CIWM

Circular Economy Institute

Stewardship

A circular economy vision 2050 and the role of the resources and waste sector



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The 2050 vision in one page

The United Kingdom has built a capable waste system, it works at moving, treating and to some extent recycling waste. By 2050, it must have become something more: a circular economy where stewardship becomes its central tenet, where materials, products and natural resources are treated as assets to be cared for, circulated and renewed.

In that future, prosperity is no longer coupled to ever-rising material consumption and waste. People can live well without carrying the burden of needless ownership, premature failure or confusing choices. Products are designed to last, adapt and return. Buildings are banks of recoverable components. Food and biological materials replenish soils and nature. Manufacturers remain connected to what they place on the market. Local places have the capability to repair, share, reuse and recover value. Materials return to industry and are trusted, traceable and competitive.

The resources and waste profession has changed with the system. Its success is measured by the stewardship of resources and the value it helps society retain. It is an expert partner in design, investment, infrastructure, behaviour, data and the fair management of transition. Residual waste still exists, but it is smaller, more predictable and safely managed within a system designed to prevent it.

↗ **The organising principle of stewardship and value is simple: Product before component; Component before material; Material before energy; Disposal only when higher-value options are genuinely exhausted.**

This is not a forecast, and it is not an implementation plan. It is a shared vision and direction, shaped by interviews across the system, tested against four contrasting scenarios, and informed lightly by the thinking of organisations working on circularity, resource resilience and operational delivery.

The four scenarios make the choice clear. Political retreat and resource pressure are credible risks and will cap the opportunity of change. A smarter version of today is possible, but insufficient. A four-nation fully circular future stretches our ambition but can underplay the realities of transition. The preferred future is therefore ambitious and practical: a system transformation through global stewardship that reduces demand, preserves value and builds the capacity to adapt.

By 2050, the question asked of every product, service, place and system will be:

↗ **Are we meeting people's needs while using fewer virgin resources, preserving more value and creating less harm?**

That question shifts attention from managing the consequences of waste and consumption to shaping their causes. It also provides a durable test for policy, investment and professional practice, whatever combination of technologies, institutions and business models emerges.



Introduction: A future worth building

By 2050, a child born today should be entering adulthood in a country that can provide a good life whilst protecting the resources that make that life possible.

That is the promise at the heart of this vision. It is not simply a promise to collect more, recycle more or dispose of waste more safely (or more efficiently), important though those things remain. It is a promise to change the relationship between prosperity and resources. We will build an economy that creates value without depending on a constant flow of new materials, reduce ecosystem damage and develop a society in which better choices are affordable and available to everyone. This is particularly important as we transition from a fossil fuel linear economy to a metals and minerals economy.

Our approach starts with a simple recognition: the things called waste are rarely without value. They contain materials extracted from nature, energy used in manufacture, the skill of the people who made them and the carbon emitted along the way. When a product is discarded too soon, all that value is diminished. When it is maintained, repaired, shared, adapted or remade, more of that value remains in service: economic, social and environmental.

This vision aims to describe what the world should look like, when that way of thinking is normal: What the resources and waste sector should look like, and what is needed to get it there? It asks us to design an economy around continuation, care, stewardship and renewal rather than rapid replacement and consumption. It gives manufacturers and brands a continuing relationship with what they place on the market. It gives places the means to keep resources useful locally. It allows the resources and waste sector to apply its practical knowledge before waste is created and manage what remains. **Above all, it makes stewardship an ordinary feature of good business, good government and everyday life.**



A stronger economy

A circular economy that centres around stewardship is more productive because it wastes less of what the country has already paid to extract, make and move. Businesses are less exposed to volatile global material markets. Manufacturers can draw on dependable supplies of high-quality secondary resources. Products earn value through performance, maintenance, upgrade and repeated use, not only through the sale of replacements.

This creates room for innovation and worthwhile work. Repair, re-manufacture, reverse logistics, materials science, digital traceability and circular design become sources of skills and competitive advantage. Investment has a clearer long-term direction. Local and regional economies retain more value rather than paying repeatedly for materials that quickly pass through them.

It is not an economy that makes or consumes nothing. It is an economy that gets much more benefit from what it makes, what it uses, that understands where it is vulnerable and builds resilience by keeping products, components and materials in productive circulation.

A recovering ecosystem

Every tonne of material has a place of origin. Reducing demand for virgin resources means less pressure on landscapes, habitats, water and climate, both in the UK and overseas. Keeping products useful preserves the energy and carbon already embodied within them. Better biological cycles return safe nutrients and organic matter to soil and help restore the health of living systems.

The ambition reaches beyond doing less harm. Stewardship connects resource decisions to the recovery of nature. It asks whether the way we design, source, use and return materials leaves soils, water, biodiversity and the climate more capable of supporting life. Nature is no longer treated as an endless store of inputs and a silent recipient of waste, but as the living foundation of the economy.

Better lives

For people, the vision means products that work for longer, can be repaired and do not create a hidden penalty for those who cannot afford to replace them. It means clear services and return routes, less confusion and fewer demands for perfect consumer behaviour. It means access to the benefit a product provides, without ownership always being the only or best route.

It also means communities with useful local infrastructure, skills and employment. Repair, sharing, reuse and redistribution can strengthen connection as well as conserve resources. Workers in the resources sector are supported to carry their expertise into new roles, while the essential work of protecting public health and managing a diminishing supply of unavoidable waste retains the respect and investment it deserves.

The transition will only be successful if its benefits are widely shared. A circular system that is inconvenient, unaffordable or inaccessible is not the future described here. A shift towards stewardship should give people greater security, better choices and a meaningful voice in the places and systems that affect them.

An invitation to our partners

CIWM and the resources and waste profession cannot create this future alone, nor should they. The decisions that shape material use are spread across government, finance, design, regulation, manufacturing, retail, construction, infrastructure, local places and households. The vision is therefore an invitation to build a common direction across those boundaries. It is an opportunity for the sector to adapt and thrive as our economy changes and a call to action – to practice stewardship.

Supporting the vision means accepting the central destination: Meeting people's needs with fewer virgin resources, retaining more value and creating less harm. Each organisation can bring the influence, knowledge and capability that only it holds.

Government and public bodies can create the confidence to invest. Clear strategic ambition and long-term policy, procurement and planning can reward durability, repair, reuse and high-quality secondary materials. Well-defined standards and effective enforcement can protect responsible organisations and the public from poor practice.

Industry, producers, designers, material scientists and retailers can prevent waste at source. They can create products and services that last, make repair and return straightforward and remain responsible for the consequences of design choices. By sharing appropriate data and information, they can help the whole system recover value safely.

Local authorities, cities and communities can make stewardship visible in everyday life. They can connect planning, skills, and services to local material flows, provide sites for reuse, procure with ambition and a long-term goal in mind and ensure that new systems work for their places and people.

How partners can help

Partners can begin by using the stewardship question in the decisions they already make:

> Does this choice reduce virgin resource demand, keep value in use and improve outcomes for people and nature?



Resources, waste, logistics, repair and reuse organisations can raise operational capability and standards while developing the systems that return products, components and materials to useful service. Their knowledge of what works in practice is essential to credible change.

Investors, insurers and financial institutions can recognise the value and risk carried by material choices. They can support long-lived, adaptable infrastructure and business models whose returns come from performance and retained value, while avoiding investment that locks the country into unnecessary waste.

Universities, professional bodies and civil society can strengthen evidence, skills, standards and public trust. They can convene change facilitators, challenge weak claims, identify unintended consequences and help the transition learn from experience rather than defend fixed positions.

CIWM and CEI can speak openly about trade-offs, including the activities and assets that may need to reduce or change as waste volumes fall, they can support practical demonstrations, share evidence honestly and help successful models develop between sectors and places. They can support governments to invest in the skills, data and infrastructure needed for value to flow back through the economy.

The purpose of partnership is not to create another coalition of good intentions. It is to make the vision tangible. Every repaired product, adaptable building, trusted secondary material, regenerative biological cycle and fair transition is evidence that a different economy based on resource stewardship is already being built.

↗ **This is a shared invitation: bring what you can influence, demonstrate what is possible and help make stewardship the way value is created and protected.**



The risk of retreat

The transition to a circular economy began decades ago, we are already in the change curve; this is why both going back and moving forward may appear to offer rewards. Stewardship is the activity needed for the resources and waste sector to thrive along the journey and at the destination. However, the benefits can seem a long way off as progress is not linear, it is logarithmic.

