

Wellbeing Region Sector Forum



19/10/2021



12:00 - 2:00



Online via Zoom

At this month's **Circular Economy Sector Forum** we're delighted to welcome guests from Birmingham & West Midlands.

We will be joined by Debbie Ward from the **Birmingham & West Midlands Circular Economy Club** chapter, she also works for the EnTRESS business support programme at the University of Wolverhampton and runs her own consultancy Cirklo Consult. Debbie will give an overview of CEC activities and some examples of circular businesses in the West Midlands.

We are also delighted to have Jackie Homan, the Head of Environment at the West Midlands Combined Authority as a guest speaker. The WMCA view the transition to a circular economy as critical if the West Midlands is to achieve its #WM2041 target of becoming a net zero carbon region within the next 20 years.

The West Midlands Circular Economy Routemap has been drawn up by the WMCA to understand the flow of resources and materials across the region and identify opportunities in both the private and public sectors that can grow the circular economy, creating new business opportunities and jobs, whilst supporting the environment. Jackie will outline the strategic interventions and enablers for the West Midlands that have been identified in the Routemap.

[Watch the full event and presentations here.](#)

Jackie Homan's Presentation

The WMCA declared a climate emergency in June 2019, leading to the development of the WM2014 Plan. Since the approval of the WM2014 plan, the environment and energy programme has developed into a number of areas. Today Jackie focused on the Circular Economy route map at today's meeting.

The aim was to collate and map what's happening already and explore how to take it onto a regional scale. Amplify the ambition of a circular economy.

Principles: Resource optimisation - inclusive green growth - innovation and collaboration - enabling foundations.

Initial areas of focus: Circular manufacturing - how can an area heavily involved in industry become more circular?

Circular construction - Looking at zero-waste construction hubs.

Food & sharing economy - Bring communities together, improve on the work already happening. Using events (such as commonwealth games) to provide more opportunities.

<https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/environment-and-energy>

What can we learn from the WMCA and what's happening in the West Midlands? How can we bring some of their actions to South West Wales?

Questions for Jackie

LB: How much of this is business to business and how much is business to consumer?

JH: A mix of things as we develop. We're at the beginning stages of showing how important this is to take forward. Industrial symbiosis will mostly be business to business, food will be more community work. This is why we need to work with leading organisations in this space to embed circular economy into the thought process of all programs and projects developing.

VM: Question, wondered what grass roots innovation you have discovered already? What examples did you find that's already happening?

JH: Many examples, including some of them in the route map. Largely driven through grass roots level. Looking to help in developing organisations that offer share sheds.

DL: What have been the challenges of a regional approach?

JH: Regular a net-zero officers group. What would be the helpful things to consider at scale? Everyone is limited in their capacity and scale. We work very closely with local authorities to ensure this resonates with them and what they find helpful for us (WMCA) to do.

ZA: What was the consultation process? Meetings, surveys, etc?

JH: Ran three workshops for each priority area. Representatives from communities would take part via Zoom. Representation and engagement was positive.

JV: Can you tell us more about how the circular economy works in the food sector? What are your plans for food producers? Are you going to engage local food producers (small-scale and large-scale) and connect them with the final customers?

JH: At very early stages with taking it to a practical stage. Currently linking into influencing food waste and food sharing at the upcoming Commonwealth games.

PM: What scale is the team and how long have you been in the post? How long have you got this guaranteed for?

JH: Started on my own since Nov 2019, recruited two additional members of staff. 5-year carbon plan. Managing the grant funding programme themselves.

Now a team of eight on environment and eight on energy. Majority of posts are in place for 2 years, looking to secure more funding to keep those posts.

LB: What do you think the role of legislation is, how regional is it and how much wider does it need to be?

JH: Waste management is held by local authorities. There's the option to lobby government bodies. We could identify and tackle those areas of concern and that will be important to consider on the route map going forward. Still at the early stages regarding this.

JJ: Became more aware of the distinction between the Welsh Gov and UK Gov and how different things are done. As we share borders, there have been issues and peculiarities - what plans or what work is being done?

JH: Unsure what interaction there has been between the circular economy in UK gov and Welsh gov. Interested to find out if there's anything that can be built upon. Wolverhampton has signed up to the Circular Cities Declaration, which is a European wide scheme.

Debbie Ward's Presentation

Debbie Ward is from the Birmingham & West Midlands Circular Economy Club chapter, she also works for the EnTRESS business support programme at the University of Wolverhampton and runs her own consultancy Cirklo Consult.

Debbie was inspired by Circular Economy Mapping Week in February 2018 and was keen to get involved and set up the Circular Economy Club chapter in Birmingham and West Midlands in the same year.

Predominant activities include:

- Running events, at least 4 events a year.
- Collating feedback on consultation documents, including Industrial Strategy, Local Industrial Strategy, Waste & Resources Strategy and Waste Management Plan.
- Supported the WMCA West Midlands Circular Economy Route Map.

Key learnings:

- There's a need for clarity on where to put the line between circular and not circular.
 - Are all recycling initiatives circular or only those where energy inputted in recycling is less than creating something from scratch? Are all organic and composting initiatives circular? Are all renewable energy circular or should we always assess the externalities?
- The urge to collaborate - the need to join the dots.
- The opportunities for citizens to come together and share their thoughts.
 - The club tries to create the space for citizens' ideas to flourish into impactful actions.
- The willingness to build on current momentum.
 - The CE momentum is visible globally.

