



WIG

The Whitehall & Industry Group
connecting the sectors



'Environment & Climate Change' Series

Closing the Loop: A cross-sector approach to achieving a Circular Economy

Thursday 21 January 2021

Expert Insight

We were joined by Tim Brooks, Vice President of Environmental Responsibility, LEGO Group; Paula Chin, Sustainable Materials Specialist, WWF-UK; Michael Topham, CEO, Biffa; and Dawn Woodward, Deputy Head, Resources & Waste Division, Defra, to discuss the future landscape of the agricultural and farming sector, and what this means for the natural environment and climate change goals in the UK.

- The challenge is moving up the 'waste hierarchy' to prevent as much material going into landfill as possible (re-use), while increasing the recycling of products (second life).
- Recycling can create investment, jobs, and new industrial opportunities, while regulation could prevent waste from being exported to other countries for financial convenience. This would allow us to use most materials, including plastics, in a circular way.
- It can be resource intense to recycle and repurpose perfectly viable products that could be re-used. Product compatibility and durability are essential to creating a higher level of circularity.
- If they are not flexible enough to allow for the roll-out of innovative materials, some good-natured legislation and regulatory frameworks can stifle circularity rather than promote it.
- Improving access to and quality of information is vital to allowing businesses to collaborate with government, as well as making it easier for consumers to act sustainably.



Cross-sector Opinion

'In around 20 words, what do you see as the single most important factor to the achievement of a circular economy?'

- Tim: Ensuring regulatory frameworks actively support circular economy development and recognition of the necessity of harmonisation across countries for delivering the circular economy on a global scale.
- Paula: Stakeholder collaboration will be the key to achieving not only a circular economy, but also driving the elimination, reduction and reuse of valuable resources.
- Michael: Make plastic packaging recyclable AND recycled. Label it clearly, and choose green jobs and raw materials for the UK over export of plastic waste!
- Dawn: Producer responsibility for managing resources efficiently and reducing waste, supported by the right policy framework, services, and incentives.



Our members' questions

Our members asked some challenging questions. Some of the issues raised included:

- How to improve waste collection and recycling at a local level, and create greater consistency across various municipal areas.
- The ways in which organisations can establish cooperative targets to ensure that efforts to achieve a more circular economy are not siloed.
- How policy and regulation can match ambition across industry and the not-for-profit sector, so that key stakeholders from across the sectors are working in tandem.

WIG members can listen to the panel's presentations [here](#)
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