

From: Nora Fahy <nfahy@rwn.ie>
Sent: Friday 11 June 2021 13:20
To: circulareconomy
Subject: Ireland's First Whole-of-Government Circular Economy Strategy - Public Consultation
Attachments: RWN Submission to All of Government Circular Economy Strategy.docx
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Please find attached our submission on the Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Kind Regards

Nora Fahy
Project Co-ordinator
Roscommon Women's Network – NCCWN (*National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks*)
Unit 5, The Old Mill, Castlerea, Co Roscommon. F45 R922. **TEL: 094 9621690 / 086 8099154**
www.rwn.ie | [Facebook](#) | [twitter](#)



RWN Registered Charity Number: 20072995 - Company Number: 295613. **My working hours may not be your working hours, Please do not feel obligated to reply outside of your normal work schedule**

Tel: 0949621690 **E-mail: info@rwn.ie** **Website: www.nccwn.org**

national collective of
community based
women's
networks



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
Registered Charities Number: 20060688 Company Number: 400554

Follow us on:



CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE - The information contained in this email message is intended only for the confidential use of the named recipient. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient or the person responsible for delivering it to the recipient, you are hereby notified that you have received this communication in error and that any review, dissemination or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this in error, please notify the sender



ROSCOMMON WOMEN’S NETWORK (RWN) RESPONSE TO FIRST WHOLE-OF GOVERNMENT CIRCULAR ECONOMY STRATEGY

Introduction & Background

RWN is a grassroots community, voluntary inclusive networking organisation that highlights and endeavours to address issues for women and their families, through empowerment, education, overcoming isolation, supporting collective action and being a catalyst for change. We are part of the National Collective of Community based women’s Networks (NCCWN). We are a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Our office, resource and training centre are based in the town of Castlerea, Co Roscommon and we are leading the way on climate action locally through community development and a feminist lens within a rural context.

On International Women’s Day 8th March 2019 we launched our Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024. The plan was developed in consultation with the women and families around the county, Protecting our Environment and Enable women to generate an income are two of our four strategic goals.

The recent economic downturn was very challenging for everyone and community projects were no exception with budgets reduced by over 40% in the period and the amalgamation of the community development programme with the Leader Partnership companies in 2014. In an effort to maintain the RWN centre and autonomy of RWN project, the women, many of whom were service users and their families, started a pop up charity shop to raise much needed funds in 2013, a few months later the shop became a permanent feature and to this day is RWN’s main fundraising source. The shop proceeds covers 80% of the project’s annual resource centre overhead and operational costs and is completely volunteer run. A few years back the volunteers noticed a decline in the demand and income for our “clobber” (Textile recycling companies collecting clothes) which led them to investigate what happens to the clobber and then to finding alternatives. Following a visit

to the Rediscovery Centre in February 2018 RWN, led by the need identified by the local women, sourced funding for the Pilot Community Re-Use training Project (see appendix 2) . This project trained the RWN Volunteers and other interested local women in the basics of textile upcycling and repair and in the effects of textile and other waste on the environment. The pilot was a collaboration between many players including Roscommon County Council, GRETB, Rediscovery Centre, St Angelas College NUIG, Roscommon Environment Network. On the success of the pilot RWN secured funding from EPA in 2019 under the Green Enterprise fund for the WECAN project (Women's Environment Community Activation Network). WECAN is currently working to establish a Social Environmental Enterprise in the County Roscommon serving the region with the capacity to grow from the current Textile upcycling training, repair and production under the brand CycleUP into bicycles, paint and other waste materials. The project has many collaborators and supporters locally, regionally and nationally and is working to raise awareness on the circular economy through community education and workshops to groups and schools. We are a member of the Rediscovery Centre Circular Economy Academy. The 10 women in the Cyclup group have, over the last two and half years acquired the knowledge and skills and are now disciples of the circular economy and proficient at upcycling waste textiles. The group recently completed QQI level 6 Training, Evaluation and Delivery Course to equip themselves to share their new upcycling skills, circular economy knowledge and understanding with schools and groups through workshops and training events providing flexible employment opportunities in the Circular Economy locally for the CycleUP group members who are all currently all unemployed and volunteering.