Examples of businesses in the West Midlands:

- **Paint 360:** Recycle paint, the carbon savings is enough to drive a transit van 5 miles
- **Kool Mill:** A milling process that delivers power savings of up to 90% and maximises the return of food from a valuable resource by avoiding wasted rice and power.
- **Share Shack:** Borrow, save, learn and share DIY equipment, toys, gardening equipment, etc.
- **Birmingham Bike Foundry:** Worker co-operative, fully functioning repair shop involved in cycling activities across the city.
- **ReUsers:** Second hand can be first choice. They divert 250 tonnes of waste from entering landfill every year.
- **Reclaim: Re-manufacturing and Refurbishment LA**rg**e I**ndustrial equip**M**ent. Business to business.
- **Incredible Surplus:** Initially The Real Junk Food Project Birmingham. Intercept food and other usable materials that would otherwise go to waste from supermarkets, restaurants and other sources and provide them to individuals and community organisations on a "Pay as you feel" basis.
- **Tyseley Environmental Enterprise District**

Questions

CG: If there's time, I'd be interested in knowing a little more about the behavioural changes Jackie hinted at in her presentation?

JH: Was there anything specific that you would like to know, Carl? We launched some work with the Behavioural Insights Team earlier this year and we're currently focusing on behaviour change around retrofit, natural environment and food (the latter particularly linked to the Commonwealth Games).

We work with a behavioral insights team. A barrier is the distinction between a comms programme and focus around behaviour change. It's much more than comms. We need to work with businesses as well as communities. Net Zero business pledge. Carbon literacy training for staff in organisations

We need the right conditions and infrastructure to make it easy for people to change their behaviour.

DW: Consider our sphere of influence: Try not to be overwhelmed by the enormity of what needs to be achieved, but view what can be changed on a smaller scale and as an individual.

We need to ask more questions about where things are sourced, what percentage is recycled, etc. The power of asking that question.

LB: We should display the environmental impact on everything we buy. If we're asking people to make informed decisions, we shou

DW: Third-party certifications demonstrate that the products' sustainability claims are independently tested and verified. However, products also get the Climate Pledge Friendly label if they have Compact by Design certification, a new assessment created by Amazon to identify products that use less packaging. This can be awarded regardless of the sustainability of the item itself. We need to be aware of issues with "Green Washing"

General Comments:

JJ: I think that one of the major challenges we are facing in Wales UK and Europe is the skills gap issue - as vocational study has 'lost value' in favour of university and academic training - we are seeing the results of a lopsided education/skills strategy. We are at least five years away from redressing this balance even if we act with haste. I would venture that this is going to be a huge challenge which needs to be flagged up as a matter of critical urgency - you just can't get the skilled workers needed to make and fix things these days

MJ: To jump in on some of the comments here, BioInnovation Wales (<https://bioinnovationwales.org.uk/>) is a project run from Aberystwyth and Swansea Universities. We run a number of distance learning modules (All focussed on the Circular

Economy) in order to address skills shortages in Wales. The courses are also Free of charge to those living or working in Wales. We also run a module on Behaviour Change.

LC: Thank you for all of the links everyone. The presentations have been excellent. I will share the information I have learned today with all my colleagues at Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS), the local County Voluntary Council in Pembrokeshire. My email is liz.cook@pavs.org.uk

JJ: We need to address the skills gap. Physical skills learning needs to be encouraged from a young age. We need to change the view on construction and roles that involve physical activity. We are going to fall foul of people who can make, create, etc.

ZA: If you're interested in connecting with Adrian who is our Circular Economy Club representative here in Wales, his email is adrian_matthews@hotmail.co.uk

LB: Precious Plastic can be used as a great educational tool. We need to get rid of "Conscious Consumerism" in the sense that it needs to be the way that we live, rather than something we request (for example, requesting house renovations)

YZ: It has been inspiring to listen to you all. I'm here for myself but also to represent Luke Fletcher MS who's extremely keen to see the Welsh Government actively contributing to and facilitating innovation within the circular economy.

If anyone would be interested in setting up a meeting to this end please drop us an email: Luke.fletcher@senedd.wales. My email is Yasmin.zahra@senedd.wales. Thank you to 4theRegion for setting up this fantastic forum.

Attendees:

Adrian Matthews - Circular Economy Club Wales
Dafydd Herdman -
Debbie Ward - Circular Economy Club West Midlands & Birmingham
Carl Gough - Social Business Wales
Jackie Homan - WMCA
Jana Viriskova -
John Owen - Coleg Sir Gar
Julie Jones - Gower Gas & Oil
Lee Bazalgette - Bazcreative
Lina
Liz Cook - PAVS (Pembrokeshire County Voluntary Council)
Mathew Jones
Phil McDonnell - Swansea Environmental Forum
Ross - Garrison Farm
Vicky Moller - Grwp Resilience
Yasmin Zahra
Zoe Antrobus - 4theRegion

Next Steps/Actions:

- To contact Jackie, get in touch: jacqueline.homan@wmca.org.uk
- To find out more about Bio Innovation Wales, contact Mathew Jones: maj57@aber.ac.uk

Resources & References

- <https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/environment-and-energy>
- <https://circularcitiesdeclaration.eu/>
- <https://www.ippr.org/fairness-and-opportunity/>
- <https://theaws.co.uk/active-communities/share-shacks/>
- <https://bioinnovationwales.org.uk/>
- <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2021/08/what-does-amazons-climate-pledge-friendly-label-really-mean/>
- <https://www-bbc-co-uk.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-58954978.amp?fbclid=IwAR3yJDGC4NWecoou7MXatVVljLt6vxXjtj5cMhj9FXJMJJSLUJMpaSODmow>
- <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KUku69qGhuCria153O2vbFu3Pp3Mx3mVwbC4zNPRiu0/edit#gid=1073342545>
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