



The Circular Economy Strategy

A RESPONSE FROM WCVA

1. Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) is the national membership organisation for the voluntary sector in Wales. Our purpose is to enable voluntary organisations to make a bigger difference together.
2. We are pleased to have the opportunity to respond to Welsh Government's consultation on the Circular Economy Strategy. The voluntary sector has been at the forefront of creating and promoting the circular economy. That includes global initiatives like 'Freecycle', as well as charity shops and a host of local social enterprises. We thank those organisations and individuals who have contributed evidence to our response.
3. We believe environmental organisations are best-placed to answer many questions in this consultation, such as those on the technical specifics of recycling and material usage; however, there are a number of more cross-cutting questions that are of interest across the wider voluntary sector. This response concentrates on those.

USING GOVERNMENT LEVERS

4. A long-term shift in behaviour needs to be encouraged to help procurers have more regard to reuse and recycling of materials. We echo Wales Co-operative Centre's call for procurement processes to have stipulations for reuse and repurposing of materials to maximise economic and social value.
5. Community benefits should be core requirements of contracts, rather than simply desirable additions.
6. We should of course aim to ensure the public sector in Wales does not purchase 'products that adversely affect the human rights or environment in other countries', but we should

equally try to ensure that the human rights or the environment of the UK are not adversely affected.

7. We would like to see the commitment outlined in paragraph 6 set out in a future update to the International Strategy.
8. In relation to the review of the carrier bag charge – we would like Welsh Government to set out what it hopes to see from this review before it begins and involve the voluntary sector in any discussions about any future amendments to the charge.
9. A new Circular Economy Strategy must include the Future Generations Act at its heart in order to ensure progress towards the seven Wellbeing Goals. As noted by Size of Wales in its response to this consultation, this would allow for the introduction of and promotion of sustainable procurement practices across all levels of government.
10. We would also expect the Strategy to be integrated with the aims of fair work and an inclusive economy as described in the Social Partnerships Bill. Particularly, the Social Partnership Council outlined in the Bill appears to be well-placed, with voluntary sector involvement, to ensure an economy that insists on reuse and recycling of materials.
11. Any shift in procurement strategies must adhere to the Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector, and local authorities should be reminded of this.

ENABLING COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES

12. A question asks: ‘Is continued business support to make businesses more efficient a priority action?’ We would like assurance that Welsh Government is including social enterprises in this definition of businesses.
13. Bringing communities and businesses together in collective action is vital, but it must be ensured that there is little to no additional bureaucracy involved as this has the potential to stifle the action that the Strategy is meant to be growing.
14. It’s important for Welsh Government to support existing initiatives as well as new ones, or else there may be a situation where organisations do the same work and compete for the same funding pots. Cardiff, for instance, has a number of reuse and repair organisations – these should be approached about any plans for expansion before any such new organisations are set up.

15. Core funding for projects is vital so these organisations can take care of rent, staff costs, vehicle purchases and other costs necessary to pay in order to get off the ground.
16. The types of projects supported by the Landfill Disposals Tax Community Scheme would benefit from longer-term funding to really embed the good work they do in communities.
17. As Wales Co-operative Centre have said, social businesses need to quantify and measure their social impact so this impact can be promoted to buyers.
18. Resource should be put into further developing social capital to ensure people are fully engaged and able to take part in the decisions affecting them. As our [Empowering Communities](#) report notes, those areas where social capital is in abundance are those that have good relationships with decision-makers. This in turn can create genuine coproduction of services, leading to improved local environments and causing better physical and mental wellbeing.
19. The [National Principles for Public Engagement](#), as endorsed by Welsh Government, offer a set of principles to service providers to ensure that people and communities are enabled to engage with decisions that affect them.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE

20. The voluntary sector must be involved in the promotion of a community infrastructure that helps reduction of waste to ensure that this is achieved from grassroots level, rather than being imposed from the top down. This will involve all sectors, and citizens, working co-productively on service design and delivery.
21. For the sector to fully play its part in the Circular Economy, it must receive long-term support and resource. Although we understand the difficulties of this in the current climate, we repeat our call for funding cycles of three to five years. The voluntary sector has had conversations with the Finance Minister about this.

DISCUSSION

22. WCVA will be pleased to discuss these or any other points relating to this consultation response with officials, committees or Ministers if requested.

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