

# Responsible Business Summit 2016

## Breakout session summary: Demystifying the Circular Economy

As part of the 2016 Responsible Business Summit, we hosted a breakout session on Demystifying the Circular Economy to clarify what is meant by 'the circular economy' and to explore some of the opportunities which it presents. The session was chaired by Dr Rob Hardeman, HRH Prince of Wales Ambassador for Corporate Responsibility in Northern Ireland, and featured the following panellists:

- Trevor Knipe, International Synergies NI Ltd
- David Knott, Belfast Harbour
- Kevin Hurst, Veolia
- Tim Walker, Belfast City Council

## Presentation content

David Knott outlined Belfast Harbour's four stage approach to the circular economy:

- 1) Tidying: collecting existing waste and finding alternative uses
- 2) Transactional: symbiosis, using waste as a resource locally
- 3) Transitional: waste from energy
- 4) Transformational: Anaerobic Digestion plant, to create energy from biodegradable waste

View [David's presentation](#) for further information and examples of activities in each stage.

Trevor Knipe told of how International Synergies provide a mechanism for organisations in Northern Ireland to exchange resources, by linking producers of waste materials with organisations which can use the materials as a resource. This service has been provided since 2007 and is funded by Invest NI. The programme has diverted over 200,000 tonnes of waste from disposal and has provided £9 million of cost savings and £13.5 million of additional sales to the organisations they work with.

Tim Walker gave an overview of Belfast City Council's targets for dealing with waste and their progress to date, highlighting some of the challenges ahead. Tim outlined different approaches which are consistent with the circular economy framework: recycling, reuse, repair, remanufacturing and servitisation.

Kevin Hurst outlined the economic opportunities of the circular economy and Veolia's response by making a fundamental shift in their business model from a service supplier to a resource producer by manufacturing green products from end-of-life resources. As an example, Kevin showed an alternative to petro-based plastics which is manufactured from PHA recovered from waste water. You can find out more about this process [here](#). The circular economy already represents 20% of Veolia's turnover.

## Key messages from the discussion:

- Contamination and variable quality of the waste which is collected for recycling limits the amount of value that can be retained through recycling processes. The clearest opportunities for 'closing a loop' are with high quality materials which can be segregated
- Businesses should find opportunities to support innovators and new business models in order to progress towards a circular economy model

## **Find out more**

In 2017, Business in the Community will be launching a new circular economy hub designed to help guide organisations in how they should approach the circular economy through a series of toolkits and webcasts.

We will also be convening several networks of organisations to collaborate on circular economy issues, and hosting further events.

For further information on the circular economy, or to find out how we can help your business, email [p.ramsey@bitcni.org.uk](mailto:p.ramsey@bitcni.org.uk)