

# THE BEST ENTRY POINT FOR YOUR CIRCULAR ECONOMY JOURNEY



[www.circularchange.com](http://www.circularchange.com)

## Mainstreaming the circular economy mindset

**The 5th Circular Change Conference - in partnership with Bled Strategic Forum and the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia - is focused on key European and Slovenian achievements of the systemic circular transition, as well as on challenges caused by COVID-crisis, calling for the radical shift in the mindset.**

/ By **Ladeja Godina Košir**, Founder & Director, Circular Change; Chair of the Coordination Group, European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform

The Circular Change Conference is one of the key European meeting points of circular economy changemakers. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, its 5th edition has been transformed into a "virtual roadshow" that consists of 5 events and 5 partnerships.

The collaboration with Bled Strategic Forum is the result of joined ambition to engage the whole spectrum of different stakeholders and stress the importance of systemic, transdisciplinary and inclusive approach in the process of rethinking the economy and society of the future. We are putting forward security (in terms of healthcare) and economic recovery (in terms of green recovery).

### Shifting the mindset and embracing the change

Through the entire Circular Change Conference, we are exploring the mindset – how to rethink our values and redefine our patterns, definitions, metrics, habits, and decision making processes. Addressing SDG'S, European Green Deal, Circular Economy Action Plan as well as the Green Recovery interventions. We are bridging top-down and bottom-up approaches, introducing circular measures taken by governments as well as circular initiatives launched by citizens.

Slovenia has adopted the EIT Climate-KIC Circular, Regenerative Economies Deep Demonstration program with the ambition to

showcase an increase in visibility as a circular economy leader with progressive and innovative community events designed to bring stakeholders together, ensure the dissemination of results and put the country on the international circular economy map. Great content also for the upcoming Slovenian EU Presidency in 2021.

So, plenty of reasons to join us! ■



## Sustainable leadership by taking bold actions

**Scotland's circular journey, COP26 and why collaboration is key to bringing the lasting global change needed to overcome the climate crisis**

/ By **Iain Gulland**, Chief Executive, Zero Waste Scotland

'What will you remember when you return home?' That question was posed in the last edition of the Bled Strategic Times by one Slovenian minister seeking to remind delegates of the economic and environmental benefits of doing business with this small pioneering nation. No one's going to ask that this year because, unfortunately, not many of us are travelling to Slovenia. Instead, hundreds of political, academic and corporate leaders from around the world will, like me, stay home. We will still have important, valuable discussions on ideas and information, but we will be 'meet' virtually instead of in person.

After years of calling for urgent, radical change to overcome the climate emergency, Covid-19 has

forced global transformation virtually overnight. It has proved that we can all act together to do business differently. To 'Build Back Better' - overcoming the public health crisis and the climate crisis through the global green recovery - we need to carry on doing things differently. If we are going to succeed, we all need to collaborate to forge a circular economy which works locally, nationally and globally. In Scotland we're starting from a position of relative strength.

### Scotland's circular front-runners

Zero Waste Scotland has been leading our nation's circular journey since 2014 providing financial support and expert advice from our experienced, expanding and increas-

