

TRANSFORMING IRELAND THROUGH THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Rediscovery Centre Strategic Plan 2022-2026



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Original Pencil Sketch Artwork Designed and Created for the Rediscovery Centre
by Natalija Mannapova-Zuta.

Foreword

The ongoing climate and biodiversity crises, combined with global pandemics and conflicts, demonstrates that rapid movement towards a circular economy and society - where all people and resources are valued - is needed now more than ever. This five year strategic plan sets out a pathway for the Rediscovery Centre to help steer that transition.

By providing lifelong learning for a sustainable and circular economy and demonstrating the possibilities that offers, the Rediscovery Centre can help create fair and lasting solutions to the social, environmental and economic challenges we face.

We have made clear choices about the future direction of the organisation, and how we plan to realise our ambition. We have also made decisions about the kind of organisation we want to be. This is based on contributions from our employees, our partners and our stakeholders and we are grateful to everyone who participated in this process.

Our new vision, mission and values reflect this and with our goals give us a clear path for the future.

Professor Anna Davies, Chairperson.

This five year strategic plan builds upon strong foundations of community education and public engagement. It commits to further developing robust advocacy structures and to using research and partnership to advance evidenced based change for an equitable transition to the Circular Economy.

The plan is the result of an in-depth strategic planning process and provides a high level roadmap of our agreed future direction and ambition. It commits to strengthening our research capacity and communications capability to amplify our collective voice and build on our ongoing digital transformation.

In creating a culture of excellence, we will go beyond organisational compliance to demonstrate best practice. One of our greatest strengths at the Rediscovery Centre is our dedicated staff and supporters. We will continue to invest in our valuable team to enable them to achieve their professional and personal goals, embracing all of the opportunities that working with the Rediscovery Centre offers.

This is an exciting time for the Rediscovery Centre. We are at the heart of a transformational shift in support towards a Circular Economy in Ireland and we look forward to the next five years of development with ambitious optimism for all that we will collectively achieve.

Together we will signpost the direction to a more sustainable future where all resources are valued and the well-being of our planet and its people are prioritised.

Dr Sarah Miller, CEO

Section 1

What We Stand For

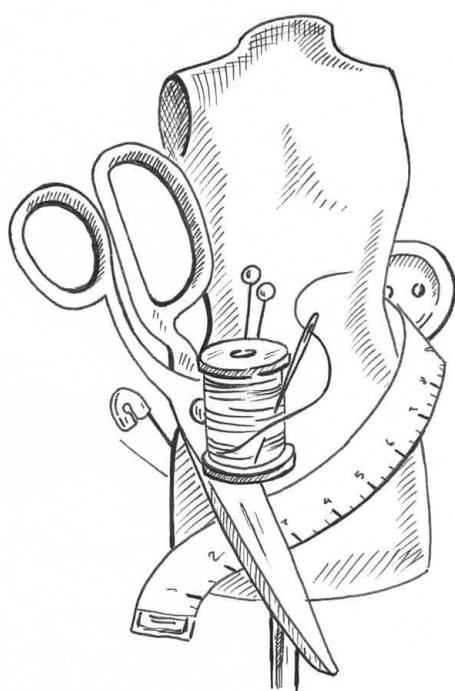
- We believe in working together to create fair and lasting solutions to the social, environmental and economic challenges we face.
- We believe in a world with no waste, where all resources are valued and our planet is regenerated.
- We believe that the structural drivers of resource use must be addressed as an urgent priority to secure our immediate future and to achieve long-term sustainable growth.
- We believe that with knowledge, and equality of opportunity, comes the power for people to create positive changes in their lives and their community and to break free from taking, making and wasting.

