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# **An Comhchoiste um Chomhshaol & Gníomhú ar son na hAeráide**

**Tuarascáil maidir leis an nGelleagar Ciorclach**

Deireadh Fómhair 2024

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**Joint Committee on Environment & Climate Action**

**Report on the Circular Economy**

October 2024

33/JECA/26



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## Related information

### Publications

All publications for this committee are available on the [Oireachtas website](#).

### Committee videos

Footage of Committee proceedings can be found on the [Committee videos page](#).

### Contact details

The contact details for the Committee can be found on the [Committee page](#).

### Terms of reference

Read the [terms of reference](#) for the Committee.

## Committee Membership

### Cathaoirleach

[Brian Leddin TD](#), Green Party

### Leas-Cathaoirleach

[Christopher O'Sullivan TD](#), Fianna Fáil

### Members

[Richard Bruton TD](#), Fine Gael

[Réada Cronin TD](#), Sinn Féin

[Cormac Devlin TD](#), Fianna Fáil

[Alan Farrell TD](#), Fine Gael

[Paul Murphy TD](#), People Before Profit-Solidarity

[Darren O'Rourke TD](#), Sinn Féin

[Jennifer Whitmore TD](#), Social Democrats

[Senator Timmy Dooley](#), Fianna Fáil

[Senator Alice-Mary Higgins](#), Independent

[Senator John McGahon](#), Fine Gael

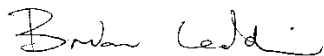
[Senator Pauline O'Reilly](#), Green Party

## Cathaoirleach's Foreword

Ireland's transition to a Circular Economy is a topic that has been closely examined by the Committee during the lifetime of this Dáil. On behalf of the Committee, I wish to extend sincere gratitude to Deputy Richard Bruton TD for his work as rapporteur which was completed and helped to inform the work of the Committee for the pre-legislative scrutiny of the Circular Economy Bill in 2021-22.

Two years on from the passage of the Circular Economy Act, the Committee held a series of engagements with the Minister, officials from the Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications and the EPA, as well as stakeholders from various sectors. The Joint Committees' Report contains 47 recommendations which the Committee feels can help to meaningfully increase Ireland's rate of circularity, which is very low compared to other EU member States.

I would like to express my appreciation to all the witnesses for their valuable contributions and to members of the Committee for their dedicated work.



Brian Leddin TD, Cathaoirleach

October 2024

## Introduction

Perhaps the most impactful legacy of the Covid crisis has been an increased awareness of the risks that arise from global supply chains.

Our current “Take, Make, Use, Discard” model ignores the environmental costs along the supply chain. Globally, we are already using raw materials at a rate 50% higher than nature can replenish annually, and this could triple by 2050 if current trends continue. This is unsustainable.

The Circular Economy model aims to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation by rethinking supply chains entirely. The work which I did as Rapporteur on behalf of the Committee on the Circular Economy is worth recalling. Some key points made then, highlighting the need and opportunity for circular thinking in Ireland’s supply chains, were:

- **Building, mobility, and nutrition** are the main drivers of Ireland’s above average material extraction, with poor resource use in these areas.
- **Environmental degradation** in Ireland is evident in emissions, biodiversity loss, and water quality, with weak eco-design practices.
- **Municipal waste** generation is over 600 kg per person, 22% higher than the EU average, ranking seventh highest among members.
- **Food waste** exceeds 1 million tonnes, generating over 3 million tonnes of GHG emissions annually.
- **Landfill reliance** has sharply decreased, but incineration has taken its place, with recycling stagnating at around 38%.
- Only **one-third of plastics** on the market are recyclable.
- Up to **one-third of items** in the green bin are incorrectly placed, and only half of compostable material ends up in the brown bin, which 57% of homes lack.
- **Bring Centres** receive only 137k tonnes of material, less than 5% of the waste generated.
- **Recycled material** is mostly exported, with about 75% export dependency.

Reimagining how we meet our needs is the hallmark of circular thinking. Despite some innovative initiatives, the circular economy in Ireland remains underdeveloped. The market for materials recovered through recycling is weak and hampers best use of materials. The

Repair, Reuse and Refurbishment sectors are very small. The Sharing Sector in Ireland is also in its infancy. Building and car occupancy in Ireland are exceptionally low. Few of our public buildings accommodate different users.

Making the right choices at the outset is so much better than trying to correct this afterwards. It is estimated that 80% of environmental damage is baked in at the design stage. We should not think of the circular challenge as how we manage waste. Instead, it is about rethinking how we meet our needs in a way that has less adverse impacts and which designs out waste.

There are many opportunities to become more circular in how we behave that are within relatively easy reach. These include the greater use of smart controls, shallow retrofits, smart meters, food waste avoidance, guidance for low impact refurbishment, changing the choice of building materials, better waste separation, more public charging networks, sharing platforms for travel and others uses, rightsizing supports, packaging free areas in larger supermarkets, remote health delivery. They all represent structural shifts with low upfront costs but significant savings.

If we are to deliver a circular strategy, a step change is needed. Better design must become a central tool to drive rethinking of the supply chains. Standardisation of what must appear on labels and the verifiability of any claims should occur at pace. Public Procurement should be standardised to align with the new attention to circularity. The creation of new targets and the emergence of new markets are needed to make a Circular Economy model a reality. Tighter regulation of what materials can be used and a consistent methodology for Product Environmental Footprinting are needed.



Richard Bruton TD, Special Rapporteur to the Joint Committee on the Circular Economy

October 2024

## Stakeholder Engagements

The Committee held a series of engagements with stakeholders which provided evidence from a broad perspective. These engagements took place as follows:

Date	Topic	Witness
30 April 2024	Engagement on the current state of play in relation to the Circular Economy following on from the signing into the law of the Circular Economy Act 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ossian Smyth TD, Minister of State</li> <li>• Denis Dunne, Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)</li> <li>• Ellen Holloway (DECC)</li> <li>• Jacqueline Healy (DECC)</li> </ul>
21 May 2024	Discussion on the Circular Economy as it relates to the food sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Flynn, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)</li> <li>• Warren Phelan, EPA</li> <li>• Fiona McCoolle, EPA</li> <li>• Tony Collins, DECC</li> <li>• Marc Kierans, DECC</li> <li>• Brian Quirke, DECC</li> <li>• Angela Ruttledge, FoodCloud</li> <li>• Aoibheann O'Brien, Food Cloud</li> <li>• Paul Kelly, Food Drink Ireland</li> <li>• Linda Stuart-Trainor, Food Drink Ireland</li> <li>• Kevin Maher, Food Drink Ireland</li> <li>• James Gaffey, Circbio</li> <li>• Helena McMahon, Circbio</li> </ul>
18 June 2024	Discussion on the Circular Economy as it relates to Consumer Durables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Niall McLoughlin, DECC</li> <li>• Bernie Kiely, DECC</li> <li>• Danielle McCormack, DECC</li> </ul>

- Barry McGreal, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)
- Claire O'Brien, DETE
- Sarah Miller, Rediscovery Centre
- Claire Downey, Rediscovery Centre
- Chris Mooney- Brown, Community Resources Network Ireland (CRNI)
- Una Lavelle, CRNI
- Bernadette Connolly, CRNI
- Emma Kavanagh, CRNI