Political retreat and resource pressure caps the full long-term opportunity of change but could result in short-term benefits that are tangible because we have been there before. In the long term, the Retreat scenario leads to a higher-cost, higher-risk future that caps opportunity for our nations, communities and economies.

The first phase of the roadmap is to acknowledge where we are: in the Static scenario and currently spending time and effort on incremental change and persistent challenges. The second phase is to raise standards to accelerate progress. This involves explaining what improvements the transition will bring now and over the next 2-4 years to help the sector to move as one and in the same direction.

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How to read this document

Most of this document describes the destination and the tests that should endure on the journey towards it.

- **Section 3** introduces four contrasting futures and explains the choice they create.
- **Section 6** sets out a transition roadmap towards system transformation
- **Section 9** explains how the first phase should be governed and learned from
- **Section 10** adds a stretch ambition that looks beyond UK boundaries.

The pathway is directional rather than fixed and should adapt as evidence, markets and circumstances change.

The scenarios are not forecasts. They are lenses that expose choices, risks and assumptions. The signposts indicate the changes we would expect to see if the system is moving in the right direction.

1. Purpose of this vision

Waste policy is historically framed around what happens after value has already been lost. That work remains, but it is no longer enough. Adapting to prevent climate change, biodiversity collapse, resource insecurity, pressure on nature, public affordability and industrial resilience all point to a wider challenge: how the economy meets people's needs while drawing less from the Earth and wasting less of what it already has.

This vision provides a common destination and method for that wider transition. It is intended to help CIWM, CEI and their members and partners see beyond the boundaries of the present system and choose different long-term choices. It creates space for government, business, communities and the profession to align around an outcome whilst embracing the ambiguity that change creates.



Three ideas define its scope.

1st Waste is a symptom of decisions made throughout a product or material's life. The system therefore begins with need, design and business models, not with the bin.

2nd Circularity is a means rather than the final goal. Circulating more material is useful only when it reduces virgin resource use, retains meaningful value, supports human wellbeing and helps nature recover.

3rd Stewardship is shared but not vague. Responsibility should sit most strongly with those who have the greatest power to shape outcomes, especially at design, production, procurement, system design and investment stages.

↗ **Citizens and communities have agency, but should not be expected to compensate for poor systems through perfect behaviour.**

Why call it stewardship?

The circular economy remains essential language, but on its own it does not always tell us enough about where responsibility sits; it can risk kicking the proverbial can down the road.

Circularity describes the outcome and what we want products and materials to do: remain useful, circulate at high value and avoid becoming waste. Stewardship adds something different and integral. It describes how we protect that value, for how long and with what duty of care and who is responsible. It shifts the emphasis from moving materials successfully through a system to looking after the products, components, materials and natural resources on which the economy depends.

The distinction and integration between circularity and stewardship matter because a material can technically be ‘circular’ while still losing value, travelling unnecessarily, creating emissions or shifting environmental and social impacts elsewhere. Stewardship makes care, custody and consequence explicit. It does not replace the circular economy; it gives it an organising ethic. In this vision, a circular economy is the system we are trying to build, while stewardship describes the behaviour and responsibility needed to make it work: use less, keep value at its highest level, regenerate natural systems and remain accountable for what happens next.

↗ **A vision is valuable when it is clear enough to guide choices, broad enough to unite different actors and robust enough to survive uncertainty.**

Foundations in the sector’s own voice

The vision is grounded in interviews with people bringing perspectives from systems change, investment, industrial strategy, operational delivery, political economy, consumption, the built environment, materials, governance and logistics. Their language and emphasis varied, but a strong common direction emerged.

Interviewees consistently argued that prevention must come before management; that the circular economy is larger than recycling; that responsibility needs to move upstream; and that the present economics of the system too often reward throughput and linear consumption. They emphasised keeping products and components at their highest useful value, giving investors and operators greater certainty, treating data as shared infrastructure and planning honestly for assets and activities that will shrink or change.

The interviews also resisted an overly tidy picture. Different materials require different loops. Infrastructure cannot change overnight. Access and affordability matter. International supply chains complicate accountability. Technical potential does not guarantee adoption. These tensions are not reasons to lower ambition. They are the conditions that make a clear, adaptive vision necessary.

2. Why a new vision is needed

CIWM and the Circular Economy Institute's shared purpose is 'to move the world beyond waste', and their strategy aims to shape the future of waste, recycling, and resource management. CIWM, incorporating the Circular Economy Institute, aims to act as a vital change agent to enable the sector's role in the transition to a low-carbon, circular economy.

The UK's waste and recycling system performs vital social, environmental and economic functions every day. It protects health and local economies, keeps places working, keeps people working, recovers materials and energy and manages risks that cannot yet be designed away. Considerable expertise, infrastructure and capital sit within it.

Yet efficiency at the end of a linear economy cannot by itself produce a circular one. Better collection and treatment can reduce harm, but may leave the basic pattern untouched: extract, manufacture, sell, use briefly and discard. A highly optimised downstream system can even make continued waste generation feel manageable.

The next era will address absolute resource use as well as the treatment of waste. It will preserve the labour, energy, knowledge and carbon already embodied in products. It will make the secure supply of secondary materials an industrial capability. It will recognise that land, soil, water and biodiversity are part of the resource system, not external to it. It will support the planetary boundaries framework.

For stewardship, the implication is practical. We can judge resources by the total pressure created through extraction, production, use and return. Using fewer virgin resources, keeping products and components useful for longer, recovering critical materials, regenerating biological systems and preventing harmful substances from dispersing into nature can reduce pressure across several planetary boundaries at once. This is why stewardship goes hand-in-hand and **beyond** waste management and circularity: it is about meeting human and economic needs while reducing the demands we place on the Earth systems on which that economy ultimately depends. It concerns competitiveness, resilience, public value, nature and a sustainable and resilient economy.



3. Four possible futures

We cannot know what the resource economy of 2050 will look like. Political priorities will change, technologies will develop unevenly, resource pressures will increase and public expectations will shift. Rather than build a vision around a single prediction, we explored four deliberately different futures.

These scenarios are not forecasts and they are not choices in themselves. They are a way of asking what happens if today's forces develop in different directions or with different levels of ambition, what each future would mean for resources and the profession and which elements we should actively pursue or guard against. Taken together, they help define the future this vision chooses to build.

The Retreat scenario tests the consequences of policy reversal, short-term cost cutting and declining resource ambition. The Static scenario shows a slightly more efficient version of today: useful incremental progress, but continued dependence on high material throughput. The Accelerated Progress scenario describes an insular but world-leading circular economy in which prevention, reuse, repair and high-quality recovery become mainstream. The System Transformation scenario goes further, creating a global stewardship, describing what regenerative, resilient economies operating within planetary boundaries could look like.

Each mindmap has a Sankey diagram to illustrate what shape the industry might take in that scenario. The Sankey diagrams aren't a prediction, method or a process. They are an illustration of possibilities and options that exist. It shows that if your part of the sector is shrinking, another is growing.

To bring about change, reuse needs a champion. Waste doesn't disappear; it is managed differently. Legal definitions could change; some reuse can be inside the sector rather than passing through the end of waste barrier and disappearing.