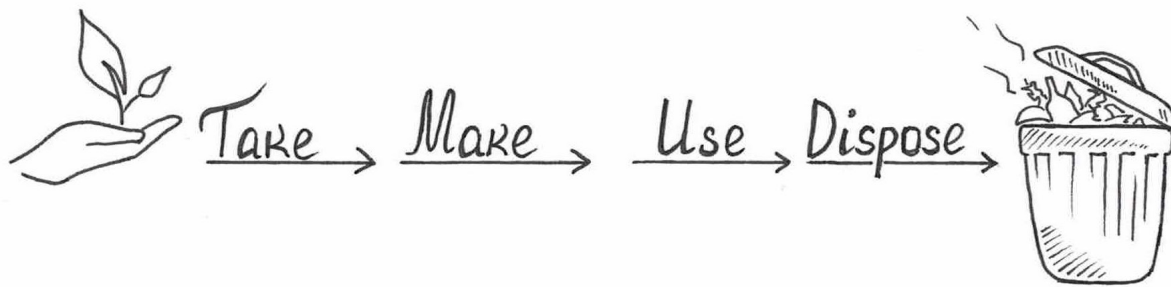
Vision

A society that is fair, inclusive and thrives within natural resource limits

Mission

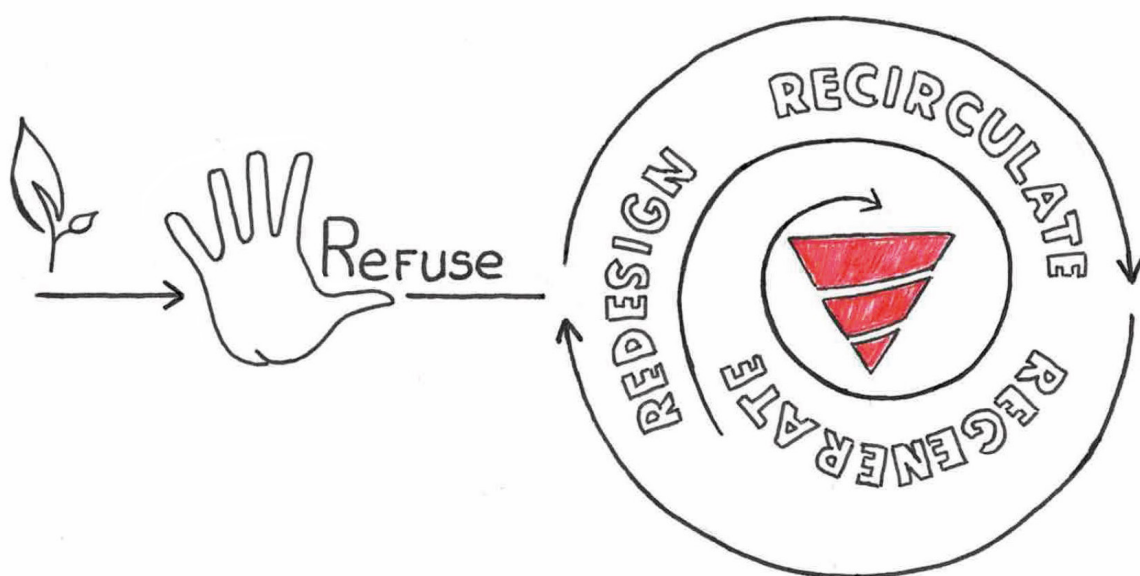
To lead Ireland's transition to a circular economy and sustainable future





Our current economic system is not circular, it is linear. In a linear economy, we take resources from nature to create products. These products are used and then thrown away. However, an economy that is based on *taking*, *making*, and *disposing* of products causes significant environmental problems. The way we live in Ireland and in most European countries is unsustainable, depleting the world's limited resources and creating ever more waste. If every human used as many resources as Europeans, we would need 2.6 Earths to support our population. Moreover, according to Earth Overshoot Day, if everyone used as many resources as the Irish currently do, this increases to 3.1 Earths. Realising the limits of our planet's resources, a new way of thinking has emerged: the circular economy.

The circular economy is inspired by nature, where the full value of all resources is respected and optimised. It aims to decouple economic growth from resource use and to create positive economic, social and environmental value for society. In a circular economy, the value of materials and resources is retained for as long as possible and the creation of waste and pollution is minimised or prevented entirely. A circular economy keeps products in use for as long as possible and avoids waste generation. This can be achieved through sustainable design principles, reuse, repair, remanufacturing, recycling and new business models, such as sharing, renting or offering products as a service.



Values

→ Sustainability

We implement and promote environmental, social, and economic practices that can be maintained long-term without compromising our environment or the ability of others to meet their needs.

→ Integrity

We live by what we say. We are transparent, honest, open and ethical in all that we do.

→ Force for Good

We pioneer creative solutions, support people to think differently about how we live and inspire bold action towards Ireland's transition to a more sustainable way of life.

→ Equality

We promote an inclusive circular economy, leaving no one behind, and ensure that social equality is delivered through the solutions we provide.

→ Excellence

We aim for excellence, professionalism and to be innovative leaders in the circular economy and sustainability.

→ Collaboration

We actively collaborate and foster collaboration internally and externally at all levels, within and across sectors. We value the input of all stakeholders, recognising the broad remit of the circular and social economy.



For the twenty-first century a far bigger goal is needed: meeting the human rights of every person within the means of our life-giving planet. - Kate Raworth



STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

OUR VISION

A society that is fair, inclusive and thrives within natural resource limits

OUR MISSION

To lead Ireland's transition to a circular economy and sustainable future

STRATEGIC GOALS



Goal 1 Educate

Advancing Lifelong Learning



Goal 2 Demonstrate

Enabling Action and Best Practice



Goal 3 Collaborate

Deepening the Movement



Goal 4 Advocate

Driving Evidence Based Policy



Goal 5 Thrive

Creating a culture of excellence

OUR APPROACHES



Innovation



Communication

OUR VALUES

Sustainability

Integrity

Force for Good

Equality

Excellence

Collaboration

Context

The transition to a circular economy is a global movement that will deliver environmental, social and economic agendas.

