



Circular Economy Conference 2025

The Driving Force for Ireland's
Move to a Circular Economy

**Wednesday,
September 24, 2025**

#LetsGetCircular

08:30 – 09:30 **Registration and Tea/Coffee**

Session 1 – Setting the Scene
Chair: David Flynn, Director of the Office of Environmental Sustainability, EPA

09:30 – 09:40	Welcome	<u>Laura Burke</u> , Director General, Environmental Protection Agency
09:40 – 09:55	Ministerial Address	Minister Alan Dillon , Minister of State at the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment with special responsibility for Circular Economy
09:55 – 10:50	Roundtable Discussion	Roundtable discussion moderated by the chair with three senior public sector policy representatives – <u>Martina Hennessy</u> (Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment), <u>Joseph Cummins</u> (Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment) and <u>Heidi Redmond</u> (Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland)
10:50 – 11:00	Local circular solutions – An Post	<u>Owen Keogh</u> , Head of Sustainability, An Post

11:00 - 11:30 **Coffee Break**

Session 2 – Producer Responsibility in Priority Sectors
Chair: Dr Geraldine Brennan, Director of Circular Economy Innovation at Irish Manufacturing Research

11:30 – 11:45	Plastics	<u>Katharina Schlegel Thummer</u> , Council Director, Circularity and End-of-Life, Plastics Europe
11:45 – 12:00	Product life extension processes	<u>David Fitzsimons</u> , Director, European Remanufacturing Council
12:00 – 12:15	WEEE	Elizabeth O'Reilly, Head of Environmental Compliance, WEEE Ireland
12:15 – 12:25	Local circular solutions	<u>Rebecca Wilson</u> , Director of Education, Research and Policy, Rediscovery Centre
12:25 – 12:50	Q&A	Moderated by chair

12:50 – 14:00 **Lunch Break**

Session 3 – Markets & Consumption
Chair: Warren Phelan, Programme Manager, Circular Economy Programme, EPA

14:00 – 14:15	EU Circular Economy Act	Dr <u>Florian Flachenecker</u> , Taskforce Leader on the Circular Economy Act, DG ENV
14:15 – 14:30	Circularity in textiles retail	<u>Lynne Walker</u> , Primark
14:30 – 14:45	Social and environmental impacts of overconsumption	<u>Dr Orla Kelly</u> , Associate Professor in Social Policy, UCD
14:45 – 14:55	Local circular solutions	<u>Seán McCabe</u> , Head of Climate Justice & Sustainability, Bohemian FC
14:55 – 15:25	Q&A	Moderated by chair
5:25 – 15:30		Closing remarks

Setting the Scene

Minister Alan Dillon, Minister of State at the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment

with special responsibility for the Circular Economy. Alan Dillon TD is Minister of State at the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment with special responsibility for the Circular Economy and Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment with special responsibility for Employment, Small Business and Retail.

He previously served as Minister of State at the Department of Housing with responsibility for Planning and Local Government. Before entering political life, Alan built a successful career in the multinational life sciences sector, specialising in biologics and pharmaceutical drug manufacturing and medical devices.

He is a graduate of Maynooth University with a double honours Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Mathematics and Biology, holds a Master of Science degree in Pharmaceutical Science from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and earned a Postgraduate Diploma in Education from the University of Galway.

In addition to his political and professional achievements, Alan had a distinguished sporting career, representing Mayo as a senior footballer for 15 years. He captained the team and earned two GAA All-Star awards.



Laura Burke, Director General of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Laura was appointed in 2011 and served as a Director within the EPA since 2004.

As Director General she has the responsibility to lead and strategically manage the EPA. Laura was the Chair of the European Environment Agency (EEA) Management Board from 2017 to 2023. Laura is a member of the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) and a member of the High Level Implementation Committee of 'Food Vision 2030', the Irish Agri-Food Sector Strategy. Prior to joining the EPA, she worked in the private sector. Laura is a graduate chemical engineer of University College Dublin (UCD), holds an MSc from Trinity College, Dublin, is a Fellow and is President of Engineers Ireland and is a Chartered Director. In 2025 Laura was appointed an Adjunct Full Professor in University College Dublin.

She is a member of the Board of Genio CLG. In 2016 Laura was awarded the UCD Engineering Graduates Association (EGA) Distinguished Graduate Award.



Martina Hennessy, Assistant Secretary Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency, DCEE

Martina Hennessy is the Assistant Secretary for Circular Economy & Resource Efficiency in the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

Martina joined DCEE in 2019 and has led the development of policy in a number of areas since then, including petroleum, offshore renewable energy and climate. She also served as a temporary ordinary board member of An Bord Pleanála during this period.

Martina joined the civil service in 2016 and has experience of working in both public and private sectors prior to this.