Scenario 1: Retreat | A fragmented system under pressure

Drivers

↗ Legislation
- Weaker environmental regulation
- Short-term, reactive policy
- Limited enforcement

↗ Governance
- Fragmented decision making
- Short-term political cycles
- Reduced coordination across UK
- Limited transparency

↗ Technology
- Minimal investment
- Slow innovation and uptake
- Reliance on existing systems
- Limited data and monitoring

↗ Industry
- Focus on lowest cost
- Consolidation and less competition
- Limited investment in infrastructure or innovation

↗ Social attitudes
- Low awareness and engagement
- Convenience over responsibility
- Low trust in the system
- Recycling seen as someone else's job

Intervention pattern

Limited and reactive action

↓

Reduced investment

↓

Inefficient systems

↓

Ad hoc Innovation

↓

Fragmented and declining system

Material flows 2050

↗ Recycling
- Lower rates
- More contamination
- Higher reliance on virgin materials

↗ Reuse
- Limited market
- Niche initiatives
- Convenient system with hidden costs

↗ Repair
- Declining skills
- Small-scale and specialist
- Not economically viable for most

↗ Consumption
- Higher overall material use
- Shorter product lives
- Linear business models
- Convenience drives choices

Infrastructure 2050

↗ Collection
- Inconsistent services
- Variable quality
- Ageing infrastructure
- Limited innovation

↗ Recycling
- Limited capacity
- Lower quality outputs
- Reliant on exports
- Higher contamination

↗ Residual waste
- Significant volumes
- More landfill and incineration
- Higher emissions
- Limited energy recovery

↗ Reuse & repair
- Fragmented provision
- Harder to access services
- Few local networks
- Limited integration with communities

Outcomes 2050

↗ Environmental outcomes
- Higher emissions
- Continued resource depletion
- Nature and biodiversity in decline
- Pollution remains high

↗ Economic outcomes
- Higher public sector costs
- Volatile costs and markets
- Reliance on imported materials
- Lower productivity
- Limited green jobs

↗ Social outcomes
- Hidden costs for households
- Reduced access to services
- Lower public trust
- Regional inequalities persist
- Less resilient communities

Resources and waste industry 2050

A more wasteful, costly and less resilient system

Five defining themes

1. **Systems thinking** – Fragmented system delivers limited benefits.
2. **Designing out waste** – Progress is minimal and inconsistent.
3. **Shared responsibility** – Government, industry and citizens are disconnected.
4. **Innovation for regeneration** – Limited innovation and slow adoption.
5. **A Just transition** – Inequality and hidden costs are entrenched.

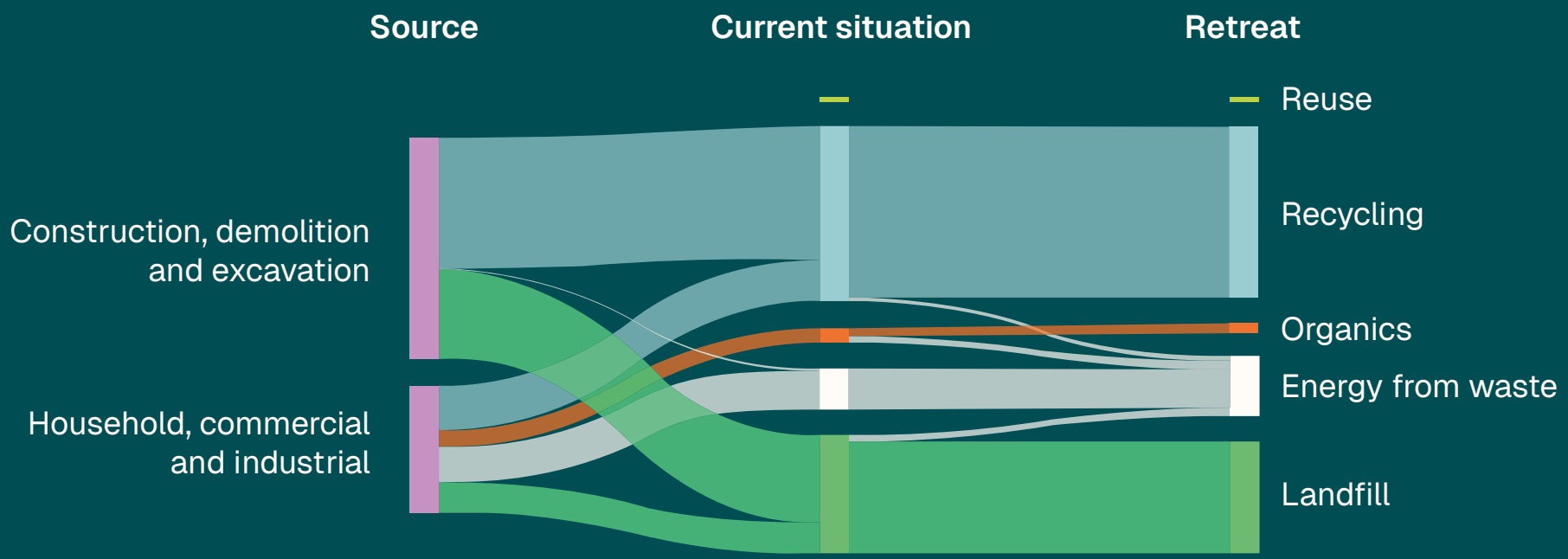


UK resource system 2050

- A more wasteful system
- Higher public sector costs
- Convenient system with hidden costs
- Hidden costs for households
- Less resilient communities
- Not aligned with a 1.5°C pathway

The Retreat scenario is a higher-cost, higher-risk future in which short political cycles, weaker regulation and pressure to reduce costs pull the system back towards energy and disposal rather than stewardship. Recycling continues, but quality and ambition stall; reuse and repair remain marginal; and infrastructure becomes increasingly locked into managing mixed waste. The apparent savings are short-term. Greater exposure to resource prices, weaker domestic capability, slower carbon reduction and declining biodiversity leave the UK less resilient and more vulnerable to future shocks.

Reuse sits outside the system and is not visible. Mixed waste prevails. Landfill bans on organics are implemented. Plastics are either sequestered or the carbon captured is stored. Deregulation eases the cost of disposal or waste is shipped abroad. The strategic role for CIWM is a cost efficient and safe sector, delivering basic training and skills.



Scenario 2: Static | Incremental change in a largely linear system

Drivers

↗ Legislation
- Incremental tightening of regulation
- Inconsistent enforcement
- National approaches remain fragmented

↗ Governance
- Short-term political cycles
- Competing priorities
- Limited cross-government alignment
- Progress varies by region

↗ Technology
- Incremental innovation
- Focus on efficiency not system change
- Limited rollout of advanced recycling
- Reliance on existing infrastructure

↗ Industry
- Established business models remain dominant
- Incremental resource efficiency
- Continued use of virgin materials
- Commercial focus on lowest cost

↗ Social attitudes
- Awareness of issues but behaviour change is limited
- Convenience and cost drive choices
- Recycling seen as a civic duty rather than a system priority
- Moderate public engagement

Intervention pattern

Incremental policy changes

↓

Targeted investment

↓

Selective collaboration

↓

Efficiency improvements

↓

Niche innovation

↓

Slow and uneven progress

Material flows 2050

↗ Recycling
- Moderate recycling rates
- Contamination limits quality
- Inconsistent collection across areas
- Down-cycling remains common

↗ Reuse
- Limited mainstream uptake
- Niche markets and pilots
- Short product lifetimes
- Convenience dominates over reuse

↗ Repair
- Small but growing market
- Skills remain limited
- Not economic for most products
- Fragmented and localised offerings

↗ Consumption
- Steady material demand
- Shorter product lives
- Continued reliance on virgin materials
- Limited product-as-a-service
- Convenience drives choices

Infrastructure 2050

↗ Collection
- Coverage is widespread but inconsistent
- Mixed and unsorted waste prevails
- Ageing infrastructure
- Limited digital integration

↗ Recycling
- Mixed quality outputs
- Contamination remains high
- Limited domestic capacity
- Reliant on export markets for some materials

↗ Residual waste
- Significant volumes remain
- Landfill and incineration continue
- Energy recovery used where viable
- Emissions reduce slowly

↗ Reuse & repair
- Fragmented networks
- Limited integration with collection systems
- Convenient drop-off in some areas
- Digital platforms emerging but not widespread

Outcomes 2050

↗ Environmental outcomes
- Moderate emissions reductions
- Resources still depleted
- Some nature and biodiversity gains but limited
- Pollution persists in air, land and water

↗ Economic outcomes
- Steady but modest growth
- Exposure to volatile material and energy markets
- Continued reliance on imported materials
- Incremental efficiency savings
- Limited innovation-driven growth

↗ Social outcomes
- Jobs replaced by machines and AI
- A shrinking sector
- Persistent regional inequalities
- Limited public trust
- Some skills development but not at scale

Resources and waste industry 2050

A largely linear system with incremental improvements and persistent challenges

Five defining themes

1. **Incrementalism** – Steady progress but no system shift.
2. **Dependence on virgin materials** – Continued reliance limits circularity.
3. **Unequal outcomes** – Benefits are unevenly distributed across places and communities.
4. **Technology not transformation** – Innovation improves efficiency but does not fundamentally change the system.
5. **A narrower sector** – A smaller, more automated industry with limited growth and resilience.

