



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

COVID-19

Kirklees Council

Developing a Circular Economy in Kirklees

Kirklees Council is working with Leeds University to identify and engage local manufacturers with particular potential for circular economy innovations, leading to a more resilient and sustainable local economy, creation of new jobs and better environmental outcomes.

Context

Kirklees has suffered the health and economic impacts of the pandemic in a similar manner to neighbouring districts. However, in the early stages of the crisis it was projected to see a particularly marked decline largely due to the concentration of manufacturing firms which account for 25% of the local economy. Much has been said during the pandemic of the need to build back better both in terms of environmental sustainability and economic inclusivity. These issues chime with two key work streams in Kirklees prior to Covid-19, which have been incorporated as crosscutting themes within the Economic Recovery Plan in combination with the application of the Council's People, Partners, Places approach. Moving away from a traditional linear (take-make-use-waste) economy towards a circular economy (CE) provides opportunities for Kirklees to make significant strides in carbon reduction while presenting opportunities for local businesses to increase their resilience and create competitive advantage – and at the same time opening up new job opportunities. Working with this group of businesses builds on existing business growth activity within the council.

Development

During the pandemic the Council was contacted by Dr Anne Velenturf, a leading expert on circular economy based at Leeds University, who was interested in developing partnerships with Local Authorities. Following an initial discussion an internal webinar was arranged with Dr Velenturf to consider the opportunity and a possible approach. At a similar time, the Yorkshire Universities PERN group (Place-based Economic Recovery Network) held a series of webinars which considered four themes across all of which circular economy could play a contributing part:

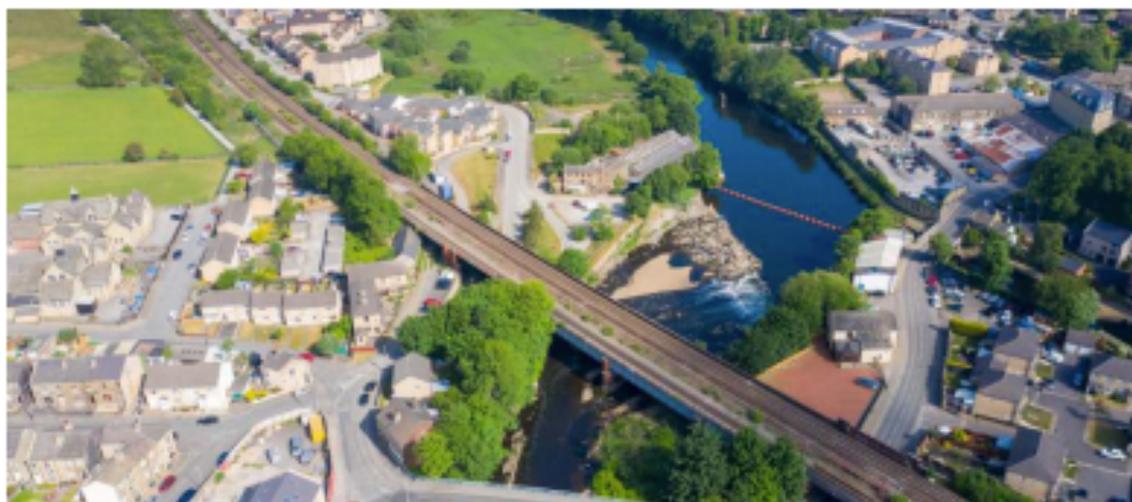
- The future role of towns and cities
- Clean and green recovery tackling climate change
- Start-up & entrepreneurial led recovery

- Resilient supply chains.

It was also identified that the West Yorkshire Combined Authority was in the process of relaunching resource efficiency support for businesses (ReBiz) including 30 days consultancy support to identify CE opportunities. This support provides opportunity for businesses identified as having a potential for CE innovation; they can be directed to initial support and prepared for further grant support to implement recommendations identified through consultancy. On the back of this work, Kirklees Council and Leeds University have agreed to jointly fund initial research into CE potential in the Kirklees economy and use this work to attract funding for further research. This complements CE research being undertaken by Huddersfield University related to food systems.

Implementation

This project, still in its inception stage, is based on a new partnership between Kirklees Council and Leeds University. The design of the project has been developed through the initial webinar with stakeholders internal to the council. An initial phase of desk-based research will map the manufacturing base and related flows of inputs and outputs of the project. This will be used to identify businesses with strategic potential to drive development of a circular economy in Kirklees. It should also be noted that partnership is a key aspect of most CE innovations, with one organisation providing a solution to reducing waste in an aspect of another's processes; or another business utilising the waste from another's production process.



Mirfield, Kirklees

Review

It is too early to evaluate the success of this project, but improvements are expected in the following areas:

- Increase in creation of circular economy jobs
- Increase in competitiveness of Kirklees manufacturing firms
- Increase in investment attracted to Kirklees-based firms innovating in the circular economy space
- Reduction in domestic and trade waste volumes
- Reduced carbon emissions through efficiencies in raw materials processing and logistics
- Increased public awareness of the circular economy concept and the imperative to reduce waste.

Additionally, CE innovations are likely to drive new or stronger collaborations between firms, with the Council and potentially with local communities.

For further information contact:

Jess Newbould

Economic Resilience Project Officer – Kirklees Council

Jess.newbould@kirklees.gov.uk | 01484 221000 | www.kirklees.gov.uk