and advocating their pivotal part in a stronger, more sustainable future.

We are helping shape a better future for towns and places more widely, representing and promoting their diversity while supporting those organisations and groups who have an interest and ownership of them.

What is the circular economy (CE)?

Find out more about the Circular Economy in our What is the circular economy? video

Scotland's Towns Partnership and Zero Waste Scotland have worked together to develop this Circular Towns Toolkit, featuring steps people can take to benefit from the sustainable possibilities in their own area. Read on for inspiring real-life case studies of towns and communities across Scotland and further afield who are doing just that.

Examples and initiatives like these are an effective way to bring people together and make them feel like they're part of something bigger. When people take the time to invest in and improve their local area, they care more about what is happening in their community overall.

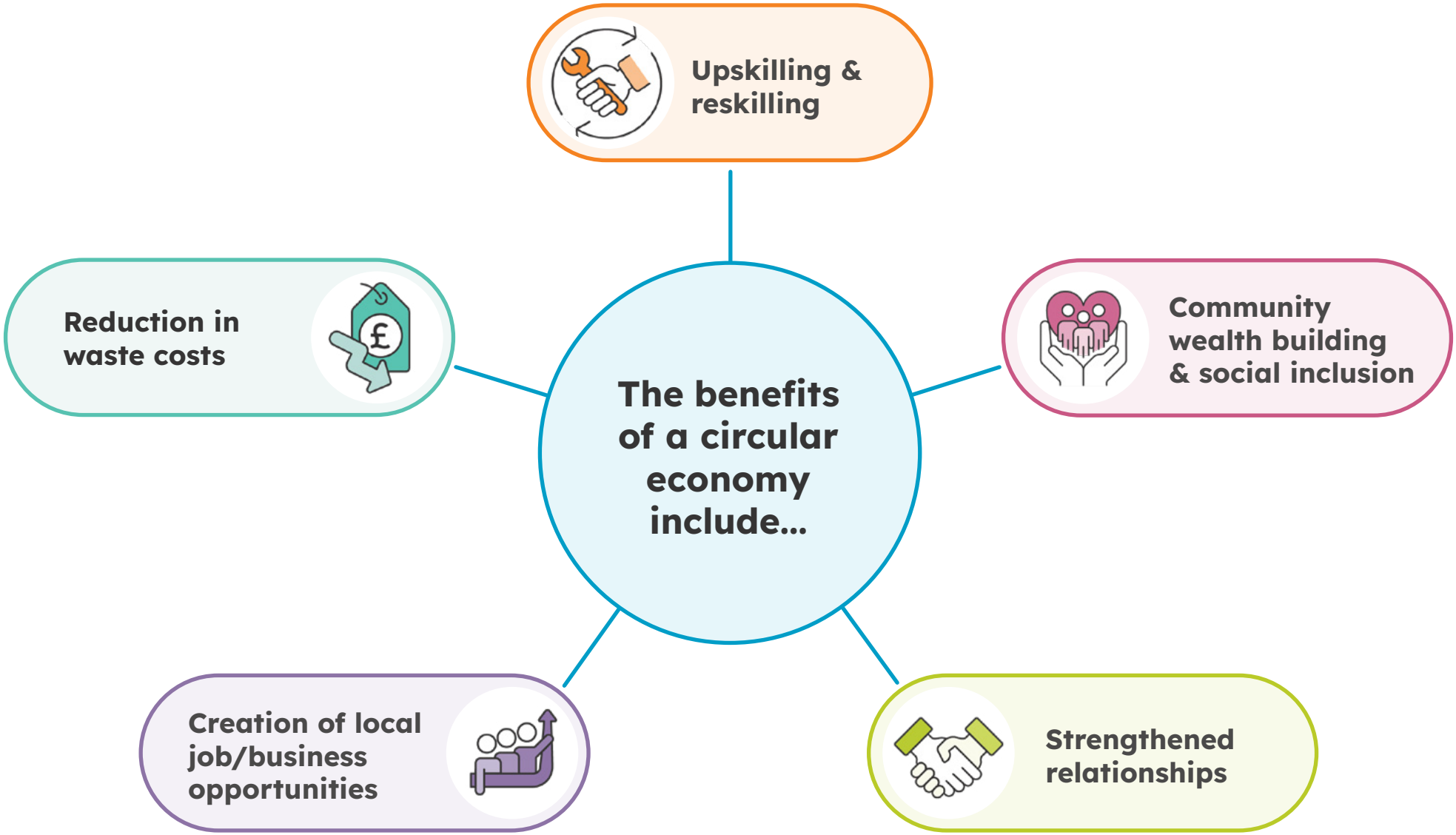
Zero Waste Scotland's '20 ideas to kickstart your circular community' is also a great resource you and your community could make use of.

Circular economy

Reduce - Reuse - Recycle

In the current 'linear' system, products are made, used, and disposed of. This is not good for businesses, people, or the environment. Designing out waste is the goal of a circular economy.