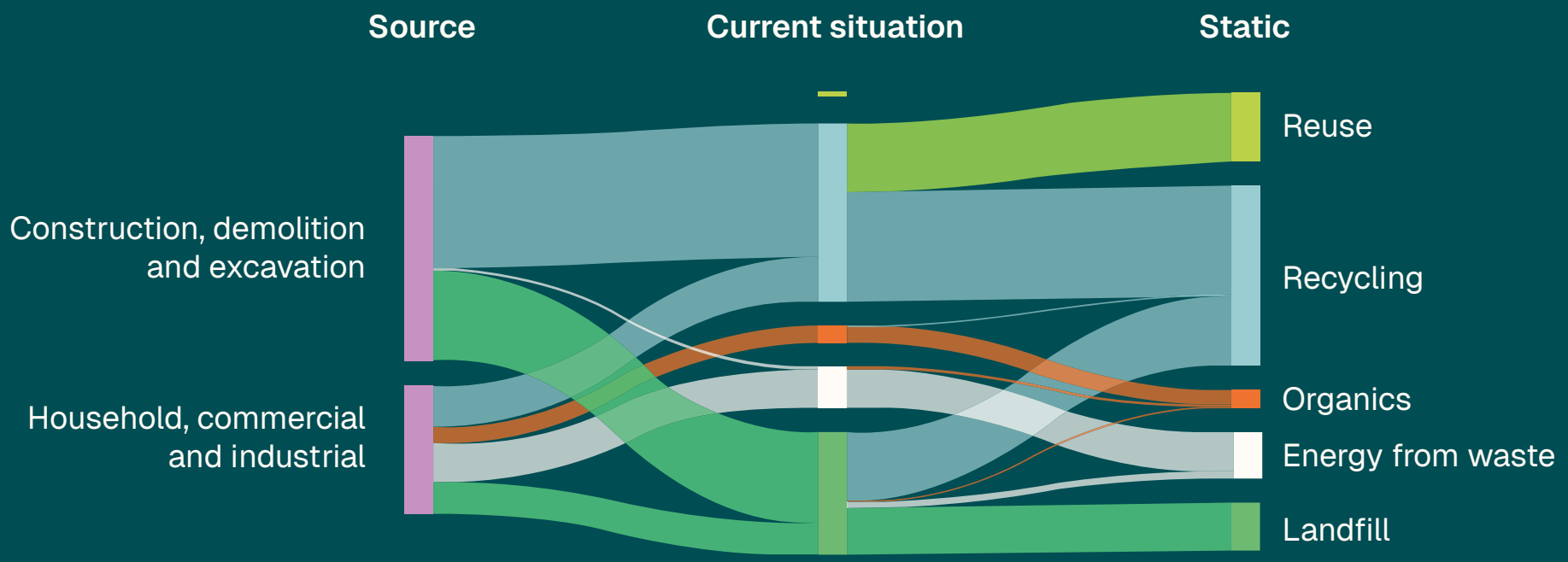


UK resource system 2050

- Incremental progress but no system change
- Mixed and unsorted waste prevails
- Continued use of virgin materials prevents recycling
- A smaller, more automated sector
- Ongoing environmental pressures
- Modest economic benefits
- Persistent social inequalities

The Static scenario is a future of incremental improvement without fundamental change. Recycling becomes more efficient and technology improves parts of the system, but consumption remains high, reuse and repair stay relatively small and virgin materials continue to underpin economic activity. It is a plausible extension of today: better managed, more automated and somewhat lower impact, but still materially a linear system. The risk is that visible progress creates a sense of success while the deeper challenge of reducing resource demand remains unresolved.

Reuse is integrated into the sector. Reuse targets on construction waste help achieve statutory targets to halve waste and double resource productivity. Organics and dry recycling increase due to Simpler Recycling. Mixed waste prevails. AI attempts to sort more efficiently. The strategic role for CIWM is staying efficient and safe, integrating AI and encouraging increased regulation.



Scenario 3: Accelerated Progress | A world-leading circular economy

Drivers

↗ Legislation
- Strong, stable framework
- EPR fully effective
- Circular procurement rules
- Ambitious targets

↗ Governance
- Cross-government alignment
- Integrated UK strategy
- Local empowerment
- Transparent accountability

↗ Technology
- Proven, affordable solutions
- Digital transparency
- Material intelligence
- Continuous innovation

↗ Industry
- Circular business models
- Investment in scale
- Value-chain collaboration
- Skills fully embedded

↗ Social attitudes
- Circular choices are the norm
- High engagement
- Pride in circular living
- Communities lead change

Intervention pattern

Consistent policy and delivery

↓

Targeted investment

↓

Collaboration at scale

↓

Innovation and adoption

↓

Continuous improvement

Material flows 2050

↗ Recycling
- High-quality, closed loop
- All key materials captured
- Minimal residual waste

↗ Reuse
- Embedded in design
- Commercial models thrive
- Mass participation

↗ Repair
- Mainstream service
- Accessible and easy
- Extensive skills and jobs

↗ Consumption
- Lower material demand
- Longer product lives
- Sharing and product-as-a-service
- Well-informed choices

Infrastructure 2050

↗ Collection
- Smart, low-emission fleets
- High participation
- Digital and data driven

↗ Recycling
- Advanced facilities
- High-quality outputs
- Regional self-sufficiency

↗ Residual waste
- Minimal and stable
- Non-landfill
- Low/zero emissions (CCS/BECCS)

↗ Reuse & repair
- Widespread networks
- Integrated into communities
- Digital platforms
- Local circular hubs

Outcomes 2050

↗ Environmental outcomes
- Deep carbon reductions
- Resource use decouples
- Nature and biodiversity recover
- Planetary boundaries respected

↗ Economic outcomes
- Strong, resilient growth
- High productivity
- Competitive UK industry
- Skilled jobs and innovation
- Greater resource security

↗ Social outcomes
- Good, green jobs
- Healthy, inclusive communities
- Fairer distribution of value
- High well-being
- A culture of care and stewardship

Resources and waste industry 2050

Competitive, resilient, climate positive and regenerative

Five defining themes

1. **Systems thinking** – Whole system design delivers multiple benefits.
2. **Prevention by design** – The best waste is the waste that never exists.
3. **Shared responsibility** – Businesses, government and citizens play their part.
4. **Innovation for regeneration** – Technology and people drive positive change.
5. **A Just transition** – A thriving, inclusive and resilient economy for the long term.

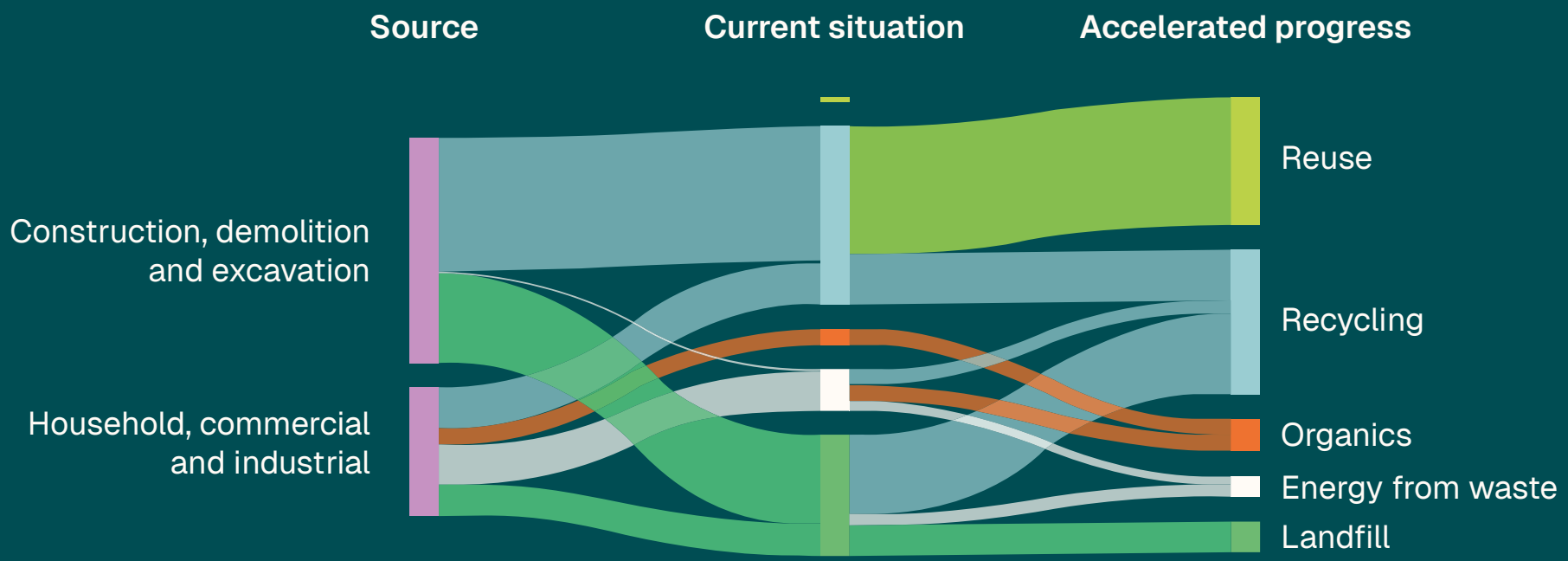


UK resource system 2050

- World leader in circular economy
- High resource efficiency
- Innovation and skills powerhouse
- Resilient and future-ready
- Prosperous, fair and inclusive
- Net positive for nature and climate