Heidi Redmond, Department for the Economy Northern Ireland

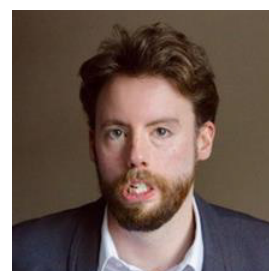
Heidi has a background in sustainable development and project management. Since 2020 she has applied her knowledge, skills and passion to developing Northern Ireland's first Circular Economy Strategy. Acting as an adviser to the Department for the Economy she has been involved in assembling the evidence base and engaging stakeholders to inform and shape the strategy. She is also a board member of Northern Ireland Reuse and Repair Network (NIRN), which facilitated Northern Ireland's first repair week earlier this year.



Joseph Cummins, Head of Climate Action and Energy Policy Unit, DETE

Joseph is Head of the Climate Action and Energy Policy Unit in the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment.

His team implements the Government's Climate Action Plan objectives as they relate to enterprise and industry, working closely with Enterprise Ireland, the IDA and the SEAI. He represents the Department and enterprise stakeholders in many forums, including the Heat and Built Environment Taskforce.



Joseph's previous experience includes roles at IDA Ireland and the Department of Finance.

Owen Keogh, Head of Sustainability, An Post

Owen joined An Post in 2025 as Head of Sustainability and to lead the sustainability strategy for the national postal service.

Prior to joining An Post, Owen was Head of Sustainability for Musgrave Group and its brands. Owen joins An Post with a wealth of sustainability experience in the retail sector in both Ireland and the UK having previously represented Lidl, Bord Bia and Sainsbury's.



Owen has a background in agriculture and studied food business in UCD, an MAgSc in Agricultural Innovation Support and a MSc in Business Sustainability from UCD Smurfit Business School.

Producer Responsibility in Priority Sectors

Katharina Schlegel Thummer, Council Director, Circularity and End-of-Life, Plastics Europe

Dr. Katharina Schlegel Thummer joined Plastics Europe as Circularity Director in December 2021, being responsible for circularity and End-of Life of plastics, Plastics Europe's Fact & Figures as well as the work on Global initiatives.

Prior to Plastics Europe, she has been active in different functions in research and market development at BASF and Bayer CropScience.



David Fitzsimons, Director, European Remanufacturing Council

David Fitzsimons is based in Brussels where he represents the remanufacturing sector. A member of the new European Ecodesign Forum, a member of the EU Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform and advisor to several R&D projects funded through Horizon, he is contributing to the WBCSD CTI metrics and is aiming to shape the Circular Economy Act to promote new business opportunities for remanufacturers.



“Remanufacturing will be a €100 billion sector in Europe by 2030. The business opportunities will be found not only by identifying the products suitable for value retention processes but also in the digital infrastructure around them...Ireland is well placed to discover and develop these services”

Elizabeth O'Reilly, Head of Environmental Compliance, WEEE Ireland

Elizabeth O'Reilly is Head of Environmental Compliance at WEEE Ireland, and leads on Circular Economy, policy engagement and RD&I for the Scheme.



She has developed with her team, the Membership base of WEEE Ireland to over 1400 Producers since its start up in 2005, and maintains the Scheme's reporting obligations and other regulatory and approval criteria. Her core work focuses on developing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) solutions on behalf of the Irish electrical and battery industry, and representing them on the National Waste Advisory, Circular Economy and Batteries Groups and in European partnerships at the WEEE Forum, Eucobat, PV Cycle and PRONEXA.

She is a Chartered Environmentalist and Irish Centre Council Member of the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM).

Rebecca Wilson, Director of Research, Policy, and Education, Rediscovery Centre

Rebecca Wilson is Director of Research, Policy, and Education at the Rediscovery Centre, Ireland's National Centre for the Circular Economy. She previously worked at Research Ireland, where she played a pivotal role in strengthening the national research landscape through strategic public engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and evidence-informed policy development.



Rebecca has led flagship national initiatives including Science Week and Creating Our Future, building strong connections between researchers, policymakers, industry, and communities to ensure research delivers meaningful societal impact.

Passionate about making complex ideas accessible and relevant, she has a proven track record of translating research insights into actionable policy recommendations. In her current role, Rebecca applies this expertise to advancing sustainability goals, fostering innovation, and supporting Ireland's transition to a more resource-efficient, circular economy.

She holds an MSc in Strategic Management and a BSc in Marketing, Innovation, and Technology.

Markets & Consumption

Dr Florian Flachenecker, Taskforce Leader on the Circular Economy Act, DG ENV

Florian Flachenecker is Taskforce Leader for the Circular Economy Act in the Directorate-General for Environment at the European Commission. Florian is also an Honorary Lecturer in environmental economics at University College London.