It is an essential component in delivering climate neutrality, with approximately 45% of global emissions associated with making and circulating food and products. Becoming more circular will tackle biodiversity loss, create sustainable growth, provide for inclusive jobs and support community resilience.

The last two years have seen momentum build significantly behind the circular economy movement. The European Circular Economy Action Plan 2.0, adopted in 2020 as a building block of the European Green Deal, sets in train a suite of initiatives along the entire lifecycle of products.

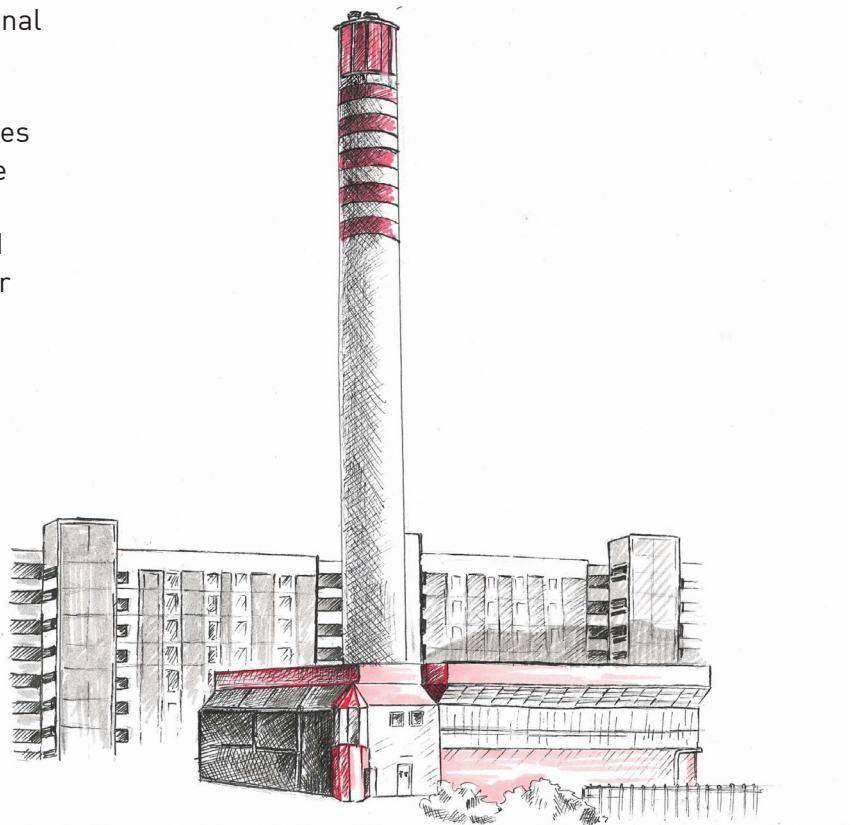
These initiatives and goals are reflected in Ireland's emerging policy framework, including the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (2019), the Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy (2021), the Environmental Protection Agency's Circular Economy Programme (2021) and the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy due in 2022. Circular economy goals are reflected in other sectoral policies including the Climate Action Plan 2021, the Rural Development Policy 2021-2025, the National Development Plan 2021-2030 and across food, industry, enterprise and other policies.

With these policies and plans, as well as the appointment of a Minister responsible for the Circular Economy, a dedicated Circular Economy unit in the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and a Whole of Government Circular Economy Working Group, now is a pivotal time for the circular and social economy in Ireland.

The Rediscovery Centre - Our Journey So Far

2004 – 2009

Built in the 1960s, to respond to Dublin's housing crisis, Ballymun was created to house up to 20,000 people. Located on the edge of the city without adequate community, health and recreational and social facilities, the new suburb experienced social, economic, and environmental issues. The Rediscovery Centre (RDC) was established in 2004 as a direct response to these issues and to the growing national and international concern in relation to the management of natural resources and waste.



Recognising that for the community to thrive physical regeneration had to be accompanied by social, economic and environmental development, the Rediscovery Centre set to work. Public education to grow community participation and to develop Ballymun as an example of Environmental Sustainability was core to the Centre's approach. Pilot projects demonstrating excellence in waste prevention, reuse and recycling began and the Centre became an accredited Discover Science Centre. Social Enterprises in furniture, fashion and paint were established contributing to the development of environmentally sustainable businesses and providing training and employment opportunities.