The Accelerated Progress scenario describes a world-leading circular economy in which consistent policy, targeted investment and collaboration bring prevention, reuse, repair and high-quality recycling into the mainstream. Products last longer, circular business models become commercially normal, secondary materials are trusted and resource use begins to decouple from growth. The economic and social gains are significant: stronger resilience, productive new industries, skilled work and better outcomes for climate and nature. This scenario demonstrates what determined delivery within the existing economic system could achieve.

Reuse targets on construction and household waste alongside more EPR regulations drive substantial change. Statutory targets to halve waste and double resource productivity are achievable. The strategic role of CIWM includes developing circularity metrics, championing regulation and standards, leading a drive against unsorted waste and integrating AI usefully.



Scenario 4: System transformation | A regenerative, circular and resilient future

Drivers

↗ Legislation
- Stronger, long-term framework
- Circular economy embedded
- Extended producer responsibility
- Global alignment

↗ Governance
- Joined-up, long-term approach
- Stable funding and delivery
- Clear roles and accountability
- Citizen and stakeholder voice

↗ Technology
- System-wide innovation
- Digital product passports
- Advanced sorting and recycling
- Design for circularity

↗ Industry
- Circular business models mainstream
- Investment in re-use, repair and re-manufacture
- Local, resilient supply chains
- Nature-positive operations

↗ Social attitudes
- Low-waste culture
- Value longevity and repair
- High participation
- Links to health, nature and community

Intervention pattern

Clear, shared vision and targets

↓

Collaborative governance

↓

Sustained investment

↓

System-wide innovation

↓

Behaviour and market transformation

↓

Continuous learning and adaptation

Material flows 2050

↗ Recycling
- High and consistent rates
- High-quality, closed loop
- Wide range of materials
- Minimal contamination

↗ Reuse
- Mainstream across products and sectors
- Accessible and convenient
- Supported by infrastructure
- Strong markets

↗ Repair
- Widely available and affordable
- Skilled workforce
- Design for repair
- Part of everyday culture

↗ Consumption
- Lower overall material use
- Longer product lives
- Service and sharing models
- Well-informed, responsible choices

Infrastructure 2050

↗ Collection
- Universal, high-quality service
- Smart, efficient systems
- High capture rates
- Integrated data and monitoring

↗ Recycling
- Advanced, low-impact facilities
- Regional and local capacity
- High-quality outputs
- Powered by renewable energy

↗ Residual waste
- Very low levels
- Non-landfill solutions
- Energy recovery only for non-recyclable materials
- Minimal emissions

↗ Reuse & repair
- Extensive networks
- Integrated into communities
- Digital platforms
- Local hubs and services

Outcomes 2050

↗ Environmental outcomes
- Significant carbon reductions
- Resource use within planetary boundaries
- Nature and biodiversity restored
- Clean air, land and water

↗ Economic outcomes
- Thriving, inclusive economy
- Stable resource supply
- Innovation and skilled jobs
- Lower long-term costs
- Growth in circular markets

↗ Social outcomes
- Good jobs and fair work
- Healthy, thriving communities
- Greater equality of access
- High well-being
- A culture of care and stewardship
- More resilient to future shocks

Resources and waste industry 2050

A circular, regenerative system that delivers for people, nature and a thriving economy

Five defining themes

1. **Systems thinking** – People, nature and economy are connected.
2. **Designing out waste** – Products and systems regenerate by design.
3. **Partnership and shared responsibility** – Government, industry and citizens work together.
4. **Innovation for people and planet** – Technology and behaviour drive positive change.
5. **A nature positive future aligned with a thriving economy** – A resilient UK that delivers for people, nature and the economy.

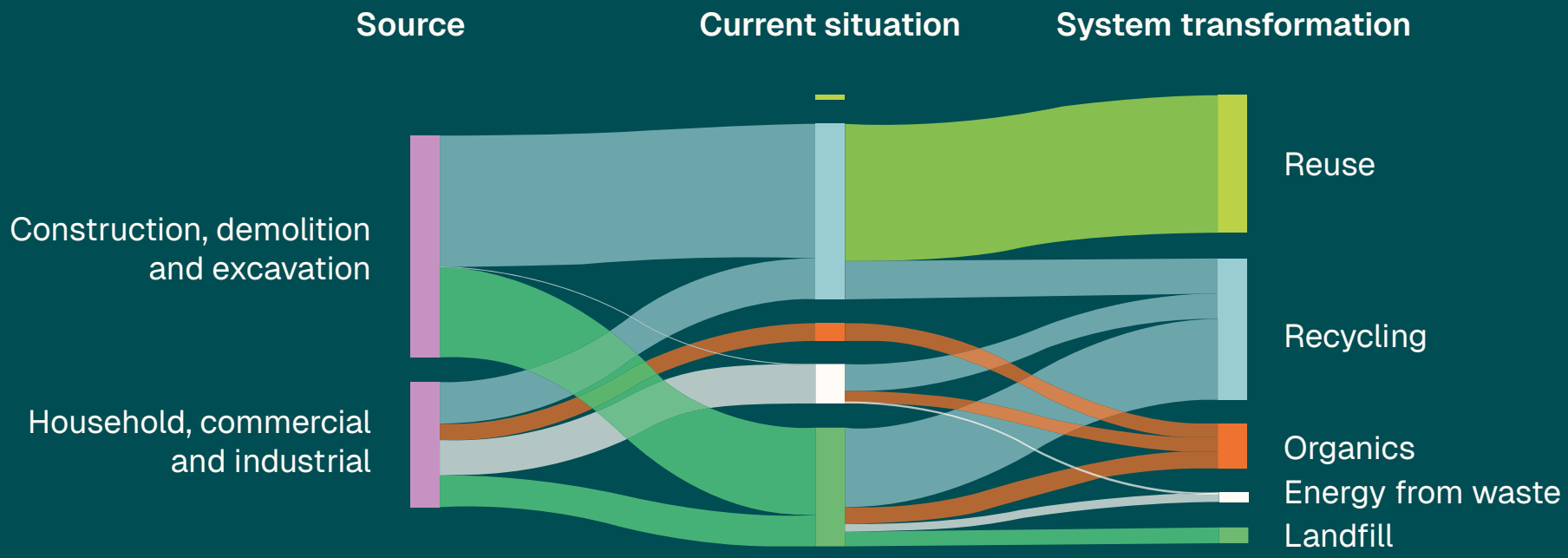


UK resource system 2050

- Circular and regenerative economy
- Resource use within planetary boundaries
- High recycling, reuse and repair
- Nature and biodiversity restored
- Thriving, inclusive economy
- Resilient communities
- Net positive for climate and nature

The System Transformation scenario goes further. It imagines an economy redesigned around lower overall material use, long product lives, repair, reuse and regenerative flows built into business models, with resource decisions made within planetary boundaries. Policy, investment, technology, business models and public behaviour reinforce one another rather than operating as separate interventions. Waste becomes exceptional rather than routine, while value is retained through products, components and materials for as long as possible. This is the most stretching scenario, but it provides the direction of travel for a global stewardship economy: a resilient system that works for people, nature and a thriving economy.

The reuse, dry recycling and organics waste facilities are material specific, wide-ranging in design and purpose. Product and material flows are complex and need space for high levels of separation. Plants that create energy also capture and store carbon. The strategic role for CIWM is leading a sector through change and delivering stewardship.