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02 July 2024      Discussion on the Circular Economy as it relates to the Construction Sector

- Marion Jammet, Irish Green Building Council (IGBC)
- Giovanni Impoco, IGBC
- Hubert Fitzpatrick, Construction Industry Federation (CIF)
- PJ Ryan, CIF
- Eamonn Stapleton, CIF

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09 July 2024      Engagement on the Circular Economy as it relates to the Waste Sector

- Adrian Kane, SIPTU
  - Pat McCabe, SIPTU
  - Gerry Harris, SIPTU
  - Michael Gleason, SIPTU
  - Scott Millar, SIPTU
  - Willie Noone, SIPTU
  - Richy Carrothers, Fórsa
  - Aisling Cusack, Fórsa
  - Julie Flood, Fórsa
  - Daithí Doolan, DCC Working Group on the re-municipalisation of Waste Management
-

- John McLaughlin, County & City Managers Association (CCMA)
  - Seán Scott, Local Government Management Agency (LGMA)
  - Kevin Swift, Connacht Ulster Waste Management Planning Office
  - Leo Duffy, National Waste Collection Permit Office
-

## Policy Overview

1. The Circular Economy Programme (2021-2027) is designed to drive Ireland’s transition to a circular economy and marks a turning away point from the “take make waste” culture of resource management. The principle of a Circular Economy rests on a reduction in the use of raw material and the design of products for long-life, reuse, repair, and recyclability. In 2022, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) reported that Ireland has a “circularity” rate of 2%, which was the third lowest ranking in the European Union (EU) and well below the average of 11.5%. The increased growth of waste streams in Ireland, and a decreasing capacity to manage it using conventional methods, underlines the need for an increased adoption of circular practice across the economy and society as a whole.
2. Minister Ossian Smyth outlined to the Committee steps taken in recent years to establish the necessary policy and regulatory framework for a successful circular transition, underpinned by the passage of the Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act in 2022. A corresponding series of initiatives in specific sectors, including the National Food Waste Management Plan and the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy, have also been undertaken. Members were informed that the second iteration of the Circular Economy Strategy, containing more detailed sectoral targets, will be published by the end of 2024. In the interim, a Circularity Gap report will identify areas which need immediate attention in order to achieve meaningful progress.
3. Minister Smyth outlined plans to remove the exemption from levy from recovering and landfilling construction and demolition waste. This occurs in the context of the 2023 publication<sup>1</sup> by the EPA of a national by-product criteria for greenfield soil and stone and site-won asphalt. The Committee noted the Minister’s contention that this will help to prevent construction and demolition material from becoming waste in the first place. Construction waste in Ireland amounted to 9 million tonnes in 2021, up 10% from 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> [Commission Regulation \(EU\) No 715/2013 of 25 July 2013 establishing criteria determining when copper scrap ceases to be waste under Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council \(epa.ie\)](#)

4. Members noted the recent publication of the Buying Greener, the Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan.<sup>2</sup> This includes measures to measure Green Public Procurement (GPP) implementation in the Public Sector, GPP Monitoring and Reporting and initiatives in Training & Awareness. Members queried the Minister on where ultimate accountability for the upscaling of GPP across the public sector will lie. The Minister stated that the person who buys the goods will be responsible and that they will be assisted by the GPP criteria tool developed by the Office of Public Procurement (OGP).
5. The Committee noted the Minister's close consultation with the local authority sector on tackling the problem of illegal dumping across the country. The Minister stated that the use of CCTV and other mobile recording devices is now permitted in helping to tackle the issue. The €15 million funding of the Anti-Litter & Anti-Graffiti Awareness Grant Scheme (ALAGS), the Anti-Dumping Initiative (ADI), the Waste Enforcement Measures Grant Scheme and the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities (WERLAs) was also noted by members.
6. The Minister advised the Committee of the preparation of a National Policy Statement on Textiles and a Circular Economy Roadmap for Textiles. This occurs alongside the proposed amendments to the Waste Framework Directive (WFD) which will provide for the introduction of an EU-wide Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme. The Department is currently working on draft legislation to support the requirement of EU states to have a separate collection for textiles in place by 2025.
7. The Minister referred to the introduction of the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), saying that, despite initial challenges, it "is an example of how we can embrace circularity in our everyday lives." Members queried whether the DRS was prioritising recycling when it would be preferable to divest from greater energy use and look instead toward the use, for example, of refillable containers. The Minister said that the Government was moving toward the ban of single-use plastics but that this would happen "one thing at a time". The Minister also referred to an examination of the prospective use of refillable containers in the upcoming Circularity Gap Report.

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<sup>2</sup> [Ireland's National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap 2023-2025](#)

8. Members expressed concern regarding the introduction of the DRS for not taking enough account of accessibility issues for wheelchair users and blind people. The Minister highlighted the holding of two public consultations on accessibility but accepted that, following the launch of the scheme, issues may have come to light. He committed to working towards increasing accessibility and achieving as much coverage across the population as possible.

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## Food

9. Food waste is a global problem estimated to cause around 10% of total anthropogenic CHG emissions. The growth, processing, transportation and storage of food uses a significant amount of resources. As part of goal 12.3 of the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Ireland has agreed to halve food waste by 2030. The Committee noted that the EPA estimates that Ireland currently wastes around 800,000 tonnes of food every year, accounting for 4% of all Irish waste.
10. At 154kg per capita, Ireland's food waste in 2021 was 18% higher than the EU average. The Committee noted the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) 2023 publication of Ireland's National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap, which set out Irish food waste data in 2020 as follows:
  - Households (241,048 tonnes) – 31%
  - Processing & Manufacturing (219,453) – 29%
  - Restaurants & Food Service (178, 507) – 23%
  - Primary Production (70, 413) – 9%
  - Retail & other distribution of food (60, 893) – 8%
11. The Committee noted the aims of the National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap in establishing baseline data and interim targets on the way to the 2030 target. Members expressed concern that work is still focusing on baseline data, given that Ireland made its commitment to halve food waste nearly one decade ago. The Committee further noted a total 28 key priority actions contained in the Roadmap, including the upscaling of donation and redistribution.
12. The Committee noted EPA data that shows 17% of matter placed in general household bins and 27% of commercial bins is food waste. This problem is compounded by the fact that only 69% of Irish household have access to a brown bin. The Committee acknowledged that waste collection services are now obligated to provide customers with bio-waste (brown) bins, which includes alternatives to wheelie bins. The EPA advised that better segregation at source will lead to greater capture of food waste and lead to improved levels of recycling.