2010- 2015

The Rediscovery Centre grew, focusing on demonstrating excellence in reuse and waste prevention through pioneering research, entrepreneurial initiatives, green skills development and environmental education. Interactive citizen engagement increased in line with demand and the inaugural 'Let's Talk Science' festival was held. Rediscover Cycling, dedicated to building and reconditioning bicycles, was established and all four Social Enterprises saw high rates of progression to education or full-time employment. Community demonstration programmes operated from a newly-created community recycling centre growing awareness and inspire action. Annual increases in the total tonnage of waste diverted from disposal were achieved through the Rediscovery Centre's services and sales.

Central to the Rediscovery Centre's increased ability to drive innovation, with respect to the Circular Economy, were the European Commission supported WISER LIFE and ReNEW projects. Through investment in research, networking and policy influencing capacity the Rediscovery Centre became known as a unique and credible voice on the circular economy. Securing the Ballymun Boiler house as a '3D textbook' to promote sustainability and winning

the Green NGO of the Year Award in 2015 positioned the Rediscovery Centre as an eco-destination as well as a national education and demonstration centre for the circular economy.

2016- 2021

The opening of the repurposed Boiler House was a turning point enabling the Centre to centralise operations and to facilitate the development of a centre of excellence in reuse. With the support of the Community Services Programme the team grew in number. The combination of an expanded team and a bespoke headquarters enabled the centre to grow its in-person and online environmental education, training and events reaching just under 23,000 individuals in 2020. Securing funding from institutional donors and from commercial activities the Rediscovery Centre could provide services such as community employment and training free of charge.

A strategic partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency enabled the centre to expand its work and supported a major repositioning as the National Centre for the Circular Economy in Ireland. Recognising the centre's role as an advocate in Ireland and Europe on the circular economy, the research and policy department grew to facilitate research and analysis on priority areas. A Circular Economy Academy was also launched as a free, nationwide mentoring and support programme assisting social enterprises and community organisations to move towards sustainability and embrace the circular economy.

National Centre for the Circular Economy

As the National Centre for the Circular Economy, the Rediscovery Centre is leading the change from waste to resource in Ireland. We are committed to educating, demonstrating, and inspiring action that will lead Ireland's transition to a more sustainable way of living. We understand our remit as follows:

- We are a repository for information and guidance materials on the circular economy
- We create and disseminate knowledge and good practice
- We support innovation and pilot projects, bringing together the skills and expertise of artists, scientists, designers and craftspeople united in a common purpose of sustainability
- We develop educational resources and deliver lifelong learning for schools and communities
- We conduct research on policy and practice
- We maintain a watching brief on new developments in the sector
- We collaborate across sectors to deliver innovate, impactful solutions
- We participate in high level advisory groups and in policy platforms in Ireland and in Europe to advance the circular economy
- We develop and support best practice social enterprises demonstrating effective resource efficiency and delivering social outcomes through vocational training and skills building for the long-term unemployed.

Our Strengths

- We work to advance the circular economy to support positive economic, social and environmental change. People are at the core of our efforts, inclusion is our practice, and our methods of change are rooted in **equality and social justice**.
- We are committed to a **science-based approach**, translating evidence and research into tangible, everyday practices for more sustainable lives.
- We provide a **credible, independent voice** elevating advocacy as an organisational priority, believing in the need to intensify efforts to ensure that progress and momentum are built upon.
- We believe in the power of **lifelong learning** and we support people of all ages, building their knowledge, skills and capacity to reflect critically and affect change in their lives and communities.
- We use our expertise and creativity to **communicate compelling narratives**, bringing people along with us, counter-acting feelings of overwhelm and building the movement.
- We develop and use our Centre as a best-in-class **3D Textbook** to demonstrate innovative construction methods, sustainable resource use and a design that prioritises the needs of the wider environment and society
- We work at **multiple levels** and **cross sectorally** to bring about positive and lasting change