The future we choose

The scenarios show that simply making today's waste system more efficient is not enough. Nor should we assume that technology alone will deliver circularity. The future we choose takes the ambition of the System Transformation scenario, the practical action demonstrated by the Accelerated Progress scenario and the resilience lessons exposed by the Static and Retreat scenarios.

We call that future: **Stewardship**

By 2050, the UK has become a circular economy. We use far fewer virgin resources. Products and materials stay useful for longer. Nature is recovering. What waste remains is managed safely and fairly.

The organising principle is simple: product before component; component before material; material before energy; disposal only when higher-value options are genuinely exhausted.

That changes where the effort goes. Products are designed to last, adapt, be repaired and come back. Producers stay connected to what they put on the market. Maintenance, upgrade, return and reuse are routine rather than specialist activities. Materials return to industry and manufacturers can trust their quality and know where they came from.

Places have the infrastructure and skills to keep more value local, through repair, reuse, redistribution and reverse logistics, while regional systems handle reprocessing at the scale it needs. Biological resources go back into healthy soils and living systems. Residual waste is small and predictable. We plan infrastructure on that basis rather than assuming today's volumes will continue.

The profession changes too. More of its expertise is used before waste is created: in material science, design, procurement, investment, data, behaviour and place-making. The practical job of protecting people and dealing safely with what remains is still essential. Unsorted waste is unheard of. Energy from waste is limited in terms of feedstocks: no fossil plastics, no e-waste, no textiles, no packaging, no food waste, no garden waste. Landfill is even more limited, with no construction waste and exceptions made only in emergency situations, and an emergency is not characterised by lack of planning. The waste hierarchy means something to every resources and waste professional.

↗ **By 2050, waste no longer defines the system. Stewardship does.**

A vision with boundaries.

This does not mean closing every loop at any cost. Trade continues. Technology changes. People still consume things, and some residual waste remains. The test is whether a choice works overall: does it reduce resource demand and harm, make sense economically, protect nature and work for people? Circularity is useful when it helps achieve those things.

4. What stewardship looks like

Stewardship is not built through policy and infrastructure alone. It has to work in everyday life, in businesses, in places and across industry. The detail will vary, but the direction should be recognisable: keeping products and materials useful for longer, making better use of what we already have and reducing the need to continually draw on new resources. The table opposite describes what that shift could mean for different parts of the system.



For	Stewardship means
People	Products last, can be repaired and are easy to return. Sharing, leasing and re-manufactured goods are normal choices, high in quality, convenience and status.
Business	Using resources well is part of competitiveness. Revenue comes from service, maintenance, upgrade and repeated use. Waste is costly.
Places	Repair, reuse and redistribution are visible hyper-local infrastructure. Planning connects material flows, logistics, skills, land, energy and economic development.
Industry	Recovered products, components and materials move back into production through trusted specifications, traceability and quality assurance.
Nature	Less extraction takes pressure off habitats, water and climate. Biological materials return safely to soils and living systems.
The profession	The job is no longer judged mainly by tonnes handled. More value is placed on what is retained, what harm is avoided and what capability is built. Landfill is for emergencies, energy from waste is for waste that cannot be processed in any other way, the organics sector has quadrupled in size and recycling has doubled and is rivalled in size by reuse. The profession are stewards of products and materials, innovators and materials scientists, regulators and standard setters.

5. Seven tests for a stewardship economy

A vision this far into the future cannot prescribe every technology, policy or business model that will get us there. What it can do is give us a consistent way to judge whether decisions are taking us in the right direction.

These seven tests are intended to do that. They move the focus beyond recycling rates and tonnes managed and towards the outcomes that really matter: using fewer virgin resources, keeping value in circulation, restoring natural systems and making sure the transition works for people as well as the economy.

Taken together, the tests also guard against a narrow version of circularity. Recycling more is not enough if overall material demand continues to rise. Keeping a product in circulation is not automatically better if doing so creates greater energy use, cost or harm elsewhere. The tests keep attention on the outcome: less virgin demand, more value retained, healthier living systems and a transition that works for people.

Test	Question
1. Use less	Are people's needs being met with lower absolute demand for virgin resources, and are the associated lifecycle greenhouse-gas emissions falling?
2. Keep value	Are products, buildings and components staying useful for longer through durability, maintenance, repair and adaptation?
3. Build reuse infrastructure	Are return, reuse, refurbishment, re-manufacture and redistribution becoming normal, investable infrastructure?
4. Make secondary materials dependable	Do quality, standards, traceability and demand allow recovered resources to displace virgin inputs? There is a side question here: who sets these standards?
5. Regenerate living systems	Do biological cycles improve soils, water, biodiversity and resilience rather than merely reduce damage?
6. Align economics, data and infrastructure	Do incentives, information and investment reward prevention and retained value rather than throughput?
7. Make the transition fair and capable	Are benefits accessible, workers and places supported, and professional skills developing ahead of need?

6. Roadmap: from today to system transformation

System transformation gives us a deliberately stretching destination for 2050: a global economy in which resource demand has fallen substantially, products and components remain in use for as long as possible, materials circulate at high value, biological systems regenerate nature and very little is left without a useful next life.

We do not expect to move from today's system to that future in one leap. The roadmap takes steps to avoid the Retreat scenario by describing the possible futures and building a cross-party coalition. It improves the Static scenario by delivering the legislation that is already in place in a way that builds the foundations of stewardship. The roadmap drives through the Accelerated Progress scenario, an essential stage on the way. It establishes the infrastructure, markets, skills, behaviours and institutional confidence needed to move beyond better resource management and towards a much more fundamentally circular economy.

The roadmap therefore becomes progressively more ambitious. The early stages are about laying the foundations and proving that stewardship works. The middle stages take us through the Accelerated Progress scenario, making repair, reuse, re-manufacture and secondary materials mainstream. The latter stages push further, using global alignment, challenging absolute resource demand, ownership models, product design and ultimately decoupling waste from economic activity.

First steps

Thinking back to where the sector has come from three decades ago, growing recycling using economic interventions: the introduction of landfill tax, producer responsibility legislation for packaging and e-waste and recycling targets on local authorities. This was a catalyst of change.

What followed two decades ago was a drive to recover energy from waste that cannot be recycled, ambitious investment in local authority energy from waste infrastructure which has resulted in some local authorities sending less than 3% of waste to landfill, avoiding substantial methane emissions.

In the last decade, producer responsibility concepts were explored collaboratively and legislated for to make the value visible. Responsibility was extended for packaging and drinks containers recycling (and, hopefully, reuse) was removed from the local authority system altogether. Corresponding legislation reduced contamination and increased sorting prior to collection.

Building the foundations

From now until 2030 is about delivery, using the waste hierarchy as a fundamental principle and planning for stewardship. The waste hierarchy connects where we are now and where we want to be in the future. Setting and holding higher standards and regulating what is already in place creates a level playing field and opportunity for savings and improvements now.

Creating savings and improvements now will persuade people, businesses, industry, government and local government that circular economy and stewardship is a tangible better future. The environmental case is understood and championed but to get on board, people just want to know that everyday life now and prosperity will improve as a result.

Investors want to build more energy from waste facilities. More landfill and more energy from waste will not help stewardship; investments are needed in new types of infrastructure that will eventually replace the old technologies. Creating safe pathways for investment is essential, and two of the key opportunities are e-waste and plastics. Addressing e-waste, plastics and more will improve national resource security.

Critical minerals and e-waste

The critical minerals strategy exists, and e-waste is subject to producer responsibility. Waste prevention, reuse and value retention can be proved, and the argument must be won cross-party. All the building blocks are in place to make this change for the better. It takes a convenor and a will, and success will offer a path for other products and materials.

Plastics recycling and replacement

Begin whole sector planning for plastics recycling (and material substitution where possible). It must come out of waste, yet it has no treatment home to go to yet. Plastics are the test of our ability to both decarbonise and use fossil material responsibly without constantly demanding a virgin source. This is a crucial test of our will to act and change as a sector.

Reuse

Reuse demonstrators exist. What in the regulation and standard operating processes is preventing them from scaling? To bring stewardship to life, the sector will be wise to be firm, make these changes, demand action and validate the change before moving on to the next stage.

These practical current examples, along with many more, will catalyse change and move the sector towards making stewardship and circular economy mainstream.