13. Members acknowledged initiatives by the EPA to enhance communication, education and awareness on better food use and the prevention of waste. This includes introduction of the Food Waste Charter (FWC), a voluntary pledge by food suppliers to measure food waste and set reduction targets. Members queried the effectiveness of making the FWC voluntary, particularly as there has been a low uptake. Stakeholders stated that observing the FWC in its current form will help to inform a decision on whether to make it compulsory. Mr David Flynn, EPA, added that a critical mass of actors from the manufacturing, retail and service sector is needed to take up the FWC in order to determine efficacy.
14. Members also noted the development of standards for measuring waste in manufacturing, hospitality, and food services. Research based information campaigns examining behaviours and attitudes towards food waste are also being undertaken. The Committee further noted DECC's recent publication of Buying Greener, a procurement strategy for sustainability in the public sector. Regarding canteen and food services, the strategy outlines that 100% of new contracts will include measures aimed at preventing food waste.
15. The Committee noted the launch of the Government's National Biomethane Strategy, which sets out how to realise the potential of anaerobic digestion (AD) with the ultimate target of producing 5.7 terawatt hours (TWh) by 2030. It is estimated that food waste could produce up to 1TWh of the 2030 target. Fifteen per cent of Ireland's municipal waste was treated by AD in 2021. Members cautioned against the perverse incentive of maintaining food waste in order to contribute to AD. In response, Mr Tony Collins, DECC, advised the Committee that AD in Ireland will be agri-centric, relying more heavily on feedstocks like animal slurries.
16. Members queried the usefulness of the best-before date, which refers to the estimated time at which the quality of food is beyond optimal. Best-before dates do not relate to food safety. The EPA has previously advised that 55% of Irish consumers throw out food due to best-before dates, at the annual cost of around €700 per household. Members noted that in the context of struggling to meet our 2030 target, the best option is to abolish the best-before date outright.

17. Stakeholders stated that the EU Food Information to Customers Regulation (FIC) No. 1169 of 2011, is currently being revised. A cross-Departmental group is also developing a new policy on the EU approach to food labelling. Ms. Fiona McCoolle, EPA, added that:

“the population has a good understanding of the difference between use by and best before but do not necessarily demonstrate the corresponding behaviours.”

18. The Committee noted the leadership shown by FoodCloud in reducing food waste in Ireland. Since being set up in 2012, and through the use of innovative digital solutions, FoodCloud directly connects retailers and food businesses with surplus food to local community groups that can use the food. To date, FoodCloud has helped to redistribute 280 million meals to 10,000 community partners in Ireland and five other countries. Members further noted initiatives such as the Grower's Project, which captures food waste in production phase, and Virtual Foodbanking, which extends the FoodCloud model to countries on the front-line of global poverty and climate breakdown.

19. Angela Ruttledge, Head of Public Engagement, Foodcloud highlighted the need for a national platform for the redistribution of farm-level surplus, the development of Virtual Foodbanking in low- and middle-income countries and full resourcing of the priority action points in the National Foodwaste Prevention Roadmap. In response to members queries about factors inhibiting the growth of food redistribution, Ms. Ruttledge advised that a lack of resources, particularly headcount, is problematic. She added:

“Whilst we are incredibly proud of our 10-year milestone, FoodCloud’s impact, and the projects outlined above, we know that our work is chipping the tip of an iceberg. For example, the 3,723 tonnes of surplus redistributed in Ireland by FoodCloud in 2023 represents just 0.5% of the total food wasted in Ireland.”

20. Members noted evidence from the Circbio Research Group, which encouraged the evolution of perspectives towards to the Circular Economy in the Food Sector from one of waste reduction to one which can benefit producers, businesses, consumers and communities across the whole supply chain. Dr Helena McMahon, Co-Director, Circbio, set out that:

“A more holistic view of the food system is required in terms of the opportunities for valorising waste and introducing opportunities for decarbonisation. The final step in that value chain is always the creation of energy from the residues that are left, where possible.”

21. The Committee noted the potential demonstrated by the Farm Zero C Project, which is working towards the development of a climate neutral dairy farm. The project has demonstrated a 36% reduction in average farm emissions and savings of over €18,000 euros. Dr James Gaffey, Co-Director, Circbio, highlighted the potential to extend this model to dairy farms across the country. Circbio also cited work in the development of bio-refineries, which, for example, with support from companies like Tírlán, have been working on the conversion of dairy processing residues and waste into biodegradable plastic. Members also noted Circbio's evidence that a skills gap in innovation is a critical issue inhibiting the scaling up of circular practices in the food sector.
22. The Committee noted evidence from FoodDrink Ireland (FDI) outlining the commitment of Irish manufacturers to meet the 2030 food waste target. Mr Paul Ryan, Director, FDI, advised that members are currently working on the reduction and eventual phasing out of hard-to-recycle materials. Members noted that the industry has struggled to cope with the rate and complexity of EU packaging legislation, particularly as guidance from the EU Commission has been delayed. Mr Ryan called for the continued development of closed loop recycling processes. He also cautioned against overlooking the maintenance of food standards and safety in the application of new packaging rules. It was further suggested that financial incentives be introduced for green transport initiatives.

## Consumer Durables

23. The Committee noted the urgent need to adopt new approaches to the use of consumer durables, as consumption patterns are wholly unsustainable. Members acknowledged this in the context of rapidly expanding waste streams like E-Waste, which, in the EU, has grown from 7.6 million tonnes in EU in 2012 to 13.5 million tonnes in 2021. The Committee agreed with the assertion by Mr Niall McLoughlin, Head of Circular Economy Strategy, DECC, that a circular economy, in moving beyond the economic model of “take make waste”, has the potential to significantly reduce dependency on primary resource extraction and complex global supply chains. Adoption of circular practices will also serve to insulate the State and businesses from supply shocks caused by external factors. The Committee noted the reference to proposed legislation which sought to ban the destruction or dumping of unsold non-food products and placed a significant pressure and obligation on not just the manufacturers, but also the companies.
24. The Committee noted the role of the Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022 in providing for the shift to a more sustainable pattern of production and consumption. Members expressed disappointment that the Department has not yet published the second iteration of the Circular Economy strategy, which will set out sectoral targets for reductions in material resource consumption, increased levels of repair and reuse and an increase in the use of re-usable products and materials. The Committee eagerly awaits the publication of the Department’s Circularity Gap report, which will identify factors inhibiting the growth of Ireland’s 2% circularity rate.
25. The Committee noted a submission from Mr David Flynn, EPA, which detailed that Ireland has an annual reuse rate of almost 11kg per person. Members recognised the immediate need to “scale up” to meet the reuse target of 20kg per person by 2027, as outlined by the National Waste Management Plan 2024-2030. The Committee further noted plans to upgrade at least 10 Civic Amenity Sites, to specifically cater for reuse. The National Waste Management Plan commits to developing a roadmap toward a repair target and introduces a target for the provision of a collection systems to facilitate repair. The EPA further outlined that

product design and innovation will have a vital role to play in improving the longevity and repairability of consumer durables.

26. The Committee welcomes the passage of the Right to Repair (R2R) directive into European law. R2R aims to support more sustainable consumption by making it easier to repair defective goods, reduce waste and promote eco-design. The Committee notes the obligation on manufacturers to provide a repair service on specified goods, including large household appliances as well as mobile phone and tablets.
27. Members further noted the establishment of an online platform, which will allow consumers to access details of third-party repairers including community led initiatives and social enterprises. In the event of unsuccessful repair by a third-party repairer, the manufacturer will still have an obligation to repair if possible. In the case of non-EU manufacturers, Mr Barry McGreal, Head of Policy and Legislation Formulation for consumer policy issues, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) informed the Committee that responsibility for repair will lie at the highest level of the supply chain within the EU.
28. Members queried whether the new European Regulations on Reuse and Repair would go far enough to deal with the problem of built-in obsolescence. Mr McGreal outlined that a separate directive, “Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition through better protection against unfair (commercial) practices,” specifically addresses the issue of early obsolescence. Mr McLoughlin highlighted the further need, in partnership with organisations like the Rediscovery Centre, to counter the established commercial culture of promoting new models of certain products, regardless of performance issues.
29. The Committee noted that as part of the Department’s publication of *Buying Greener: Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2027*, reuse targets are set out for a number of areas in public procurement. The strategy outlines, for example, that by the end of 2025, a minimum of 80% of publicly procured ICT end-user products such as desktop computers, portable computers and mobile phones will have been remanufactured. The Committee further noted the recent announcement by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) of a €30

million spending plan to procure 60,000 remanufactured laptops for use by the public service.