How We Create Change

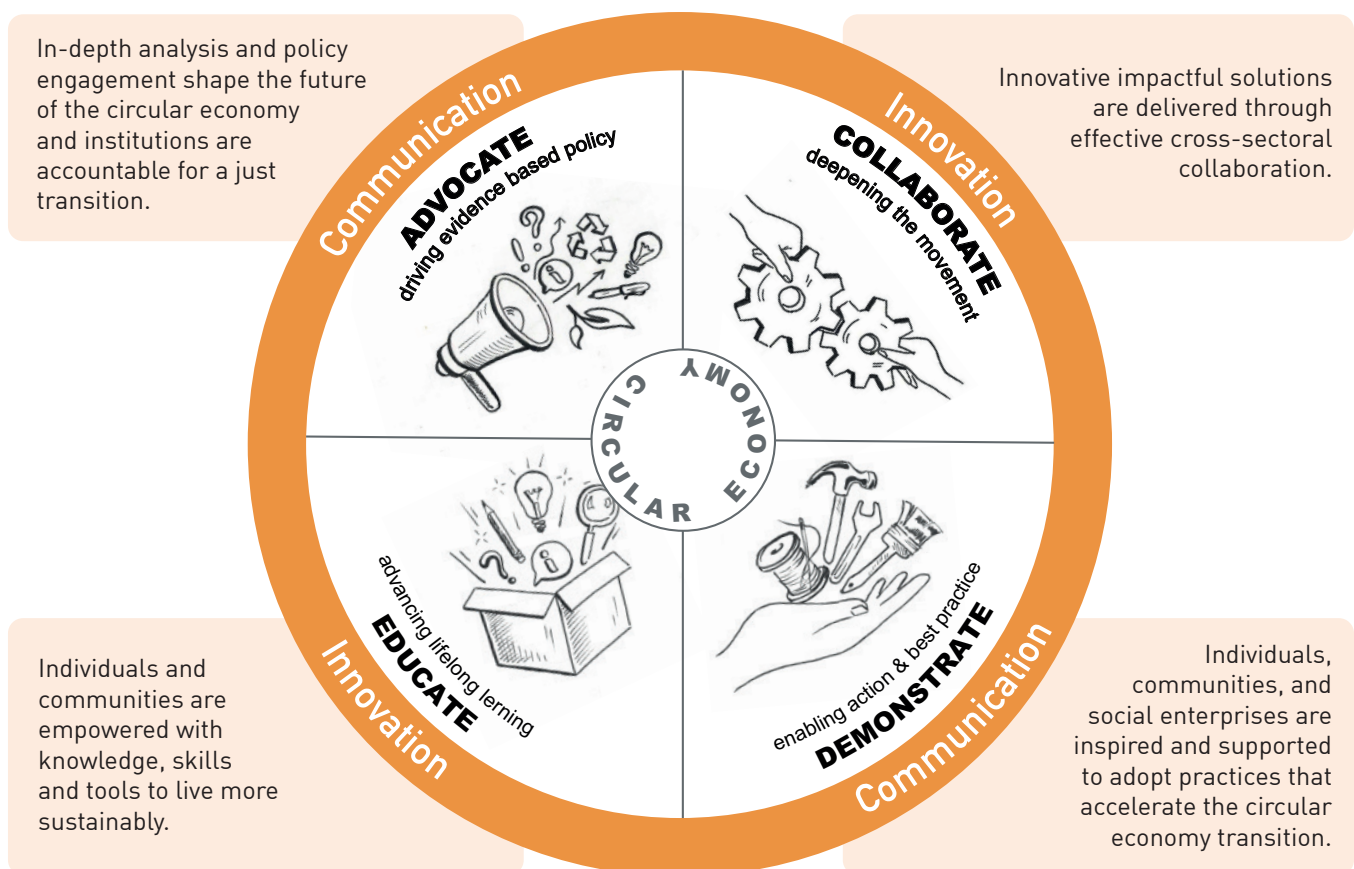
Our theory of change is shaped by our vision, our values and the following assumptions:

Transformative change is achieved by working with citizens, communities, stakeholders and institutions. We are stronger when we collaborate with others and in doing so, amplify evidence based work, and accelerate the transition to a circular economy.

A just transition to the Circular Economy and sustainable change requires a social movement. We are committed to supporting communities and social enterprises, and using our skills and expertise to ensure that they participate in and benefit from the circular economy.

We do this by:

- Creating momentum and focus on the circular economy in all that we do
- Empowering people and communities with knowledge, skills and tools to live more sustainably.
- Inspiring and supporting individuals, communities and social enterprises to adopt practices that accelerate the circular economy transition.
- Delivering impactful, innovative solutions for the circular economy through effective cross-sectoral collaboration.
- Shaping the future of the circular economy, through in-depth analysis and policy engagement, and advocating for a just transition.



Cross-Cutting Approaches

Innovation: We cultivate curiosity, creativity and take a human-centred approach to problem solving. We take responsible risks and recognise that permission to fail is critical for a culture of innovation.

Communication: We capture the attention of target audiences through quality content, compelling storytelling, and by facilitating conversations. A communications plan and digital roadmap will guide our approach to targeted, purposeful and impactful communication and support the achievement of our strategic vision.

Who does our work target?