As a community project we are well aware that changing culture is incredibly slow and our practice and experience demonstrates that good quality supported community education and lifelong learning from the grassroots up is an effective means to changing culture and behaviour. Therefore, WECAN project steering committee are working to develop a Circular Economy community education programme and a QQI accredited minor award in Textile Upcycling and Circular Economy. We have already designed and delivered a very popular "Healthy Greener You" (HGY) community education course to over 130 people in the county (pre covid) and have adapted it for online access.(see Appendix 1: HGY flyer Appendix 1).

In 2020 the CycleUp group of trained upcyclers created over 1000 upcycled facemasks which they donated to organisations working with vulnerable groups in the region.

In March 2019 the RWN Textile Upcycling group won the Aontas Star Award under the Sustainable Development through Community Education category.

Below are the RWN 2020 reuse/upcycling quantities for textiles:

Note: 2020 was not a typical year in terms of the statistics below due to the shop being closed for 4 months, in previous years the sales in shop to collections by recycling companies would be approx. 50% : 50% :

Textile weight in kg donated to RWN Charity shop	1999.98
Textile weight in kg recycled through Recycling Companies	-1399
Weight in kg of Upcycled textile items sold	-58.07
Weight in kg of textile items sold in Charity Shop	542.91

For more information on our WECAN project and CycleUp brand and online shop please click on the links below:

<https://www.facebook.com/CycleUpTextiles>

<https://rwn.ie/store/>

RWN Consultation Submission

RWN welcomes this new Strategy, which puts prevention (including avoidance, reuse and repair), preparation for reuse (including repair and refurbishment) and supporting social and community actors at the heart of resource efficiency planning and solutions. We very much appreciate the opportunity to offer our comments below;

1. Do you agree with the draft Strategy's proposed key objectives? In your view, are there further or alternative objectives that should be included?
 - We welcome the strategic focus in the pre-consultation, through a dedicated framework, on the circular economy and the shift away from waste management. An all of government approach is crucial given the requirement to intervene across the supply chain and across all sectors to achieve a more circular economy
2. Do you agree with the overall level of ambition set out in the draft Strategy? If not, is further ambition needed or is the draft Strategy overly ambitious?
 - We feel that a sense of urgency should be reflected in all Government policy and strategy.
3. Should Ireland measure its progress in achieving a more circular economy relative to its European Union peers? If not, what alternative benchmark should Ireland adopt and why?
 - Showing measures and progression relative to our European peers can be a good tool and will be effective in understanding where we are, where we need to go and how and in communicating this. However it is important that those measurement methods are appropriate, relevant and consistent across all regions.
4. Would you rate Irish public awareness of the circular economy as high, medium or low? And how important do you think raising public awareness is to further developing the circular economy?
 - Low, from our experience within the communities that we work with, which are mostly rural and marginalised. Raising awareness is complex and involves both providing information (to raise awareness), delivering behavioural change and providing an outlet for that change, which is the desired outcome of awareness raising. This requires an understanding of behavioural science and marketing as well

as providing the community development infrastructures like RWN and CycleUp and the many others in the social economy, and services on the ground to support action.

5. What are the most effective awareness raising measures that could be taken under the Strategy?

- Even if people are aware of what the circular economy means or like the idea of avoiding waste, it can be challenging and not always more economical to change their consumer habits. This is very evident in our work and we also notice that behavioural change in relation to prevention is not always linked to awareness raising efforts. We need more carrot than stick approach. Therefore, parallel effort is required to support education and communication, alongside addressing cost and other barriers, and providing the infrastructure and services on the ground to support action.
- We believe that the community education and lifelong learning model is an excellent and effective means of effective awareness raising, skills training, and upskilling for all, but most especially as a means of reaching the hardest to reach in disadvantaged and marginalised communities. Local communities must be supported into collective action to find local solutions which link to the national and EU strategy and action plan.

6. Are you satisfied with the proposed stakeholder engagement arrangements in the draft Strategy? Which additional stakeholders (if any), not already part of the Waste Action Group, do you think should be included in the Strategy's implementation?