30. The Committee noted the continued development of the Circular Economy Innovation Grant Scheme, which aims to support projects by social enterprises, voluntary and community organisations and businesses with fewer than 50 employees. Members noted that €650,000 is being allocated to support the scheme in 2024, bringing total funding since the scheme was launched in 2021 to €1.8 million. Members further noted continued development of CIRCLÉIRE, a cross sectoral which receives funding from the Department. The circular manufacturing platform is dedicated to the circular transition with a focus on reuse, repair, remanufacturing and recirculation strategies. Repairmystuff.ie, which has 1300 registered repairers, is also being developed to meet the requirements of R2R.
31. The Committee noted the need to further develop education and awareness of Circular principles within the general population. The Department provides annual funding to Regional Waste Management Planning Office to provide public awareness campaigns on waste prevention and management and encouraging the embedding of circular principles. Members further noted new funding for the Rediscovery Centre to develop a Circular Economy Communications Platform, which will connect key activities of the circular transition.
32. The Committee noted the success of Extended Producer Responsibility, (EPR) as a policy tool to ensure that recycling targets for certain waste streams are met. EPR schemes in Ireland have been introduced for Packaging, Batteries, Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), End of Life Vehicles (ELVs), Tyres and Farm Plastics. EPRs use a 'polluter pays' principle which makes producers financially responsible for the environmental management of their products at end of life. In the case of WEEE, members noted the obligation of operators of EPRs to work with organisations that prepare items for reuse.
33. The Committee noted legislative developments at European level to introduce mandatory of Extended Producer Responsibility schemes for textiles in member states to support the requirement to have a separate collection of textiles in place by the beginning of 2025. The revision of the Waste Framework Directive will make

producers responsible for covering the costs of the management of textile waste, which will serve as an incentive to reduce waste. The stated aim of this developing proposal is to curb fast fashion and to extend the lifetime of textile products.

Members noted the pertinence of this measure given Rediscovery Ireland's finding that Ireland has a textile consumption rate of 53kg per person.

34. Members considered perverse incentives in recycling, suggesting stronger mechanisms may be necessary to curb the creation of waste. The Committee noted the suggestion by Claire Downey from Rediscovery Ireland that a better understanding could be gained by examining the subsidies, taxes and measures in place and mapping out what areas are supporting and undermining circular activities. Ms. Downey further outlined the importance of sustainable production and taking measures to address overproduction and the creation of waste. The Committee noted the example of France and the banning of the dumping of unsold goods, eco-modulation and fashion tax.
35. Members queried what the immediate plans are to address the clear lack of repair and reuse infrastructure at local level. The Department responded that, in line with the introduction of R2R, work is being undertaken with the EPA and local authorities on a roadmap for the introduction of a local repair network. Members urged the authorities to use the two-year implementation period to carefully consider what is needed to alleviate the current struggle to overcome the practical difficulties faced by small reuse and repair businesses/social enterprises, particularly in relation to acquiring affordable insurance.
36. The Committee commended the role played by social enterprises like the Rediscovery Centre and those represented by the Community Resource Network Ireland (CRNI) in demonstrating and advocating for reuse and repair. Ms. Claire Downey, Policy & Research Director at the Rediscovery Centre, submitted that the Centre has reused 1,000kg of textiles, 18,000 kg of furniture, 18,000kg of bikes and 71,000kg of paint in the last nine years. This has led to an estimated saving of 270,000kg carbon emissions. The Rediscovery Centre also supports reuse and repair through the Circular Economy Academy, which provides one-to-one mentoring for those seeking to upskill.

37. Ms. Downey stressed the challenge posed by the low cost of new items and recommended incentives towards recycling over reuse and repair. The Committee noted the example of cities such as Copenhagen, highlighting the lessons to be learned from both local and international innovation. The Committee noted the example of a repair bonus in Austria where citizens could be refunded up to 50% of the total cost of a repair, up to a maximum of €100, as an effective repair bonus. This initiative avoided approximately 260 tons of e-waste between 2018 and 2019. Ms. Downey added:

“We have an ambitious policy framework for growth in prevention, reuse and repair of consumer durables. We now need to find ways to support this through communications and citizen engagement, an enabling environment and investment in infrastructure.”

38. The Committee noted the series of challenges facing social enterprises operating in the reuse and repair sector as presented by Mr Chris-Mooney Brown, Executive Director, CRNI. This includes a lack of adequate funding, difficulty securing suitable facilities and sector uncertainty on VAT. Stakeholders also highlighted the problem of acquiring affordable insurance. Members considered the co-benefits of upscaling community and socially led enterprises, and whether pooling risks and supports could offset these barriers. Ms. Downey elaborated that the experience of social enterprises in the sector is that insurers are reluctant to offer affordable prices due to concerns over accreditation of those involved in reuse and repair activities. Ms. Una Lavelle, CRNI, added that the current insurance cost for her organisation is €50,000, which has led to the letting go of two employees.

39. The Committee queried whether the social enterprise model can deliver the upscaling necessary for the reuse and repair sector to significantly grow for Ireland to meet statutory targets. Stakeholders stated that the social enterprise model is capable of being much more effective if the right supports are put in place. Stakeholders stated that the social enterprise model is capable of being much more effective if the right supports are put in place to allow social enterprises to fully engage in procurement opportunities, specifically VAT measures, social clauses and flexibility within contracts. In this context, Ms. Downey highlighted the

attractiveness of Community Service Programmes that could provide an organisation with funding for programme manager and four to five full-time employees. The Committee noted that the Rediscovery Centre has advocated for a climate-specific community services programme for several years. Sarah Miller, Chief Executive, Rediscovery Centre stated that:

“As the system stands, we could, with very small changes, enable an entire network of community-based reuse, recycle and repair organisations working with local authorities to deliver solutions locally.”

40. Members noted stakeholders’ evidence that the legislative framework for reuse and repair needs to be adjusted to better support social enterprises and that, at present, social enterprises are being “shoehorned” into a private sector environment. The Committee notes the importance of quality criteria and/or lifecycle costing based approach rather than a price- only approach and the suggestion that reuse could be identified as a quality factor that gives a positive weighting in the procurement process. Ms. Bernie Connolly, Chair of CRNI, added that supports and soft supports available to private enterprises, such as setting up a website or getting an innovation voucher, are not available to social enterprises. The Committee noted the suggested use by local authorities of community and social benefit clauses in the tendering process. Ms. Emma Kavanagh, Network Manager, CRNI, stated that since the introduction of EU rules requiring large companies to publish reports on their social and environmental impact, there had been an increased interest among private companies in how working with social enterprises can help them to fulfil their obligations.