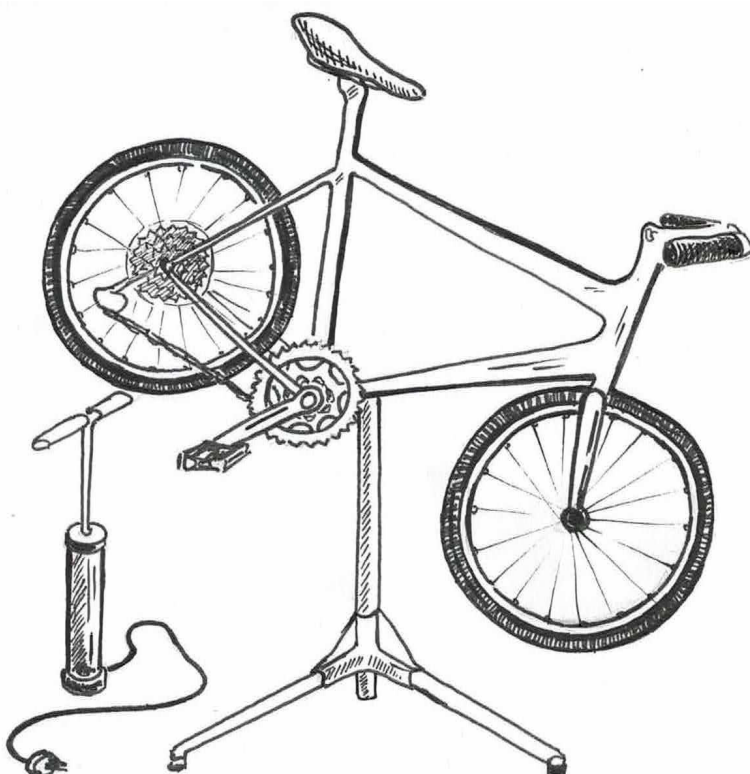
We take an inclusive approach and support people at all stages of their lives, through lifelong learning for the circular economy.

As a key demographic for change, and critical stakeholders for a just and sustainable future, we ensure that we effectively engage with children and youth through our education programme.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals principles we are committed to leaving no one behind. Our vocational training social enterprise programmes specifically target those who are long-term unemployed and distanced from the workplace recognising the challenges that they face and the value they bring.

We work with grassroots community groups, social innovators and social enterprises, and our Circular Economy Academy Partners recognising their crucial role in the transition to the circular economy.

We meet people where they are at recognising everyone's potential to make a positive circular impact. We work with people who have adopted circular practices in their daily lives as a key community and as multipliers. We reach out to new audiences, who are unaware of the circular economy, through our public engagement work.



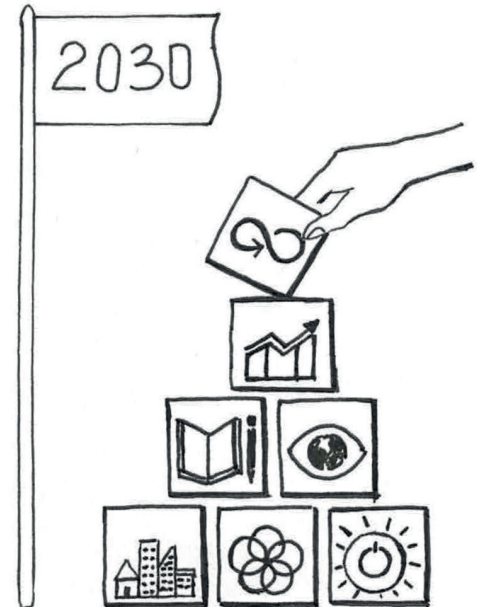
Section 2

Organisational Goals

The following section sets out the long-term outcome, specific objectives, core strategies and areas of growth and innovation for each of our five organisational goals.

More detailed indicators, deliverables and annual milestones will be documented and tracked through annual implementation plans.

Our work is aligned with and contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and its universal call for action to tackle climate change, end poverty and build a more sustainable and inclusive world by 2030. For Goals 1 to 4, we have identified the SDGs that resonate deeply with our purpose and strategy and where we can make the most positive contribution.



GOAL 1 EDUCATE

Advancing Lifelong Learning



Our Ambition



LONG TERM OUTCOME

Individuals and communities are empowered with knowledge, skills and tools to live more sustainably.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The transition to the circular economy requires all of us to think and behave differently. Education plays a vital role in ensuring that everyone is equipped with the knowledge and skills required to apply circular thinking in their lives. We provide lifelong learning in order to:

1. Deliver targeted Circular Economy Education, within the formal education sector, through:
 - Curriculum development
 - Continuous Professional Development for school leadership and staff
 - Content delivery for students
2. Improve pathways to the labour market for people distanced from the workplace through social enterprise based vocational education and skills training programmes.
3. Equip communities, through inclusive non-formal and informal education, with the knowledge, skills and tools to critically reflect on economic, social and environmental issues and to make informed decisions.

