

#CEweekLDN



Webinar: Circular Economy in the Commonwealth: the role of cities

during the [Circular Economy Week London](#)
13.00-14.30 BST Thursday 04th June 2020

Partners: Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network, the London Waste and Recycling Board and Bloomsbury Institute



Context

In 2019 Circular Economy Week London saw the first dialogue linking developments in London to the wider Commonwealth by bringing together several stakeholders including the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBWN), the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) and the London Waste and Recycling Board.

Key messages from last year included harnessing the untapped potential for much more collaboration across the Commonwealth on the circular economy with municipal authorities, social entrepreneurs (of men and women in parity) and higher education (of small and larger institutions) playing an important role as catalysts and communicators in mobilising others and tracking progress. With the UK as the current Commonwealth Chair-in-Office, the vision for Circular Economy Weeks in each Commonwealth Region within 5 years (ie. by 2024) was put forward around which to broker Commonwealth collaborations, deepen and share knowledge, build connections and focus on collective and accelerating action.

There is impetus here which can be leveraged. The London Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2018 resulted in the [Blue Charter](#), an agreement by all 54 Commonwealth countries to actively co-operate to solve ocean-related problems and meet commitments for sustainable ocean development in the most international agreement of its kind to date.

The [Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Network](#), convened by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum which last met in Kigali, Rwanda in 2018, enables Commonwealth cities and its city/municipal members in particular, to come together to look at key issues relating to effective urban management, namely; devolution and governance at the city/municipal level; urban trade, economic development and investment; technology for development; and creating inclusive and resilient cities in line with SDG11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable).

Known for its creativity and innovation, London is home to some of the most exciting developments in the emerging 'circular economy'. The capital is becoming a hot bed of opportunity for entrepreneurs - including from the Commonwealth diaspora from Asia, Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific - and established businesses creating value through better management of resources and new approaches to product design, manufacturing and services. Current issues in relation to the design, production and consumption of fashion and textiles continue to grow.

To all this COVID-19 and an emerging re/depression now provides a challenging and uncharted backdrop. Can the circular economy continue to grow during a pandemic? Reusable or second-hand items are unlikely to spread the novel coronavirus, if they are washed or disinfected in between uses. However new items come with an aura of cleanliness, while reusable and second-hand goods often fight the perception of being unsanitary. The key to encouraging reuse at a time when coronavirus infection numbers are rising might be recognizing that neither stereotype is true.

Though it is early days, people are starting to rethink their consumption patterns as access to goods and services is becoming more difficult. Trends and conversations indicate that we are now questioning what we really need; stopping to assess and consider what we buy and how we buy it, as circumstances mean old purchase habits and consumption without consideration is no longer a given even if people may be acting now more out of scarcity and necessity. The green and sustainable trend has been slowly gaining traction across the globe, but the forced change in consumption this virus might inflict could accelerate a change in business operations and production to help them cope with a slowing in trade and increasing difficulties in waste management. Regardless of how long the coronavirus epidemic lasts, the problems of environmental degradation, climate change, and plastic pollution will still be with us when it ends. The UN Agenda 2030 involving the SDGs is also now less than a decade away.

The focus of Circular Economy Week London in 2020 is on how cities are harnessing circular economy principles to reduce consumption-based carbon emissions in order to combat the climate emergency. The Commonwealth #CEweekLDN event will act as a showcase and celebration of the work being done to accelerate cities' transition to a low-carbon circular economy in London and other Commonwealth cities. It will aim to bring together policy makers, thinkers and practitioners from the public and private sector, financiers and marketeers as a platform for building more resilient, resource-efficient cities.

It will also aim to drive further awareness, participation, collaboration and action in measurably more Commonwealth cities each year in an annual event and link into discussions at key Commonwealth fora including Heads of Government Meetings and the Commonwealth Local Government Conference. It will also act as a bridge to [CLGF](#)'s work on sustainable urbanisation through a series of thematic webinars being planned for the original CHOGM week in late June 2020 and CBWN's [new digital platform](#) for connecting, capacity-building and facilitating commerce for women in business across the Commonwealth.

Agenda

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| 13.00-13.15 | Welcome and opening keynote |
| 13.15-13.45 | Panel discussion involving contributions from each Commonwealth region: Europe, Africa, Americas, Asia and Pacific |
| 13.45-14.20 | Discussion |
| 14.20-14.30 | Close and next steps |