## Construction

41. The Committee noted the considerable challenge of increasing circularity in Ireland's construction sector, as the industry is currently responsible for 50% of overall waste generated. Members further noted evidence from Ms. Marion Jammet, Head of Policy and Advocacy, Irish Green Building Council (IGBC), that less than 2% of building elements are being reused. It is also estimated that embodied carbon emissions in the built environment account for 14% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions.
42. Members agreed that transitioning to circular practices in construction will help Ireland to tackle crises in emissions, pollution and biodiversity and that circular approaches must be fully integrated into public procurement. By maintaining resources at a higher value for a longer period, circular practice in construction will also improve the resilience of Ireland's supply chains and contribute greatly to the economy, and society as a whole.
43. The Committee acknowledged initiatives taken by the IGBC to provide leadership towards a sustainable built environment, including working with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) to develop a national methodology to report on the global warming potential of buildings across their life cycle. Members also noted the 2022 launch of Building a Zero Carbon Ireland, a roadmap to decarbonise Ireland's built environment across its whole life cycle.
44. The Committee noted the IGBC's statement that the built environment can become more sustainable by focusing, in the first instance, on the reuse of buildings. Stakeholders highlighted that, in the main, renovation and repurposing of buildings has a lower climate impact than new builds. Members and stakeholders agreed that Ireland could learn from practice in London whereby the external facades of older buildings are maintained without severely restricting internal repurposing.
45. Ms. Jammet further outlined that new builds should be designed in a way that minimises waste in all stages of the building life cycle. Members noted the promotion of innovative design whereby the essential structure of a building, which contains the largest carbon footprint, is made to last as long as possible. The location of a building was also highlighted as being critical to its environmental

impact. For example, underground car parks can be avoided by building in walkable areas well served by public transport.

46. The IGBC advised that buildings should be designed for optimum use by facilitating different functions at different times. Members noted the practical example of downsizing family homes as children grow up and move out, thereby creating new accommodation units. The Committee queried witnesses on the viability of doing this presently and were advised that planning and building regulations in Ireland make it extremely difficult. Members and stakeholders agreed that increasing the adaptability of Irish homes would enable a more efficient response to demographic changes and support the emergence of more vibrant communities.

47. Members noted the suggestion of designing buildings for deconstruction and disassembly so that component parts are interchangeable and usable elsewhere. In "fitting together like Lego", buildings can become more responsive to needs as they arise. To aid the development of deconstruction and disassembly, standard sizes and the use of screws and fittings over adhesives should be promoted. The IGBC added that digitalisation and material passports can provide a system to collate information relating to product quality, safety, environmental impact and reusability.

48. The Committee noted the potential of biobased building materials to replace the carbon intensive materials conventionally used. The use of biogenic carbon in building material, for example, can effectively store carbon and stop it from re-entering the atmosphere. As the life cycle of buildings and their component parts are maximised, biogenic carbon is effectively prevented from adding to greenhouse gas emissions. Stakeholders raised concerns around waste generated from materials used in construction. Members noted the importance of reuse, using the UK system as an example. The Committee agreed that a similar recertification mechanism would ensure standards align with the insurance sector.

49. The Committee acknowledges the document provided by the EPA on 'Guidance to Planners, Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on the Management of Excess Soil and Stone from Development'. The Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC), transposed in Ireland by the European Union (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011-2020, sets out the requirements and conditions for a material to be regarded as a

byproduct and not as a waste. Article 27 (a) of the regulations maintains one of these conditions is that further use of the substance or object is certain. The Committee notes the importance of integrating circular approaches into the construction industry given the potential for large-scale reuse. Members agree the document provides a useful tool for assessing applications for development involving excess soil and stone material arising out of construction and the importation of such materials.

50. The Committee noted positive developments in the incorporation of circular principles into public procurement in the construction sector. Members agreed on the importance of whole life cycle costing and quality criteria in the procurement process. Mr Stapleton, CFI, advised that in the balance of price and quality, quality is not always associated with green procurement. The Committee noted the suggestion that a quality weighting on environment might give those in the construction industry a competitive advantage when they are tendering for State contracts. Mr Giovanni Impoco, Circularity Lead, IGBC, highlighted the example of the Opera Square project in Limerick City, a mixed-use development fundamentally driven by circular principles:

"They used a pre-demolition audit and a waste management plan which allowed them to achieve 98% of secondary material use off site and on site. More than one tonne of stones were used elsewhere in Limerick, as well as bricks using the channel in Limerick. All of the timber was recycled, the metal was quantified and 100% of it was sent for recycling."

As an EPA demonstration project partnered by the IGBC and other advocates of circular construction, the Committee agreed that the Opera Square project helps to set a template for the role of public procurement in leading the circular transition. Members and stakeholders commended the Dutch model of circularity in public procurement. Ms. Jammet highlighted that Transport Infrastructure Ireland is currently piloting this model, which will allow public bodies to apply a discount rate where organisations have reached a certain level of certification in addressing carbon emissions.

51. Members and stakeholders agreed that the question of whether to demolish buildings should take place on case-by-case basis. Mr PJ Ryan, Head of Environmental, Social & Governmental at the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) pointed out that there are times when demolition is more sustainable, particularly in cases where unviable renovation requires a new build elsewhere. Members acknowledged concerns raised around potential emissions debt associated with demolition. Members questioned whether a regulation be required, particularly for the next ten years. Nonetheless, Ms. Jammet, advocated that, in the case of larger buildings, circularity statements be more stringently incorporated into the decision of whether to demolish or not. Where demolition is granted, Ms. Jammet stressed the importance of having mitigation measures in place. The Committee noted the suggestion of using circularity statements to determine if the new building is designed for resource efficiency, adaptability and disassembly.
52. Mr. Hubert Fitzpatrick, Director-General, CIF, drew attention to Ireland's relatively low level of infrastructure in the context of increasing circularity in the construction sector. This contrasts with most other EU countries, where infrastructure is much more developed. Mr Fitzpatrick advised that, despite the impending incorporation of recycled aggregates into supply chains, the construction of infrastructure in Ireland would necessitate the use of large amounts of virgin aggregates, adding that future development and growth should not be overlooked.
53. The Committee noted that 85% of Ireland's construction waste is made up of soil and stone. The EPA's recent publication of the National End-of-Waste Criteria will lead to soil, stone and other aggregates from construction being used recycled and reused in roads, railway-ballast and other non-structural projects. This is preferable to the use of newly quarried materials, which have much higher land, water and energy use. The prospective updating of regulations to allow for the use of crushed concrete as a secondary cementitious material was further noted by the Committee. The CIF expressed support for this idea, as it will lessen dependence on carbon intensive portland cement.
54. The Committee noted the CIF's development of a carbon calculator to help small and medium-sized building firms to calculate the environmental impact of specific

projects. This will lead to greater awareness of embodied carbon and increase the uptake of materials with Environmental Product Declarations, which certify the environmental impact of products throughout their life cycle. As a founding member of the Supply Chain Sustainability School, the CIF's initiatives on increasing circularity were further noted by members. It is estimated that around 80% of contractors' emissions come from suppliers and sub-contractors.