How we will achieve success



CORE STRATEGIES

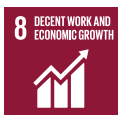
- Engage teacher education colleges to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to integrate the circular economy into their teaching once qualified.
- Actively work with the Department of Education and Curriculum Development Units, Junior Cycle for Teachers, and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), to ensure that the circular economy is embedded within the curriculum.
- Develop and deliver Continuous Professional Development Modules for school leadership and teachers.
- Develop and deliver interactive and experiential materials and workshops at primary and post-primary level, inclusive of DEIS, disadvantaged and additional needs schools, to facilitate critical thinking, understanding and skills development.
- Provide comprehensive skills training for people distanced from the workplace.
- Deliver modules on the circular economy, personal development and leadership skills to vocational education participants.
- Engage in communal education and public engagement, in geographic areas and/or communities of interest, towards empowerment and informed decision-making.

GROWTH AND INNOVATION

- Undertake research and analysis to ensure that we remain at the forefront of Circular Economy education
- Work with the National Committee for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
- Develop regional structures to host education modules and to roll out education programmes.
- Explore the feasibility of a Circular Economy mechanism for schools such the Green Flag Award in schools
- Development of accreditation standards through reuse social enterprises such as Rediscover Cycling.
- Research the future skills, training and career pathways required for the circular economy.

GOAL 2 DEMONSTRATE

Enabling Action and Best Practice



Our Ambition



LONG TERM OUTCOME

Individuals, communities, and social enterprises are inspired and supported to adopt practices that accelerate the circular economy transition.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

We demonstrate what is possible and create spaces and opportunities for everybody to participate and to gain the skills they need to support the transition to, and benefit from, the circular economy. We are a showcase the Circular Economy in order to:

1. Inspire action for a more sustainable future through the development and use of the RDC as a 3D Textbook comprising innovative construction methods, sustainable resource use and a design that prioritises the needs of the wider environment and society.
2. Strengthen individuals and communities ability to adopt circular practices by providing engaging, practical capacity building supports.
3. Advance best practice through research and innovation, circular social enterprise development and regional demonstration hubs.

How we will achieve success



CORE STRATEGIES

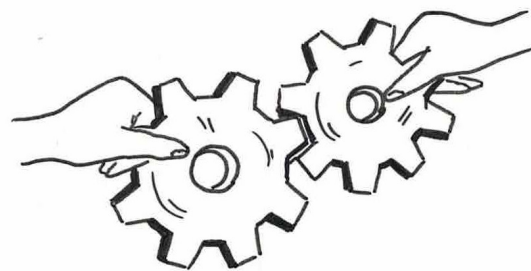
- Use the Rediscovery Centre boiler house as a state-of-the-art ecological building to demonstrate best practice building design, construction and operation, and as a tool to inspire action with respect to resource management and efficiency.
- Social mobilisation and citizen engagement to enable action through tours, events, exhibitions and practical demonstrations.
- Provision of practical capacity building supports, such as skills building workshops, master classes and ask the experts sessions, to enable participants to adopt CE practices.
- Demonstrate circular economy best practice through social enterprises, salvaging resources for use in the production of newly designed, restored, or upcycled eco-products.
- Establish best practice, and investigate circular economy opportunities through action research and innovation.
- Provide guidance and support to community based initiatives to advance the circular economy and more sustainable living.
- Provide nationwide support to social enterprises wishing to adopt and embrace Circular Economy business models.

GROWTH AND INNOVATION

- Regional Hub feasibility study
- Develop the Circular Economy Academy and continuity planning
- New Social Enterprise development, such as a surplus food initiative

GOAL 3 COLLABORATE

Deepening the Movement



Our Ambition



LONG TERM OUTCOME

Innovative impactful solutions for the circular economy are delivered through effective cross-sectoral collaboration

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Collaboration is a key factor in the transition to a resilient, just and circular economy. We are committed to joining with other organisations and networks in order to:

1. Cultivate key partnerships and initiatives to develop innovative solutions to further evolve the circular economy.
2. Utilise strategic partnerships, existing and emerging networks to leverage shared policy objectives in line with national targets.
3. Advance leading-edge circular economy research and disseminate findings so that insights are maximised and inform practice.

How we will achieve success



CORE STRATEGIES

- Engage in strategic partnerships to advance shared objectives.
- Partner with civil society, public authorities, industry and academia, to develop best practice solutions.
- Leverage existing and new networks to develop and communicate Circular Economy campaigns.
- Undertake collaborative research with Irish and European Partners.
- Leverage funding to support Circular Economy research.
- Expand research capacity and develop a research strategy to contribute to the evidence base for the Circular Economy, and to address research gaps related to both policy and practice.

GROWTH AND INNOVATION

- Collaborate to develop a national portal and movement towards Ireland's Circular Economy transition.
- In partnership with EMRWMP0, Dublin City Council and CIRCULÉIRE deliver Circular Economy Hotspot Dublin 2023 as a hub of knowledge exchange, capacity building and learning.
- Lead and grow the Paint Reuse Network to reduce paint waste in Ireland.