Skills, professional expertise and capacity

A thriving circular economy depends on people with the skills, knowledge and professional judgement to make it work. Our vision for 2050 places investment in people alongside investment in infrastructure, technology and new business models. Building the capacity to deliver change must be a central commitment, supported by sustained funding, clear responsibilities and accessible routes into learning.

The transition towards a stewardship economy requires expertise across the whole resource lifecycle: preventing waste, designing products and systems, maintaining and repairing assets, managing materials safely, and recovering their value. It also requires people who can connect these activities, understand their environmental consequences and turn ambition into practical decisions. Professional expertise provides the judgement to assess competing options, challenge poor practice and protect public confidence.

We must both develop the existing workforce, attract the next generation and pull-in talent from outside the sector. This means stronger pathways through education, apprenticeships, technical training and professional qualifications, backed by continuing professional development throughout working life. Practical experience and frontline knowledge must be recognised and shared. As technologies, materials and business models change and people need the time, support and opportunity to develop with them. Change isn't easy, so we need to prepare for it.

Capacity is also an organisational challenge. Local authorities, regulators, businesses and community organisations need enough skilled people, with the resources and authority to act. Ambitious policies cannot deliver until the organisations responsible have the expertise to commission services, enforce standards, support innovation or measure progress. Workforce planning and capacity building must therefore be built into policy, investment and delivery plans from the outset.

This is an international endeavour. Partnerships between professional bodies, governments, educators and industry should strengthen local expertise, share learning and widen access to training, particularly where resources and institutional capacity are limited. Lasting progress depends on enabling countries and communities to develop and retain their own capability.

By 2050, resource stewardship should be recognised as an essential professional capability across the economy. CIWM and CEI have a central role in championing professional standards, developing expertise and bringing people together to build this cross-country and global capacity.

↗ **Investment in skills and professional expertise is investment in our ability to deliver a fair and sustainable economy.**



Road to the stewardship-led circular economy 2050

2026-30

Build foundations

Standards, targets and a baseline

2030-35

Scale solutions

Design for longer use, higher reuse and better resource productivity

2035-40

Make stewardship mainstream

Clearer regulation, financial incentives and producer responsibility

2040-45

Go beyond efficiency

Lower absolute demand and design for repeated use in the system

2045-50

Towards full circularity

Retain highest value and eliminate residual waste by exception

Use less

Keep value

Regenerate nature

Sustainable economy

The important transition

The critical point comes around 2035–2040. By then, many of the characteristics of the Accelerated Progress scenario should be visible: functioning reverse markets, widespread repair and re-manufacture, dependable secondary materials, stronger producer responsibility and an economy beginning to use fewer virgin resources.

But that should not become the point at which ambition stops.

The next step is harder. It means asking whether we can reduce absolute material demand further, design out more residual waste, keep whole products and components circulating for much longer, and make regenerative resource use normal. It also means questioning business models and patterns of consumption that remain dependent on throughput even when recycling rates are high.

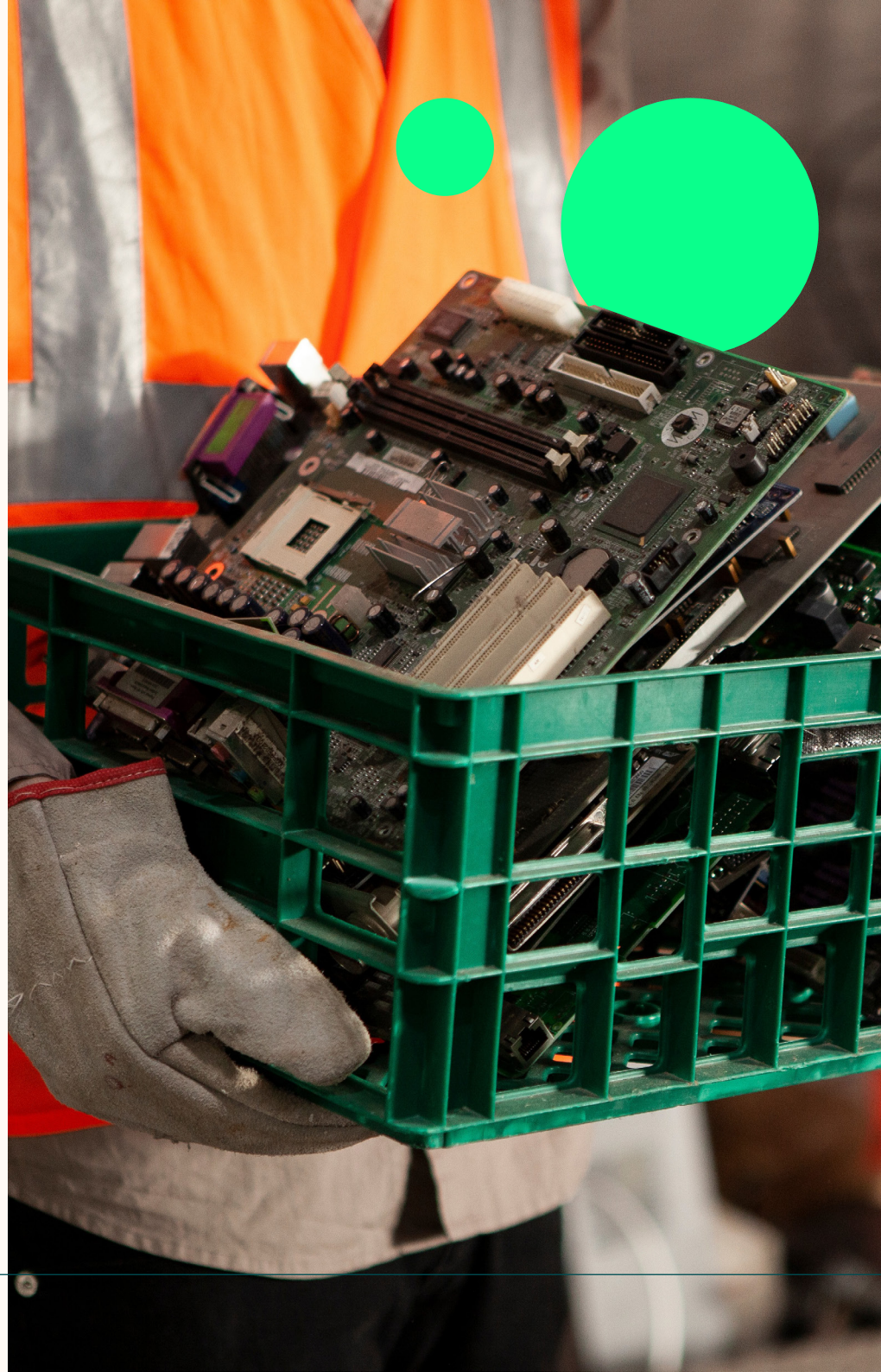
The Accelerated Progress scenario therefore becomes a milestone on the journey to the System Transformation scenario.

Keeping the roadmap adaptive

The route will change. Some technologies will advance faster than expected and others will disappoint. Different materials will require different approaches. Economic shocks, resource constraints and political changes will alter what is possible.

The roadmap should therefore be reviewed regularly against the seven stewardship tests rather than treated as a fixed programme. Progress should be judged by whether the economy is genuinely using fewer virgin resources, retaining more value, regenerating natural systems and improving outcomes for people.

The destination remains deliberately difficult. That is the point. A 2050 vision should describe the future we want to create, not simply the future we already think we can deliver.



7. CIWM and the future profession

CIWM, aligned with the Circular Economy Institute, should try to own this transition. Although many the levers sit elsewhere: with government, producers, designers, retailers, investors, local authorities and the public. CIWM's distinctive value is different. It brings practical knowledge of what happens to materials in the real world, professional standards and a community that already spans policy, operations, infrastructure and resource management.



CIWM role	Contribution
Define the profession	Make resource stewardship a recognised professional field, without losing the deep operational expertise the sector already has.
Interpret evidence	Bring scientific, economic and operational evidence together, challenge weak claims and explain the trade-offs clearly.
Convene the system	Bring producers, operators, places, finance, academia, communities and government together around practical problems and missions.
Build capability	Anticipate the skills and leadership the transition needs, including what falling waste volumes mean for existing assets, jobs and places.

That gives CIWM permission to move further upstream without abandoning its operational roots. The profession will still need deep expertise in collection, treatment, compliance and public protection. But it will increasingly need to connect that expertise to design, procurement, finance, data, behaviour, logistics and place-making. The table above sets out four roles CIWM can play consistently through that change.