We maximise usage of our resources and materials, everything has value and nothing is wasted.


The benefits of a circular economy include...
Upskilling & reskilling
Reduction in waste costs
Community wealth building & social inclusion
Creation of local job/business opportunities
Strengthened relationships

What could my community do?

7 examples of circular community action

1. Using waste to create local value

2. Reducing single use

3. Reducing consumption in your community

Click on the examples to find out more

4. Tackling food waste at a local level

5. Creating sustainable opportunities for the local economy

6. Creating sustainable places

7. Running sustainable events

1. Using waste to create local value

Grounds for Recycling

Website: groundsforrecycling.co.uk

Grounds for Recycling was an innovative partnership project held in Glasgow in August 2023, to coincide with the UCI Cycling World Championships. Used coffee grounds were collected using e-cargo bikes from over 60 Glasgow coffee venues and transported to the local Botanic Gardens, to be used in compost.

Legacy work from the project includes researching the use of coffee grounds in soil remediation and other applications.

- Across the page, you can find great examples of other similar projects. All these projects identified an issue/waste stream that was causing a problem or burden for their communities' businesses and citizens - Grounds for Recycling was created after businesses struggled to dispose of their used coffee grounds in a responsible way.
- Working with your community to make sure it's easy for businesses and consumers to get involved is essential – what kind of barriers could you provide support with?
- Think about making sure your project is commercially viable where possible, there may be funding streams available for pilots but it's good to ensure longevity. Consider aspects such as waste regulations, engagement plans with your target audiences etc.
- The projects mentioned here have greatly benefitted the communities they serve – Rhyze Mushrooms collaborate with community organisations to grow mushrooms in often disused and unloved spaces. Revive Eco develop coffee oil from used coffee grounds, which they collect from local businesses – this makes a great sustainable alternative to palm oil, has applications in various industries and can help save the rainforests!

Other examples:

- Highland Community Composting Resource
- Rhyze Mushrooms Co-op
- Revive Eco

2. Reducing single use

Ditching Disposables - Stirling pilot

Website: transitionstirling.org.uk/ditching-disposables

Around 400 million single-use cups are used in Scotland every year, with cups and lids together equating to over 5000 tonnes. To combat this, a network of 20 organisations in Stirling - most of them independent cafés - took part in a reusable returnable cup pilot, where customers could pay a £1 deposit for a reusable coffee cup and return it at any participating venue for a refill or their £1 back. Find out more about reducing single-use through the Zero Waste Scotland reducing single-use hub.

- Effective engagement with staff is key to getting them invested. Make sure any businesses involved have had adequate training/ info beforehand, so they know how they are helping to improve their community and the environment.
- Any promotion needs to be highly effective, particularly before a scheme like this launches. This helps ensure any relevant audiences are aware that it will be running, so that by the launch, they are familiar with what is happening and how they can take part.
- If there are 'key destinations' in your community, make sure they are involved as they are key to boosting engagement with those living in your area, plus any visitors. Think about places like tourist sites, or colleges/universities, for example.
- Could businesses offer additional incentives e.g. free water refills or a free food/drink item if customers bring in their reusable item a number of times?

Other examples:

- Portobello and Joppa Pilot (Malvarosa)
- Highland Cup Movement (Keep Scotland Beautiful)
- Switching to reusable cups (Zero Waste Scotland)

3. Reducing consumption in your community

Edinburgh Tool Library

Website: edinburghtoollibrary.org.uk

Buying tools for DIY or other projects can be really expensive and often not worth it, with the average drill being used for just 12 minutes in its entire lifetime! Tool libraries and other libraries are a great way for people to save money while reducing consumption. Edinburgh Tool Library offer a range of membership options including a Pay-It-Forward tier - volunteers also get the chance to learn some great new valuable skills.

- As the saying goes - nobody wants to buy a drill, what they want is a hole in the wall! What other things would people in your community be happy to rent instead of buy?
- There are some great examples across the page – Music Broth have a library of musical instruments and Adventure Oban will offer a whole host of outdoor equipment through their Adventure Library.
- Circular Communities Scotland offer a range of support for existing and new sharing libraries, including the Share & Repair Network, funding information and regular seminars on various topics. Get in touch with them if there is something you are thinking about starting up, or if you're not sure where to start.
- Repair Cafés, like Repair Café Glasgow, are a great way not only for people to get items such as toys, electronics and clothing fixed, but also for communities to come together to socialise and learn new skills.

Other examples:

- Repair Café Glasgow
- Music Broth
- Adventure Oban - Adventure Library

Image source: Edinburgh Tool Library

4. Tackling food waste at a local level

Dundee West End Community Fridge

Website: transitiondundee.com/community-fridge

Dundee West End Community Fridge is run by Transition Dundee and is available for anyone to use - taking donations of surplus food from supermarkets, local food businesses and even individual households to redistribute to the community.