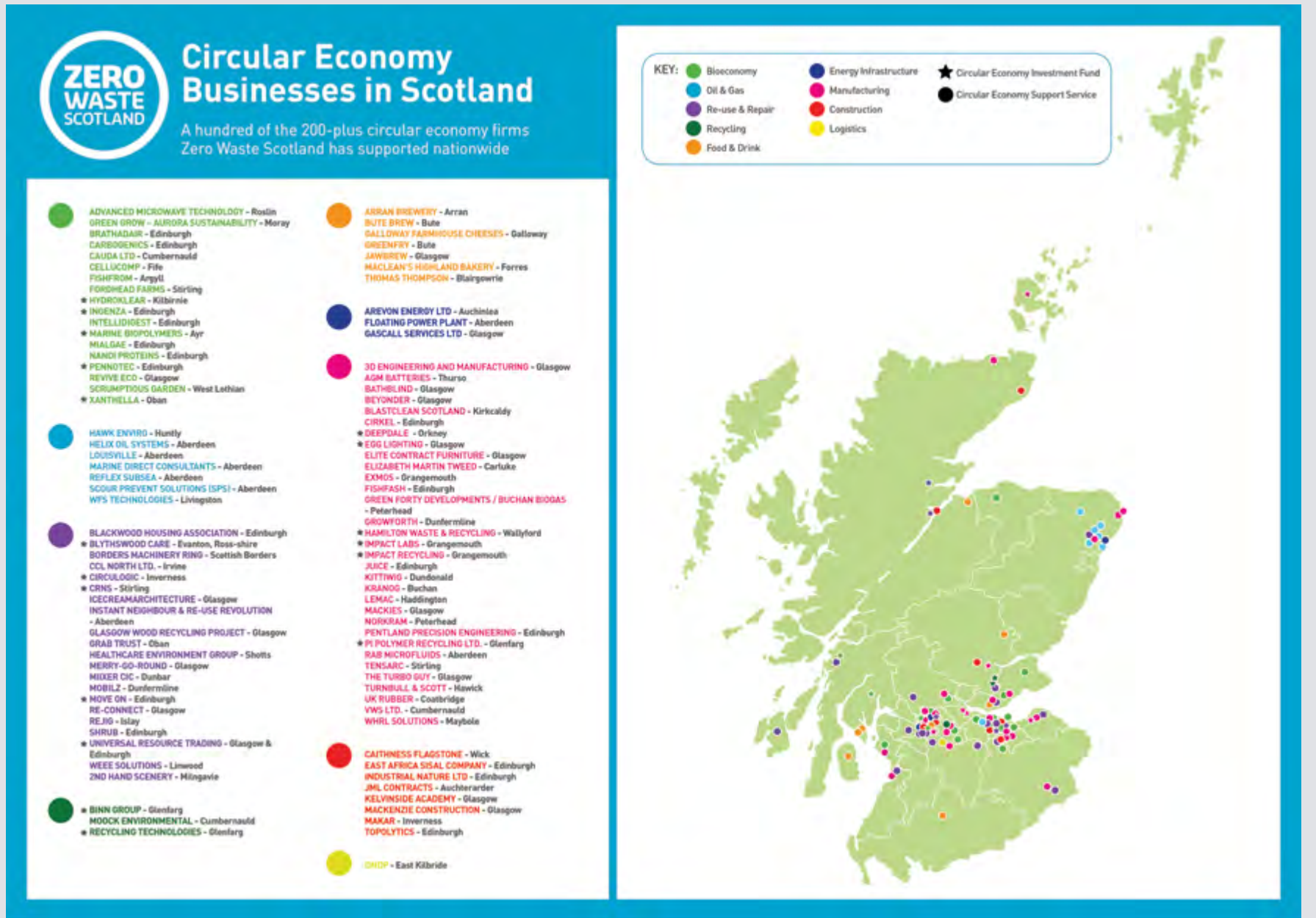
ingly diverse circular economy team. We have helped more than 200 Scottish companies find inventive ways of designing, producing and consuming things differently.

In theory a circular economy means 'Making things last' by reducing, reusing, repairing, remaking and finally recycling to keep limited natural resources in a 'loop' for as long as possible. In reality, it means a growing network of entrepreneurs developing successful commercial businesses across Scotland.

One of the most inventive companies we have worked with is Cel-luComp in Fife, which extracts tiny cellulose fibres (nanocellulose) from root vegetables to make everything from paint and concrete to cosmetics. Another is Revive Eco, a Glasgow

firm turning waste coffee grounds into fertiliser. They are also working on a sustainable alternative to palm oil which could save millions of tonnes of carbon emissions each year. Fellow Glasgow innovators, EGG Lighting, are among the circular companies reaping the rewards of switching from selling products to providing products as services, including longer-lasting relationships with customers which provide a competitive edge.

Since 2016, progress has been supported through the Scottish Government's first-ever circular economy strategy, entitled Making Things Last. The circular economy now supports nearly one in ten Scottish jobs. This headline figure comes from the first-ever national assessment



of circular economy jobs and skills across Scotland, which we carried out with the Dutch organisation, Circle Economy.

This is another example of valuable collaboration to obtain the data we need to measure and drive progress. One in ten jobs is significant, but we need to score ten out of ten. Our forthcoming report also identifies key gaps and opportunities in existing roles and skills in three key sectors - construction, capital projects including decommissioning oil rigs and wind turbines, and the bioeconomy.