- We feel the strategy should explicitly include, recognise and support the role of social enterprise, community development and community education in the circular economy at local and national level, making the circular economy more just and inclusive

7. What do you see as the major economic and/or social co-benefits of moving towards a more circular economy in Ireland, so that environmental improvements also provide economic and social opportunities, and vice versa?

- Reducing CO2 emissions, protecting our planet, community wellbeing and collective action and creating jobs.
- By keeping goods within the economy for longer, prevention, reuse and repair can support resilience in communities through localising supply chains
- The Circular economy will create opportunities for upskilling among the long term unemployed and disadvantaged communities. It will value and recognise skills that heretofore may not have been valued or appreciated i.e mending, fixing, repurposing.

- Creating flexible paid work opportunities for women and opportunities to work from home or from hubs.

9. What do you see as the major non-regulatory barriers to the further development of the circular economy in Ireland? In answering this question please feel free to address economy-wide issues or those affecting your sector in particular.

- From our experience with engaging our product audience and potential customers we find that upcycled products can be cost prohibitive and cannot and should not try to compete. The skill required to identify materials suitable for reuse, the deconstructing, design and production process is labour intensive and is a skilled process. The costs of our beautiful, useable and saleable CycleUP goods are currently unaffordable to many sections of society and this has to be addressed.
- Changing perceptions of reuse, repair and upcycling is another challenge we are finding, however it is happening slowly and sometimes informally through community education and permeating through families and communities, however, this work requires more commitment, investment and evaluation to have the desired effect and impact in a tight timeframe.
- Legislation can also support priority access to waste streams collected through EPR schemes for preparation for reuse operators from the social economy

11. What would be the most effective action Government could take to promote/support and incentivise the further development of the circular economy?

- A coordinated approach to training and jobs growth for this sector is required. When RWN volunteers wanted to start learning how to repair and upcycle in 2018 it was not easy to get buy in from other agencies locally apart from the local authority. We needed sewing machines and equipment, tutor costs etc, all which we secured eventually, however, it should not have been so difficult. This is getting better but mostly only because the results and impacts are visible and evident, however, even with this, too much work in persuasion is required. Local agencies, collaborators and funders, although claiming to support innovation don't appear to be quite there yet when it comes to the circular economy in our experience.

12. Which sectors do you think can make the biggest contribution to making Ireland's economy more circular?

- Social enterprise should play a pivotal role in the circular economy as practitioners and as innovators in driving the circular agenda. Recent research funded by the EPA and conducted by CRNI, mapped out everyone involved in second hand goods and we found that the majority of those identified, just under 50%, identified as not for

profit entities or social enterprises. The reason why reuse, repair and recycling are so suited to social enterprise model is:

- They are labour intensive, because it involves handling a range of different products that may need fixing up or cataloguing, cleaning, repairing, retail or tech solutions.
- This also means it's suited to a very broad range of skills and training potential, affording marginalised people an opportunity to participate in society through skills training and entry to the jobs market.
- Reuse and repair are highly localised because it involves keeping goods in local circulation so can support local communities and regions
- They support a broad range of social aims in addition to creating jobs and training for people at distance from the labour market, supporting low income families and individuals by making available low cost household goods, food, laptops to bridge digital divide or other services

- Community Development Projects and Programmes

Projects like RWN and CycleUP work with individuals or groups that are long-term unemployed, have disabilities, are ex-offenders, come from drug rehabilitation or are part of disadvantaged communities—such as members of the Traveller and Roma community— through employment schemes, such as CSP, Tús, RSS, CE and others. This has knock on social impacts including, empowerment, improved self-esteem and well-being, increased engagement with the community, reduced social exclusion and collective action. Using the carrot approach as opposed to the stick!

13. Do you broadly agree with the policy areas listed for future development in the draft strategy? If not, which areas would you remove/add to the list?

- Further work on redesign, reuse and remanufacturing, as well as supporting the redirection of textiles into reuse, is extremely important and timely for the next iteration of the Strategy. Outcomes from the Circular Textiles project are specifically designed to help inform this work by identifying the potential additional recovery of textiles from separate collection, their quality, and opportunities to reuse, remanufacture or recycle them.
- Reuse and repair sit on the top tier of the waste hierarchy and are at the heart of a circular economy. It is essential that greater focus is placed on these key areas and specific measures are implemented.