55. The Committee noted the need to address the problem of finding suitable storage for aggregates, as well as current rules that only allow them to be stored on site for six months. The CIF suggested that local authorities be directed to provide storage facilities for aggregates. An apparatus to recertify and test aggregates is also necessary. The Committee noted the need for the development of new digital platforms to match donor and receivers, so that material is circulated as quickly and efficiently as possible. The CIF acknowledged that Ireland exports a great deal of precast concrete, meaning on circularity, it will not come back into the economy once it goes away. Members agreed that this is an area where we must examine standards at production points with regard to what is exported rather than just the concrete used in construction.
56. The CIF advised the Committee of the necessity for the construction industry and relevant public bodies to upskill in circular principles, as contractors will need to align their bids with more detailed client specifications. Construction managers will need to develop resource and waste management plans and consider material logistics, site layouts and supply chain engagement in new ways. On site-training will also be necessary to ensure circular principles are embedded into the working culture.

## Waste Service

57. The Committee acknowledged the significant challenge Ireland faces in managing municipal waste. Of particular concern is Ireland's continuing waste growth and decreasing capacity to manage it. Representatives from the County and City Managers Association (CCMA) stated that Ireland generated a total of 3.17m tonnes of municipal waste in 2021, with a recycling rate of 42%. Members noted that Ireland's level of municipal waste is equivalent to 644kg per person, considerably higher than the European average of 527kg. Mr John McLaughlin, Chair of CCMA Climate Committee, identified the slow delivery of infrastructure and poor waste segregation in household and non-household settings as significant factors in Ireland being set to fall short of European recycling targets in 2025.
58. Mr. Adrian Kane, Divisional Organiser, SIPTU, noted the CCPC's 2018 report's finding that the household waste collection market is atypical within the EU in persisting with what the commission refers to as privatised side-by-side competition in market areas. In other EU cities, the dominant model is either carried out by state-run monopolies or competitive tender.
59. The Committee noted the publication of National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024-2030 (NWMP) by the Local Government Sector. The plan targets significant waste reduction by putting circularity at the centre of Ireland's approach to waste management. The principal elements of the plan are reducing material consumption, maximising the quality and quantity of secondary materials and the increase of recycling, reuse and repair rates. A total of eight corresponding national targets have been set. Kevin Swift, Regional Co-ordinator, Connacht-Ulster Regional Waste Management Planning Office stated that:
- “Our overall ambition is 0% waste growth over the lifetime of the plan. We will not be able to do that without reducing general waste, increasing recycling, promoting reuse, embracing repair and doing all of the things the circular economy requires us to do.”
60. The Committee noted the NWMP's attention to ensuring all households can avail of an authorised waste service, the standardisation of bin identification to enhance segregation and the promotion of items accepted for recycling using visual

representation. Members also noted the initiative to complete the roll-out of brown bins to all households across the country. However, ambiguity remains as to how this will be provided to areas with bag collection only - there are around 900 such streets in Dublin.

61. The Committee noted that the implementation of the NWMP will require attention to four critical components. The first is an increased focus on communication with customers, consumers and businesses. Secondly, the plan calls for deeper engagement with businesses on the potential for circularity within the local and wider economy. A focus on enhanced regulation and a critical upscaling of infrastructure are also prioritised. The CCMA highlighted the need for €40 million in additional funding to fund these initiatives.
62. The Committee noted evidence that increased collaboration between key public partners and stakeholders in the private sector as essential to delivering the level of response required to achieve meaningful change. Members queried the CCMA on the attractiveness of taking waste disposal mechanisms into public ownership in order to enhance co-ordination and realise greater circularity in the sector. However, the CCMA stated that the current model of private collection provides very high collection rates.
63. Members noted the view that re-municipalisation of waste service would help to increase efficiency in the system and make it easier to embed circularity into waste management. Members and Stakeholders agreed that one of the issues that arise with procurement, is that it may not be as flexible or responsive as a public service delivery. Stakeholders suggested that the current model is environmentally unfriendly by allowing for side-by-side collection by multiple operators, resulting in greater emissions and a lack of centralised control. It was also highlighted that, under the current system, around 23% of households in Ireland have no collection service at all. The Committee agreed that this is a contributory factor in practices like illegal dumping and fly-tipping in rural and urban areas. Mr Adrian Kane, Divisional Organiser, SIPTU stated that re-municipalisation could occur by ensuring that there is one service provider for each local authority. To ensure compliance with

competition laws, it was suggested that the service for each area be put out to tender.

64. Stakeholders also drew an association between re-municipalisation and the reduction of illegal dumping. Citing the 2023 Institute of Public Administration report on the re-municipalisation of waste services in Dublin, Councillor Dáithí Doolan, DCC Working Group, noted that illegal dumping is not deemed to be an issue in comparator cities with public waste services. However, the CCMA referred to the success of anti-dumping initiatives and cited EPA data that shows a steady fall in the estimated amount of unmanaged municipal waste between 2016 and 2021. The Committee notes the lack of available data on the recording of the cost of illegal dumping.
65. There was lack of consensus as to whether waste services in Ireland should undergo re-municipalisation or be subject to competitive tendering. The Committee agreed that the legal framework should be examined to determine the most appropriate model and best legal approach to re-municipalisation. Conor Walsh, Secretary, IWMA, stated that there is already significant state involvement in waste management through regulation and enforcement by the National Waste Collection Permit Office (NWCPO), the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities (WERLAs) and the EPA. Mr Walsh added that there are currently around 25 household waste collection companies operating in Ireland.
66. Members highlighted local government obligations in regard to collecting and/or arranging to collect household waste. The Committee noted the importance of such obligations in the context of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.
67. Some members expressed concern regarding the profits of waste service providers, highlighting recent reports on the decision to increase household waste charges. It was further acknowledged that the expense associated with recycling is counterproductive to the ultimate goal. Members stressed the importance of exploring different forms of public services, whether publicly procured or publicly delivered. The Committee acknowledged the importance of ensuring members of

the households are not penalised for effectively managing their waste. Stakeholders stated that profit margins are not excessive and are publicly available.

68. The IWMA also highlighted concerns regarding the Deposit Return Scheme, adding that the loss of valuable materials in green bins has incurred a cost to service providers that will most likely be passed onto customers. Mr Richy Carruthers, Head of Local Government, Local Services and Municipal, Fórsa, said that such a charge is an example of the waste management system “punishing service users and the public for doing what is asked of them by increasing prices despite the fact they are engaging with recycling waste according to what the State requires.” Mr Carruthers expressed the view that those who feel the sharpest impact are the people living in working-class communities where the provision tends to be less and the cost tends to be more.

69. Members noted the suggestion, previously outlined by the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, that a waste regulator be established to oversee the operation of a sustainable and commercial model of waste collection in part to address inefficiencies in the side-by-side model. However, there was a lack of consensus as to whether this was preferable to the current model or the proposed alternative.

70. Referring to waste collection in dense urban settings, members queried stakeholders on the prospect of using shared collection points instead of kerbside collection, which can create heavy traffic in unsuitable areas. Mr Walsh replied that, from the point of view of waste service providers, the use of communal bins leads to a high level of cross-contamination. Mr Walsh elaborated on the trial of bin-truck cameras which detect contamination in green and black bins, leading to specific customer being informed of appropriate segregation. The NWMP further endorsed kerbside collection as the most effective means of capturing segregated household waste.

