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From: [Redacted]
Sent: 11 June 2021 17:11
To: circulareconomy
Subject: Submission: Public Consultation on the Proposed Publication of the Circular Economy Strategy
Attachments: Public Consultation on the Proposed Publication of the Circular Economy Strategy.pdf

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A Chara,

Please see my submission attached.

Mise le meas,
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Questions

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?

I agree with all the objectives except this one, "(...) with a view to delivering sustainable, regionally balanced **economic growth** (...)." Given that economic growth cannot be decoupled from environmental degradation and GHG emissions, it is necessary that we pursue an economy which thrives whether or not it grows, as expressed by Kate Raworth's *Doughnut Economics* theory. Future and alternative objectives should pursue an economy which is circular, distributive and regenerative by design, within social and ecological limits. This will require a reform of our financial system to ensure that our model of finance does not rely solely on economic growth to function. "Economic growth," is not a limitless panacea; it is a theory rooted in neoclassical economics that can be replaced by a system which is rooted in social equity and environmental stability. Please see Feasta's "[Theory of Change](#)," for a succinct model for a future 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?

The strategy is not ambitious, it is necessary. If Ireland is to become a Circular economy leader (which would be great) it needs to move quickly away from fossil fuels and their subsidisation. Ireland can only achieve a circular economy by telling its citizens the truth about the failings of our current economy, and highlighting what an economy based on well-being, rather than shareholder profit, could mean. I earnestly encourage you to engage with Kate Raworth's "[7 steps to think like a 21st century economist](#)."

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?

The benchmark should be how Irish environmental indicators (biodiversity loss and emissions as a result of extraction) and social indicators (well-being, social cohesion and interconnectedness) respond to the initiation of a circular economy. Competition with other EU countries as a motivating factor or "benchmark," seems rather childish. Ireland must move to a circular economy without delay, regardless of what other EU countries are doing.

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?

Irish public awareness of the circular economy varies with age, class, location and economic status, therefore it is difficult to measure. Raising public awareness is of course important, but this is difficult given that we have all been fed the idea that the neoliberal freemarket agenda of "take, make, discard," is associated with a display of status and wealth. To end this falsehood requires strong governmental policy relating to the pursuit of a sustainable, equitable economy which places less emphasis on marketing and profit and more emphasis on true value of environmental and social goods. Raising public awareness is important, but strong policies are required to achieve a circular economy – altruistic will is not enough on its own.

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

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?

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?

There are countless benefits, however, the major benefits are: 1. Reducing our carbon emissions by reusing rather than extracting materials; 2. Reducing our impact on biodiversity by returning natural resources to the circular economy and minimising resource extraction; 3. Social cohesion through meaningful work, community collaboration and an increase in skilled labour.

8. What do you see as the major 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.

We currently operate within a so-called "free-market," economy, however, some sectors suffer more than others within this ostensibly "fair and unbiased," system. Fossil fuels, for example, are subsidised, while sectors such as environmental protection and mental health flounder as a result of a consistent lack of resources. In response to this question, I would urge the government to please consider the inputs of Feasta, the Irish Environmental Network and the Irish Environmental Pillar regarding the reformation of our economy. To refer to Feasta's material, I would like to see our financial system democratised and reformed to become growth-neutral; an upstream limit on fossil fuel production and the subsequent phasing out of fossil fuel production; an introduction of a universal basic income; taxation reform, so that "everyone is fairly compensated for the use of common resources"; the development of an alternative metric to GDP growth; and the development of economically and ecologically just agriculture which embraces agroecology.

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.

Economy-wide, we are being collectively held back by a preoccupation with economic growth. We live in a highly unequal global society, which continues to pursue the fantastical notion of trickle-down economics in favour of implementing a fair global economy which distributes wealth equally in a manner which is conducive to operating within social and environmental systems. This must be rapidly reversed.

10. How important do you consider Green Public Procurement is in supporting the development of new circular goods and services?

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

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

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?

14. Any other comments?

In pursuing a circular economy, please, please commit to pursuing an economy which is just, equitable and sustainable overall. I am continually heart-broken by the senselessness with which we prioritise our broken financial system over our environment, our communities, and our future generations. The time for real, radical and positive change is now. Thank you for taking the first steps.