14. Any other comments?

Appendix 1: The HGY courses were delivered to approx. 150 people prior to Covid 19, this is our current offering adapted for online access



A Healthy Greener You

Minding ourselves, our families, communities, and our planet.

A little wellbeing coaching, self-care, shopping tips, reducing waste tips, understanding the basics of climate change & action to help mind ourselves, our community, and our planet.

Learn how and why small changes ordinary people can make in our everyday routine can help ourselves and our communities be healthier and happier.

One Morning a week for Six weeks. NO CHARGE

Where & When?

Online Zoom: starting Thursday 20th of May and the following five Thursdays
10.00 to 12.30 pm

How?

To book your place please contact Laura at Roscommon Women's Network (RWN) on 094 9621690, or text on 086 8099154, email info@rwn.ie or PM on RWN Facebook page.

For full program details visit www.rwn.ie



**GRETB FUNDED COMMUNITY EDUCATION COURSE
ORGANISED BY ROSCOMMON WOMEN'S NETWORK (RWN)**



Appendix 2: Textile Upcycling pilot project March to July 2019

The impact of textile waste

It Takes 2,700 Litres of Water to Make One Cotton Shirt



Enough Water for One Person to Drink for 76 Years



- Making a pair of jeans produces as much greenhouse gases as driving a car more than 80 miles.
- Discarded clothing made of non-biodegradable fabrics can sit in landfills for up to 200 years.



This project is supported by



The Textile Upcycling Project is supported by the Creative Ireland Programme, an all-of-Government five-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022, which places creativity at the centre of public policy. Further information from creativeireland.ie and ireland.ie



national collective of community based women's networks

RWN,
The Old Mill,
Casterea,
Co. Roscommon

Phone: 094 9621690
E-mail: info@rwn.ie
RWN Registered Company Number: 295613
RWN Charity Number: 20072995



Textile Upcycling Training Project





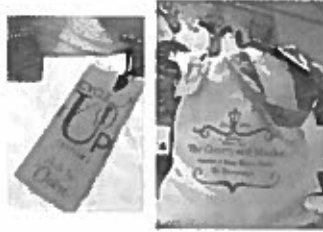
RWN Textile Upcycling Training Project

As part of RWN's Environmental Strategy, we are hoping to reduce the unsold textiles that are generated by our charity shop by upcycling these items into different products for sale! In doing so, volunteer participants master new sewing, pattern making and cutting skills as well as learn about the impact that textile waste has on the environment with our expert trainers Galway and Roscommon ETB (GRETB) and Roscommon County Council through Local Agenda 21 Partnership Fund and Creative Ireland. have funded the Pilot Project. We are thrilled to have also developed a mentoring relationship with the Rediscovery Centre Dulan to trial this new and innovative community project.

The CycleUp Textiles Brand

The 'CycleUp' textiles brand and logo was developed in conjunction with the first pilot group of participants to market their upcycled products. An order for upcycled market bags was taken at the beginning of the project so a market bag became one of two designs that the group would focus on making as well as one-off design aprons primarily made from denim to tackle the large amounts of unsold denim in the RWN Charity Shop.

Participants from the previous training groups are continuing to meet up as an informal upcycling club to make fashion and homeware items for the CycleUp brand in support of this RWN project. CycleUp branded items are currently on sale in craft shops and some of our collection is available to purchase from our online shop <http://rwn.ie/about/brand/>.



About the Training

The Training is free and will run at different sessions during the year for a few hours once a week over 8 weeks. Participants will learn easy techniques in sewing, design, pattern making and the different skills needed to up-cycle fabrics as well as learn about the impact that textile waste has on the environment.

Many who find they have all of these skills already but have an interest in upcycling, would like to link with other local like minded people under the direction of our upcycling experts. For further information call 094 9621690 / text Nora on 086 8099154.

See our website rwn.ie/textile-upcycling-pilot-project/ and Facebook page [facebook.com/RoscommonWomenNetwork/](https://www.facebook.com/RoscommonWomenNetwork/) for updates.