## Recommendations

1. Sectoral compacts should be established across key sectors including Food, Construction, Consumer Durables, Textiles etc. These sectoral compacts would address each of the following:

- Redesign opportunities of products and markets for durability and sustainability
- Behaviours to reduce waste in production and consumption
- Reimagine Extended Producer Responsibility
- Better packaging practices
- Streamline path to repurposing and reuse of materials and components
- Eliminate contamination of materials recovered
- Premium pricing for sustainability practices in production
- Develop infrastructure to support optimal practice all along the chain
- Benchmarking has different Irish performance against international best practice

Each sector has different challenges and those with relevant expertise must focus upon them.

2. New actions to promote the Circular Economy should be integrated into the Climate Action Plan- built into the detailed sectoral planning, the oversight and reporting obligations, and the requirement to adopt plans if targets are not being reached. Circularity provides a broader framework within which the actions in Electricity, Transport, Buildings, Agriculture, Waste etc can be viewed. It gives a richer perspective on what sustainability requires, identifying opportunities beyond CHG inventories alone, and outlining those situations where rapid carbon reduction may compromise other goals. It also avoids setting up separate institutional arrangements that strain limited resources.

3. Product as a service market should be facilitated, where equipment is shared by users. This “servicisation” of sectors, which traditionally sold products or vehicles

that lie empty over 90% of the time, can deliver immense material savings and ensure optimal maintenance. Preferential conditions for sharing platforms, such as access to parking or storage and concessions on excise taxes, should be considered. New developments should consciously plan facilities around sharing opportunities.

4. The Committee recommends that all Local Authorities install Deposit Return Scheme machinery at appropriate locations within their jurisdiction, up to and including machinery capable of handling large quantities of cans and bottles, at the same time.
5. The Committee recommends the introduction of mandatory monitoring, measurement and reporting of food waste across all parts of the supply chain. Members further recommends the mandatory setting of targets and target-based actions across the supply chain in order to effectively reduce food waste. To support this initiative, the Department and EPA should help businesses build knowledge, develop capacity and remedy the issues that hinder compliance. Focusing on enhanced collaboration between different parts of the supply chain is particularly important.
6. To encourage the behavioural changes required in the choice and use of food products, the Committee recommends that information and incentives should be developed to promote better purchasing, storing and consumption of food, avoidance of excess packaging, and optimal separation of disposals.
7. The Committee recommends prohibiting the use of best-before dates on fresh produce in the retail sector. This will allow customers to exercise their own judgement to decide on food quality and effectively reduce the approximately 250,000 tonnes of food waste generated by Irish households every year. The associated financial benefit to consumers is an added incentive.
8. The Committee notes the positive impact access to public innovations such as industrial washing facilities could have for reduction of packaging waste in the food sector and recommends a review of regulations to examine the potential for greater reuse of packaging where appropriate. Package policy should be rethought to remove materials that cannot be recycled, to cut down on plastics or other

material, to offer consumers products in sizes that minimise the likelihood of waste, and to improve packaging recovery and reuse approaches. Supermarkets should offer zero packaging areas and the option to refill one's own containers as an option for some product ranges.

9. The Committee recommends the strict limitation or prohibition of single use plastic packaging where alternatives are available, reflecting but not limited to Directive (EU) 2019/904.
10. The Committee recommends the development of a national programme for tackling the problem of food-waste at farm-level, which currently amounts to around 70,000 tonnes every year. A template for such a platform can be found in the FoodCloud Grower's Project, which has demonstrated enormous potential by overshooting its 2023 target and redistributing 120 tonnes of fresh produce to community organisations across the country. This recommendation compliments a key priority of the National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap to significantly increase the capacity and scale of the redistribution sector.
11. The Committee recommends an increased focus on communication, information and education with regards to circularity practice at all parts of the food supply chain. A hospitality sector campaign on food waste reduction and optimal separation of disposal streams should be undertaken. In addition, the success of the Farm Zero C project in demonstrating emissions' savings and farm finance provides a strong example of how dairy farms in Ireland can become more sustainable.
12. The Committee recommends the adoption of measures to address the skills gap inhibiting the development of circular practices in the food sector, particularly in bioeconomy. The Committee suggests the scaling up of programmes administered by Circbio and Munster Technological University. Of particular potential is the provision of micro credentials in climate entrepreneurship and leadership for industry, the public sector and schools at primary and secondary levels.
13. The Committee, mindful of rising costs, recommends that businesses operating in the food sector are encouraged to adopt and innovate in circular practices through

the provision of financial supports and incentives. Consideration, for example, could be given to the extension of the Food Waste Reduction Scheme to food businesses across the entire country.

14. In order to support the necessary growth of the reuse and repair sector, the Committee recommends an increase of reliable financial support to social enterprises and businesses operating in the sector. Specifically, members recommend a reduced VAT rate, reduced commercial rates, tax benefits and the implementation of reuse bonus schemes. Enterprise support for start-ups in the sector should be prioritised. Members further recommend engagement and analysis of how reuse and repair organisations can access insurance and product liability at affordable levels. In other EU countries, reuse and repair organisations are insured through their municipality. Members further recommend an analysis of how this could be applied in Ireland.
15. The Committee recommends the rapid development of reuse and repair infrastructure across the country to include handling, sorting and storage, logistic channels, collection systems and the enhanced equipping of reuse and repair workshops. A regional network of Rediscovery Centres, modelled on that in Ballymun, should be established to become hubs for innovation, and focal points for local engagement with community-led sustainability initiatives. A certain number of the Civic Amenity Centres should be earmarked to develop such centres, and applications should be invited for community partners to develop the initiative. Members further recommend an analysis of how circular reuse shopping centres, reuse outlets in public spaces and lending retail outlets encourage a welcoming, inclusive and creative culture and can support the increased development of the reuse and repair sector. The Committee acknowledges the city of Copenhagen as a useful example.
16. The Committee recommends the setting up of a national hub for innovation and for scaling of circular design, material sourcing, and deployment should be developed with the intention of becoming an internationally recognised Centre of Excellence. Members recommend continued engagement with CIRCULÉIRE, the

Circular Innovation Network undertaking pioneering work, on how this can be achieved.

17. The Committee recommends that the emerging Irish approach to Green Procurement should be benchmarked against international practices by a taskforce comprising DECC and DPER officials to ensure it embraces circularity principles, and that appropriate milestones to measure progress are set.
18. Members recommend the extension of Green Public Procurement into smaller scale procurement in a way that can support the development of the reuse and repair sector. This could be done by including GPP criteria in smaller scale public service tenders (below €50,000). It is also recommended that contracting authorities are incentivised to engage with reuse and repair entities through mandatory social clauses.
19. The Committee recommends the recasting of Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes to embrace far more than paying for safe disposal, in order to incorporate the right choice of materials, right packaging and presentation and the right channels for material recovery. A thorough analysis of the policy framework to ascertain if Extended Producer Responsibility schemes are unintentionally supporting recycling or recovery activities over prevention, reuse and repair should also take place. The Committee recommends the further embedding of eco-modulation into supply chains so that manufacturers are more incentivised to use materials amenable to durability, reuse and repair.
20. The Committee recommends support for sector-led upskilling, through which people working in reuse and repair, including partial or low-level, become accredited. As well as addressing concerns expressed by insurers, sector-led upskilling will create a unit of trainers through which skills vital to reuse and repair, such as innovation, problem-solving and resourcefulness, are highlighted and promoted.
21. Given limited clothes production in Ireland, policy should focus on how buyers could be better informed about the uninformed consequences of their high-volume fast fashion choices, how authentic sources of information can be verified,

and how the emerging sectors for reuse and repurposing can be stimulated. Two possible measures are:

- Regular data should be collected and highlighted in a Communication on Sustainable Fashion, to counter the power of relentless advertising.
- Retailers and designers should be encouraged to develop labels on the sustainability and origin of their products, and to adopt pledges in relation to material choices and production conditions.