Shortages of PPE during lockdown highlighted both the inventiveness and resilience of businesses in Scotland and elsewhere, but also worrying gaps in supply chains and knowledge. It was great to see our distillers and brewers moving fast from making whisky and beer to hand sanitiser to meet demand. But the fact that they had to do that was telling.

Like many developed nations, our economy is dominated by the service sector. Scotland is well placed to restore a manufacturing industry in a new, sustainable way, however. We already have the world's third greenest electricity grid which can power the green recovery.

Like Slovenia, Scotland is also famous for its spectacular scenery. Ben Nevis is the highest Scottish peak, with thousands of people reaching the summit each year. Few will know that it is dwarfed by the scale of

waste from goods like mattresses which are often flytipped around the country. We worked out that if you stacked up all the mattresses thrown out nationwide in a single year, they would create a mountain of waste which would tower over Ben Nevis (at over 100 times higher). They would even dwarf Everest, the world's highest peak (at 17 times its height).

### Circular collaboration

Here again, we are making progress through collaboration and circular thinking. A new partnership with the UK's National Bed Federation is driving change to reduce that waste. The federation worked with us on newly published guidance setting out how companies can design more sustainable mattresses which last longer and are easier to recycle at end-of-life.

Internationally, we already have a strong relationship with Slovenia. We've worked closely with conference host Circular Change, whose chief executive and founder, Ladeja Godina Košir, is a good friend of mine. In 2018 Circular Change worked with a range of partners on a road map setting out a sustainable future for Slovenia. This will be a vital guide to help steer a course towards European sustainability through the circular economy as Slovenia prepares to take up the European Council presidency in 2021.

Meanwhile at Zero Waste Scotland we are about to launch a new road map of our own ahead of COP26. Glasgow will now host the landmark global climate change summit in 2021, after it was postponed due to lockdown. We have no time to waste. While Covid-19 suddenly became the most urgent threat short-term, the climate crisis is still the greatest challenge of all our lifetimes.

Scotland can do far more than just host COP26 – we can show leadership by taking bold action on reducing all our emissions further and faster. Our new plan includes aims to build on the evidence and policy change we have produced so far to ensure we meet our Paris Agreement commitments.

In 2011 we published our world-leading Carbon Metric which allowed us to measure for the first time the impact of our consumption of materials on the climate crisis. It shows that around 80% of Scotland's carbon footprint comes from all the goods, services and materials which we produce, use and often throw out after just one use. This evidence led to key policy changes, including the introduction of the Scottish Government's climate change target of reducing food waste by a third by 2025.

### Being the change

As an organisation, like most service industry businesses, Zero Waste Scotland's emissions come largely from staff travel. We already knew pre-lockdown that the greatest cause of our carbon emissions by far was commuting. In 2018/19 alone we estimate that our staff commuted over a million miles. During lockdown we crunched the numbers and estimated that continuing with homeworking could cut our emissions by nearly 75 per cent.

I have recently urged all staff to take up the offer we are now making to all employees to move to homeworking permanently if they want to. It's a bold decision and a vital one for us to make progress as an authentic organisation leading the fight to end the climate crisis. I will also be urging staff to carry on attending meetings and events like the Bled circular change conference virtually from now on.

We all need to stop wasting our planet's limited natural resources and start living within our means. The successful sustainable future of Scotland, and the wider world, depends on urgent and permanent change. We can't afford to go back.



Zero Waste Scotland chief executive Iain Gulland's advice to Slovenia as it prepares to take up the European Council presidency in 2021.

Collaboration and information sharing will be key to Slovenia's success in leading the European Union to the sustainable future every nation needs to overcome COVID-19 and the climate crisis.

Like Scotland, Slovenia was on the right path before lockdown thanks to the road map Circular Change produced with partners in 2018 to turn circular economy theory into reality so we all live within our environmental and economic means.

To create the new circular jobs and businesses we now need more urgently than ever, nations must work together, identifying existing and emerging roles and skills, and increasing financial incentives to scale up the circular economy throughout Europe and beyond.

We all need to keep doing things differently.