The Community Fridge operates a 'Pay As You Feel' system, meaning nobody is obligated to pay for any food they receive, but can if they are able to.

- People may not want to participate if they feel they are receiving a 'handout' due to stigma around food poverty - letting people know they're helping to reduce food waste is more likely to get them involved.
- TooGoodToGo is a great app even as a consumer – you pay a certain amount of money for a 'surprise' bag, but the contents are usually worth far more. Some items in the bag will be at or near their best before date, but are still perfectly fine to eat or even freeze in some cases!
- Many initiatives like these don't just help ensure that people in their community are well-fed with hearty, healthy meals, but this also helps them get people further support from other agencies and organisations when needed.
- FareShare offer a food redistribution service alongside wider support on things like the cost of living. They are great to contact if this is something your community is looking into!

Other examples:

- The Pyramid Centre - Pyramid Shop
- Empty Kitchens Full Hearts
- Too Good To Go

Image source: Transition Dundee

5. Creating sustainable opportunities for the local economy

ReTweed

Website: retweed.com

ReTweed is a social enterprise based in Eyemouth in the Scottish Borders, focusing on skills development in women through the use of pre-loved textiles - by repairing, reusing and recycling them. Participants in ReTweed's programmes learn valuable skills, make great connections and make fantastic quality products including cushions, bags/purses, and scarves!

- Every second, the equivalent of a rubbish truck load of clothes is burnt or buried in landfill – could your community run a swap shop, clothing upcycling/repair workshop or something similar, to help people get the most out of what they wear?
- The examples mentioned here help to improve their local economy beyond just maximising the use of resources, bringing useful and transferable skills to their communities as well.
- Making things as easy as possible for people to get involved is important here as well – Move On Wood Recycling offer a competitive waste wood collection service which often benefits them too, as they can get good use out of what they collect.
- Ensuring longevity of any resources is key. Bike for Good – as well as selling refurbished bikes – offer cycling lessons for adults and children, plus repair services and workshops to help people maintain their bikes.

Other examples:

- Bike for Good
- Glasgow Wood

Image source: ReTweed

6. Creating sustainable places

Circular Glasgow & Plate Up for Glasgow

Website: circularglasgow.com

Circular Glasgow is an initiative run by Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, supported by Zero Waste Scotland and Glasgow City Council. They work with businesses on circular projects and provide additional support. As well as the Grounds for Recycling project mentioned in Section 1, they also ran 'Plate Up for Glasgow' during COP26 in 2021, working with local hospitality venues to develop innovative food items, using some ingredients that might normally be thrown away! Businesses could also come together to share best practice and collaborate.

- The food and drink tourism experience goes well beyond what is purchased and consumed during a stay – many visitors will continue to buy products from a distance after their trip.
- Visit Scotland have some excellent responsible tourism resources, where they suggest making sustainable options as easy and as clear as possible for visitors. One way to do this is through Green Certification Schemes, such as Green Tourism.
- Businesses involved in Plate Up for Glasgow noted the unexpected benefit of more effective engagement with customers & staff – the campaign was a great conversation-starter with customers, while staff felt empowered and like they were being included in the conversation.
- If you're looking for resources on how to sustainably grow food within your community, Propagate is an ideal place to start. From their 'Resilient Growers Pack' to helping to create and facilitate partnerships between different organisations, they provide lots of support to growing projects across Scotland.
- Hubbub's Breaking Ground programme is an example of community-led projects fostering a real sense of belonging and pride in residents' local areas, they have some great stories and case studies!

Other examples:

- GALE Centre
- The Visit Forres app
- GALLANT - Glasgow as a Living Lab Accelerating Novel Transformation

Image source: The Ellen MacArthur Foundation

7. Running sustainable events

UCI Cycling World Championships - Glentress

Website: uci.org/article/uci-cycling-world-championships-glentress-on-the-sustainability-trail

Glentress in the Scottish Borders was one of the venues for 2023's UCI Cycling World Championships and kept sustainability at the heart of the events. Measures included protecting wildlife and using green hydrogen generators for power. On the catering side of things, using local food vendors, running a reusable cup scheme and providing sustainable packaging - to allow leftovers to be taken away - helped keep things as environmentally-friendly as possible!

- Climate change has become increasingly at the forefront of people's minds in recent times, so including and promoting sustainable aspects of your event can be a great way to encourage people to attend and to increase staff morale.
- Maximising event resources is fundamental, not only through an environmental lens but there are additional financial benefits that come with reducing consumption/waste.
- Consider the organisations you are working with as part of any event – are they also working towards being more sustainable/ circular? Where possible, collaborating with local businesses instead of those further afield can greatly help reduce the carbon footprint, as well as contributing to your community's economy.
- Discover what the circular economy means for your sector, understand policies and regulations, access funding guidance, and find tools and resources to accelerate your journey on our Business Information Hub.

Other examples:

- Vision for Sustainable Events
- Visit Scotland Event Guides
- SWG3 - Bodyheat

Image source: Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)

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