22. The Committee recommends that the use of repurposed paint becomes a preferred practice in public works or State contracts.
23. The Committee recommends the increased incorporation of circular principles into guidelines for public procurement related to construction, principally by updating the Office of Public Procurement's Capital Works Management Framework. The Committee urges the OGP to increase focus on whole-life costing, quality in contract awards and increased digitalisation.
24. The Committee recommends the strengthening of regulations and building guidelines to support circular principles in construction, as well as the use of appropriate circularity criteria or conditions in planning.
25. The Committee recommends an examination of the factors inhibiting the downsizing of Irish homes, in order to develop policy and measures to help reduce underoccupancy and increase the efficiency of housing. The Committee further recommends financial support for those seeking to downsize homes in order to incentivise and facilitate appropriately sized living spaces with access to appropriate supports, where accommodation can adapt to evolving needs (e.g. age, disability, the decrease in home size as children grow up and move out).
26. The Committee recommends carrying out a mapping exercise of existing subsidies, taxes and measures to gain a better understanding of what areas are supporting circular activities and what areas are undermining them.
27. The Committee recommends an increased use of both pilot and larger scale projects with capital funding in order to demonstrate the potential of circular

principles in construction. A template for such a system can be found in the SEAI's EXEED Scheme, which rewards innovation in energy efficiency. The introduction of a similar scheme for construction projects will provide incentive for greater leadership in Ireland's circular transition. Enterprise grants should also be issued to construction projects on the basis of sustainability and circularity. Enterprise Ireland has already created such a scheme, Built to Innovate, for the housing sector.

28. The Committee recommends the establishment of a recertification system for materials used in construction. The system must ensure that the standards of materials align with those of the insurance sector so that materials can be reused to reduce the environmental impact. The system should provide a tool to advertise and catalogue the availability of reusable materials. Building methods must evolve so that the material efficiency of offsite manufacture and assembly are exploited to the fullest; and so that the potential of Building Information Modelling to improve management, maintenance and material recovery in buildings is taken up.
29. The Committee recommends the strengthening of regulations and building guidelines to support circular principles in construction, as well as the use of appropriate circularity criteria or conditions in planning.
30. The Committee recommends the establishment of a qualification in resource management. This will provide for the accreditation of expertise in elements crucial to increased circularity in the construction sector, such as supply chain engagement, site layout and on-site training. Such qualifications can extend to Local Authority staff responsible for procurement and infrastructure facilitating the circular transition. Accordingly, those who build and manage materials on site must adopt careful techniques so that the circular intentions of the chain are not lost through pressure of time or lack of experience.
31. The Committee also recommends additional funding for social enterprises and community-based initiatives to encourage and facilitate participation in public procurement. The Committee also recommends examining measures that could remove barriers to participation such as the pooling of particular skewing costs like insurance.

32. The Committee recommends the introduction of a quality weighting on environment to encourage reuse and drive innovation within the construction industry. The Committee agrees that circular approaches should be fully integrated into public procurement. This could be achieved by allowing a higher premium or discount for materials that have been reused, allowing those in the industry a competitive advantage when they are tendering for State contracts.
33. The Committee recommends the adoption of pre-demolition audits to assess the major elements of a building to be demolished or majorly refurbished. This should include a detailed rationale for the demolition, including an assessment of alternative proposals as well as a reclamation audit to identify reusable building elements. The audit will provide Circular Economy (CE) Statements to estimate the amount of material likely to arise from the demolition/refurbishment. Guidance on the appropriate management routes for the building elements should also be provided. The Committee recommends the extension of such audits to as many projects as possible, with a focus on public projects in the initial phase to demonstrate for wider use across the whole sector.
34. The Committee recommends an analysis be carried out to determine the environmental impact of introducing a regulation or limitation on demolition over the next ten-year period. This would provide clarity on embodied emissions as they relate to demolition.
35. The Committee recommends the adoption of necessary means to streamline the testing of materials and recertification of "end of waste" materials by the EPA. The updating of the licensing systems allowing for increased flexibility for permits relating to concrete crushing is also recommended. This can take the form of an online system, standardised application procedures and clear guidance.
36. The Committee recommends the development and promotion of a national resource database to increase the reuse of materials in Ireland's construction sector. The IRBC's Construction Materials Exchange CMex platform provides a template for the development of a system to effectively match material donors and receivers, thereby tackling Ireland's biggest single source of waste.

37. The Committee urges the attachment of conditions to planning permission to large scale developments to ensure appropriate management of materials on site and the facilitation of reuse.
38. The Committee recommends the extension of waste collection services, including organic waste, to all households in Ireland without further delay. To address the problem of providing waste services including the organic waste service to terraced housing in urban areas, the Committee recommends an examination of innovative solutions such as the use of 25ltr caddies.
39. The Committee recommends additional funding in order to realise the ambition of the NWMP in meeting Ireland’s waste reduction targets over the next six-year period. This is to include the repurposing the network of Civic Amenity Sites and Bring Centres for increased circularity, and the necessary upscaling of recycling infrastructure across the country.
40. The Committee recommends the establishment of a national waste regulator in the waste collection market. The committee recommends that the waste regulator review the potential for the re-municipalisation of waste and its potential applicability in Ireland. The Committee agrees with the CPCC view that this is “the most appropriate way to manage the complexity of the market so that the best economic, environmental and societal outcomes can be delivered in a manner that balances the interests of the State, private sector and households.”
41. The Committee recommends examining legislative options similar to that in France, providing a ban on the dumping of unsold goods and eco-modulation.
42. The Committee recommends that the Department supports the establishment of a pilot scheme in Dublin City Local Authority to re-municipalise waste following Dublin City Council’s adoption of a cross-party composite motion calling for the re-municipalisation of household waste services in July 2019.
43. The Committee also recommends research be conducted to compare methodologies for recording the cost of illegal dumping in other European jurisdictions and alternative approaches to address it.

44. The Committee recommends that Ireland should introduce laws to ban the destruction or dumping of new unsold non-food products, with fines for companies that do so. This would include items such as clothing, electronics and furniture.
45. The Committee recommends that efforts are made to ensure that the concept of a just transition into the debate on a circular economy. The Committee recognises that a transition to a circular economy is a solution to meeting our needs within safe levels of planetary boundaries. However, the circular economy transition must be just and people-centric for it to deliver decent work, improve wellbeing, and reduce inequality.
46. The Committee recommends that the national waste regulator oversee a new system of economic licensing, whereby exclusive licences are granted for specified geographic areas. In order to extend coverage to as many households as possible, the Committee recommends boundaries are designed to combine less commercially attractive areas with more commercially attractive areas.
47. The Committee recommends appropriate measures to monitor the use of recycling bins by households and businesses. Learning from the patterns of use as well as targeted information to those failing to segregate properly will help to achieve the NWMP target of 90% compliance in green bin usage.