Previously, he worked in the Recovery and Resilience Taskforce that directly reports to Commission President Ursula VON DER LEYEN on supporting green investments under the €723 billion Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Florian started his career in the Commission at the Joint Research Centre researching the socio-economic effects of environmental innovations in the EU. Before joining the Commission, Florian was an Economist at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developing and harmonising environmental data and policies.

Florian holds a PhD in Economics from University College London, having researched the climate and competitiveness impacts of the circular economy, a MA in Economics from the College of Europe and a BSc in Economics from the University of Mannheim.

Lynne Walker, Primark

As Director of Primark Cares, Lynne Walker is responsible for embedding and implementing Primark's sustainability strategy across the global business and by working with the company's supply chain partners. Launched in September 2021, Primark Cares commits the company to change the way it sources and makes its products, reduce its environmental footprint and improve the lives of workers in its global supply chain by 2030. With a background in buying, Lynne has held several senior positions at Primark and held the global role of Menswear Trading Director for eight years. Before Primark, Lynne spent 16 years working in Next Retail where she held several senior roles within Buying across Men's, Women's, Children's, and Home. Lynne holds a BA honours in Fashion Design from Northumbria University. Lynne sits on the Fashion Advisory Board of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and The Textiles 2030 Advisory Group.

Dr Orla Kelly, Associate Professor in Social Policy, UCD

Dr. Orla Kelly is an assistant professor of Social Policy at the University College Dublin. Her research focuses on the social drivers and responses to climate change, and she is particularly interested in understanding pathways to sustainable human well-being and eco-social policies.

Dr Kelly is part of the international academic research team investigating the economic, social, and environmental impacts of reduced worktime trials, led by the 4-day Week Global campaign, and she is a founding member of the Worktime Reduction Research Network (WTR-RN).

Kelly holds a PhD in environmental law, an LLM in International Human Rights Law, and an MSc in International Business. She previously worked as a Research Associate (2010-2015) and a Research Fellow (2015-2020) at the FXB Centre for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University.

Her research has been published in academic journals such as Nature Human Behaviour, Social Forces, and Sustainability Science.

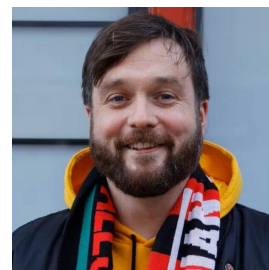


Seán McCabe, Head of Climate Justice & Sustainability, Bohemian FC

With over 18 years in fields related to climate justice, Seán McCabe's work combines grassroots action with international advocacy to address injustice and marginalisation through climate action.

He has worked to inform the development of multilateral agreements with the Mary Robinson Foundation, enhance environmental protections with the Sierra Leone EPA, promote children's environmental rights with UNICEF and the UNCRC, and develop the community-led climate strategy, "The People's Transition", with TASC and FEPS.

At Bohemian Football Club, he has built a team dedicated to developing inclusive and cooperative climate solutions that can be scaled through world football.



Chairs

David Flynn, Director, Office of Environmental Sustainability, EPA

David Flynn joined the EPA Board in October 2023 and is the Director of the Office of Environmental Sustainability.

David has responsibility for the Circular Economy, Environmental Licensing and Carbon Emissions Trading and has over twenty years of experience in environmental science and protection.

He was a Principal Adviser in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage & also previously worked as Licensing Programme Manager and as Enforcement Programme Manager with the EPA.

David holds a Bachelor of Science in environmental science, Master of Science, and an MBA from UCD.



Warren Phelan, Programme Manager, Circular Economy Programme, EPA

Warren Phelan is Programme Manager of the EPA's Circular Economy Programme. Warren is a Chartered Civil Engineer and Chartered Waste Manager and spent over 20 years working in the waste and resources industry before joining the EPA in 2022 to lead the Circular Economy Programme.

Warren has overall responsibility for the programme's activities which include circular economy and waste statistical reporting, green public procurement, food waste prevention, reuse and repair, circular construction, national hazardous waste management plan, end of waste, by-products and waste sector licensing.

In his current role, Warren chairs the National Hazardous Waste Plan Working Group, the National Waste Data Network Group and the National Reuse and Repair Network.



Dr Geraldine Brennan, Director of Circular Economy Innovation, Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR)

Dr Brennan leads the Circular Economy Innovation Unit at Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR) an Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland supported Technology Centre with responsibility for accelerating the growth and development of IMR's portfolio of translational circular economy RD&I projects.

Notably, Geraldine is the co-founder and strategic lead of CIRCULÉIRE Ireland's first cross-sectoral industry-led public-private partnership dedicated to scaling circular manufacturing and circular innovation established in 2020 and led by IMR. She is also active in international standards development and currently serving as the chairperson of the NSAI national mirror committee for international Circular Economy standards development.

Dr Brennan is a nationally and internationally recognized circular economy expert and leader with >15 years of multi-sectoral experience working horizontally and laterally across applied industrial research, sustainability consulting, advertising and communications..