Over time, CIWM will matter as much for the problems its members help prevent as for the wastes they know how to manage.

8. How we will know it is working

To understand whether or not we are progressing, we do not need a huge scorecard. We need enough measures to tell whether the system is genuinely moving in the right direction.

No single indicator will prove that the circular economy has arrived. The pattern matters. For example, higher use of secondary material is meaningful when it displaces virgin inputs; more repair is valuable when products genuinely stay useful for longer; lower residual waste is positive when it reflects prevention and value retention rather than export or displacement. CIWM can refine the measures as data improves, but the questions should remain stable enough to show direction over time.



Outcome	Core question
Resource demand	Is absolute demand for important virgin materials falling?
Value retained	Are products, components and buildings staying useful for longer before material recycling?
Everyday access	Can people across incomes and places use repair, reuse, refill, sharing and return systems easily?
Displacement	Are recovered resources genuinely replacing primary inputs?
Investment	Are capital, land and skills moving upstream, with residual capacity planned against declining need?
Nature	Are resource choices contributing to healthier soils, water, biodiversity and climate outcomes?
Fairness	Are costs and benefits fairly distributed, with affected workers and communities shaping transition?
Professional change	Is stewardship capability becoming normal in design, business, government and place-making?

9. Governance and learning to 2030

The first phase needs enough structure to maintain direction, but not another heavy programme architecture. A small representative partnership group should oversee progress to 2030, bringing together voices from the profession and from outside the traditional waste system. Its job would be to test whether the work is changing outcomes, connect the demonstrators to policy and markets and identify where the roadmap needs to adapt.

Governance must extend beyond stewardship of the document itself. National government has the clearest role in setting long-term outcomes, aligning fiscal and regulatory signals, and connecting circularity to industrial, energy, infrastructure and critical-minerals policy. Regulators are vital to set and hold standards within which the sector can operate. Mayors and strategic authorities can translate that direction into place: linking spatial planning, skills, investment, procurement, logistics and local growth. This is increasingly practical rather than theoretical; government guidance already asks mayoral strategic authorities to embed circularity within local growth plans and spatial development strategies.

There is also a case for an explicit transition-broker function. Nationally, that function should connect departments, sectors and infrastructure decisions that otherwise sit apart. At city-region level, it should convene producers, resource businesses, finance, skills providers, local authorities and communities around material flows and investment opportunities. CIWM should advocate for this capability and help define the professional standards it requires, rather than assuming CIWM itself must govern every part of the transition.

An annual account of a stewardship economy would make that learning visible. It should say what is moving, what is stuck, where evidence remains weak and what needs attention next. Just as importantly, it should be willing to report failure. If a demonstrator does not retain value, reduce demand or improve outcomes for people and nature, the lesson is to change it rather than defend it. That discipline will help keep the vision credible as circumstances change.



10. Stretch: from UK stewardship to international leadership

The System Transformation scenario is the destination we think the UK can realistically reach alone. Stretch asks what comes after that. If the UK develops credible stewardship systems at home, could it use that experience to influence the international systems through which resources, products and materials already move?

This is not an optional international add-on. The UK's resource economy is already global. Extraction, manufacture, trade, reuse and recycling cross borders every day, as do many of the environmental and social impacts. A transition that reduces UK waste while shifting extraction, pollution or low-value treatment elsewhere would miss the point of stewardship.

Success should mean more than lower UK resource use. UK organisations could be helping to make good stewardship easier across borders through compatible standards, trusted secondary materials, fairer trade, stronger recovery systems and shared learning. That is a bigger role than being a good circular economy at home. It is about helping to improve the wider resource system we depend on.

The opportunity is to connect UK progress with partners overseas: professional institutions, governments, cities, universities, manufacturers, resource businesses and civil society. The aim would not be to export a UK model. It would be to build compatible approaches, share evidence and learn from places that are already ahead in particular parts of the transition.

The Stretch question is simple: are we only shrinking our own footprint, or helping to change the system behind it?



Stretch move	What it could mean
International stewardship partnerships	Build working relationships with professional bodies, cities, governments, universities and industry networks overseas. Share evidence, skills and approaches rather than starting from scratch in each country.
Cross-border product and material standards	Push for product information, quality standards and assurance that work across markets, so components and secondary materials can keep their value when they cross borders.
Global demonstrator corridors	Pick a small number of products or materials and follow them across countries, from design and manufacture through use, return and recovery. Use those corridors to show where circular trade works and where it breaks down.
Fair circular trade	Set a clear line between useful international circulation and simply exporting risk, pollution or low-value waste. Look at impacts where extraction and processing happen, not only where products are consumed and recognise and address the legacy of waste exports that have harmed communities and environments overseas.
Resource resilience alliances	Work with international partners on critical materials, re-manufacturing, substitution and secondary supply. Treat stewardship as part of industrial resilience, not a separate environmental agenda.
A global profession	Share CIWM's capability model internationally and learn from others in return, building qualifications and communities of practice around resource stewardship.
Regenerative supply chains	Go beyond keeping materials in circulation. Use sourcing and supply-chain relationships to improve soils, water, biodiversity and community outcomes in the places resources come from.



11. A call to stewardship

None of this is inevitable. The UK could end up with a more efficient version of today. It could pursue circularity while material consumption keeps rising. Or political and economic pressure could push resource policy backwards. The stewardship route gives us a clearer direction: use less, keep value for longer, restore nature and build resilience.

CIWM and the wider profession have something useful to bring to that task. The sector sees, every day, what happens when products fail too soon, materials lose value, systems fragment and costs are pushed downstream. That experience should help shape decisions much earlier in the chain.

Our destination for 2050 is a UK where people can live well with fewer virgin resources, products and materials stay useful at their highest value, nature is recovering and unavoidable waste is managed safely and fairly.

↗ The job now is to make stewardship normal. Then help it travel.



Appendix: How the vision was developed

Interviews and synthesis

The vision draws on a programme of interviews spanning systems change, investment, industrial strategy, operational delivery, political economy, consumption, the built environment, materials, governance and logistics. Insights were synthesised thematically, looking for areas of convergence, productive disagreement, risks and under-examined implications.

Two interviews were incomplete at the detailed synthesis stage. Relevant insights from those conversations were therefore used cautiously and were not treated as the sole basis for a major conclusion.

Thanks go to: Marcus Gover, Wayne Hubbard, Adam Read, John Twitchen, Claire Shrewsbury, Tim Walker, Susan Evans, Martin Ballard, Iain Gulland, Jacob Hayler, Dan Cooke, Trang Dang, and all of the attendees at the original workshops.

Scenario method

Four scenarios were used to test the direction of travel: Static, Accelerated Progress, System Transformation and Retreat. They were designed to stretch assumptions rather than rank predictions. The preferred vision takes an ambition challenge from the System Transformation scenario, and retains the resilience lessons of the Static and Retreat futures. The development of the scenarios was informed by the futures methodologies and work of Sally Uren and Forum for the Future, whose contributions provided important foundations for the scenario process.

Wider sources considered

The following official sources were used as light-touch points of comparison. They informed the context but did not replace the interview and scenario evidence.

- CIWM, Let's Not Waste the Next Four Years
- Circle Economy, The 2026 Circularity Gap Report
- OECD, Environment Indicators at a glance 2025
- World Bank, What a Waste 3.0
- CIWM, Sector Net Zero Transition Plan (previous version being updated)
- Environmental Services Association, Our vision for a circular economy in the UK by 2040
- Futures Platform, Four scenarios on the future of circular economy
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Circular economy introduction
- WRAP, Our strategy
- WRAP, Circular Living Standards
- Green Alliance, Resources
- Scottish Government, Scotland's Circular Economy and Waste Route Map to 2030
- UK Government, Circular economy: guidance for mayoral strategic authorities (2026)
- UK Government, Vision 2035: Critical Minerals Strategy and technical annex
- Office for National Statistics, Measuring UK greenhouse gas emissions (2026)
- Office for National Statistics, Material footprint in the UK (2026 release)
- UNEP International Resource Panel, Global Resources Outlook 2024

CIWM

Circular Economy Institute

Status of this document

This is a working vision for discussion. Its role is to establish a shared destination, a transition roadmap and durable principles. The first phase to 2030 identifies practical moves and governance, but priorities, commitments, delivery arrangements and measures will need to be developed by CIWM and the partners responsible for them.

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