GOAL 4 ADVOCATE

Driving Evidence Based Policy



Our Ambition



LONG TERM OUTCOME

In-depth analysis and policy engagement shape the future of the circular economy and institutions are accountable for a just transition.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

To create transformative and lasting change, the circular economy needs to be advanced as a policy priority and the structural drivers of resource use addressed. We advocate in order to:

1. Provide leadership as a consistent and credible voice for a just transition to the circular economy
2. Ensure that evidence, insight, and practical experience informs policy development and implementation.

How we will achieve success



CORE STRATEGIES

- Develop in-depth analysis, research, policy briefs, reports and opinion pieces relating to the Circular Economy.
- Communicate Circular Economy Policy and Practice through diverse channels to the public and to policy makers.
- Stimulate the debate on the circular economy and sustainability through strategic dialogue and public campaigns.
- Support the implementation and effectiveness of relevant policies for the circular economy, and policy coherence, for a just transition.
- Participate in high level coordination and advisory groups shaping and promoting Circular Economy work at national and regional levels.

GROWTH AND INNOVATION

- Leverage market research results to develop impactful public campaigns.
- Implement DIRECT Life to coordinate and amplify digital advocacy and generate feedback.
- Invest in increased research and policy capacity.
- Create a research and policy advocacy strategy that supports structural change to make the circular economy more accessible, affordable, viable and attractive.

GOAL 5 THRIVE

Creating a culture of excellence



Our Ambition



LONG TERM OUTCOME

A culture of excellence is created by investing in staff, innovation and ensuring the efficient and effective management of resources.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

For our organisation to thrive and achieve its mission, we will cultivate a culture of excellence that supports resilience and agility. We will invest in our organisation in order to:

1. Attract and retain skilled, motivated, and empowered staff.

RDC will attract, develop and retain highly motivated and skilled staff. We will provide opportunities for staff development. We will create a common understanding of our vision ensuring that all RDC staff know how they contribute to its achievement and that their work is meaningful and significant.

2. Innovate and deliver through highly collaborative teams.

We are at our best when we combine our talents and work together towards a common goal. We deliver more creative, impactful solutions for the circular economy and generate learning, positive energy and drive within the organisation. RDC will invest in collaborative ways of working as an organisational approach to foster innovation and as a key means to deliver our strategy.

3. Be an efficient and effective organisation which gets the best value from our resources.

RDC will have best in class systems and facilities that support improved operational efficiency. We will use data driven decision making and value for money to improve performance and outcomes.

How we will achieve success



CORE STRATEGIES

- Actively promote staff development and mobility to ensure a skilled and motivated workforce.
- Embed effective leadership behaviours through our daily interactions, management routines and support staff to build the skills and competencies essential to achieving our strategic goals.
- Deepen our culture of collaborative working, knowledge-sharing, and candour about successes and failures enabling us to continually learn and improve and hold each other to account for our commitments to ourselves and to our stakeholders.
- Improve operational efficiency and control by targeted investments in technology, skills and revision of processes.
- Ensuring that legal and compliance requirements are clearly understood and met and that required statutory reporting and compliance records are submitted
- Maintain a robust governance infrastructure through the development, implementation and systematic revision of a suite of policies, procedures and reporting mechanisms.

GROWTH AND INNOVATION

- Develop and roll out a new digital strategy for the organisation
- Undertake a capital project to develop the RDC
- Strive for excellence through benchmarking, sectoral standards and awards

Section 3

A Living Plan

'Transforming Ireland through the Circular Economy' provides the Rediscovery Centre with a clear roadmap designed to reach our vision. To support the successful implementation of the plan we will communicate and connect the strategy to each teams' core purpose internally and disseminate the plan to our stakeholders as well as to the wider public via our website and social media channels.

We will cascade the strategy by translating it into clear, practical actions within annual work plans throughout the organisation. We will continue to communicate and to cascade the strategy over the five year timeframe to ensure that it connects with and motivates all staff, and that it underpins our collaboration with stakeholders and partners.

As innovation is an ongoing process, new areas of innovation and growth will be identified on a rolling basis as the plan progresses.

Measuring Our Impact

Managing and measuring performance is essential in order to track the delivery of results and to ensure that we are accountable to all stakeholders. We are committed to reviewing and evaluating the implementation and impact of our strategy. We will develop solid systems and reporting mechanisms to measure the plan's performance, and to generate real-time insights to support the achievement of the plan's goals.

Meaningful measures, capable of being tracked periodically, will be developed and will feed into the strategies performance processes. In addition to ongoing performance management, an annual review will be undertaken, in addition to substantive mid-term and endline evaluations.

