



HM Government

Terms of Reference: Circular Economy Taskforce

(last updated: 12 December 2024)

1. Purpose of the Circular Economy Taskforce

This government is committed to transitioning the UK to a circular economy. This is an ambitious goal, requiring major changes throughout the economy. Getting the transition right will generate major contributions to the Government's Missions to kickstart economic growth and to make Britain a clean energy superpower, including accelerating to Net Zero.

To support the Government in achieving this goal, a Circular Economy Taskforce ('the Taskforce') will be established and bring together industry, academic and policy experts with central and local government to develop an evidence-driven and actionable Circular Economy Strategy for England 'the Strategy'. The Strategy will be underpinned by a series of roadmaps for reform in different sectors of the economy and their supply chains.

The Strategy will form part of a much bigger Missions-oriented picture across the UK Government, underpinned by the forthcoming Industrial Strategy, refreshed Carbon Budget Delivery Plan, and heavily complemented by an Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy. The Circular Economy Strategy for England will complete that picture by focusing in particular on how we use our resources in the best way and to the best possible effect, deriving from them the maximum possible value before they become waste while also reducing emissions. Using our resources in this way will require major changes in behaviour and capability across the UK, generating opportunities to invest in capital, technology, and jobs – and to align that investment completely with our environmental objectives.

2. Key Objectives of the Circular Economy Taskforce

The key objectives of the Taskforce are to identify and assess mechanisms that can underpin a Circular Economy Strategy for England; through which the UK government, industry and civil society can:



- drive economic growth by stimulating investment in technologies, sectors and infrastructure that enable resource circularity
- create jobs across the circular economy and bolster the security of supply chains
- increase resource efficiency and productivity
- reduce emissions and accelerate to net zero
- support delivery of the UK Government's Industrial Strategy and refreshed Carbon Budget Delivery Plan, and contribute to the Government's Missions to kickstart economic growth and make Britain a clean energy superpower

In doing so, the Taskforce will:

- identify a set of metrics with which the UK government can measure England's progress as part of the UK's progress towards a circular economy, and propose commensurate targets at national and local levels
- detail the policy pathway that will deliver those targets in the most efficient way possible, with a view to driving economic growth as well as environmental benefit
- set out the priority interventions and sectors in which those interventions must be made, developing a series of sector-specific roadmaps to capture the policy pathway in detail

3. Scope

The Strategy and roadmaps will be England-only except where policy is reserved. Where opportunities exist to align with the devolved governments, we will feed proposals into the agreed work programme under the EFRA Inter Ministerial Group (IMG) so that they can inform a four-government, UK-wide approach.

The Taskforce must account for any existing policy and spend that has already been 'committed' to across government. Committed policy may include initiatives that have not been publicly confirmed, but which are critical to departments' delivery pathways towards legal obligations and commitments. The Taskforce should treat such initiatives as the policy baseline and consider where interventions will be needed in addition.

The Strategy and roadmaps will cover at least the next ten years. Assuming that 'committed' work across government will not be sufficient to achieve all statutory targets and obligations, the Taskforce must consider how to contribute to those targets as well as considering new targets and ambitions.

The Strategy will support 4 of the Government's 5 Missions

- kickstarting economic growth



- make Britain a clean energy superpower
- take back our streets
- opportunity for all

No topics are explicitly listed as out of scope, but the Taskforce will need to respect devolution and existing governance and decision-making structures at all times, which may render certain topics or settled policy decisions effectively out of scope (see Section 6 – Governance).

4. Timing

The Taskforce will complete its work within the next year, proceeding in two phases (see Outputs for detail on each phase of work). Phase two will conclude with publication of the Strategy and roadmaps between Summer and Autumn 2025.

5. Outputs

Phase One (October 2024 to January 2025)

Definitions, metrics, targets, and early recommendations that might require new funding through the next multi-year Spending Review.

It is expected the outputs from this phase will be largely based on existing practice, analysis and evidence held by UK Government and Taskforce members. Specific deliverables include:

- agreed definitions and objectives for a circular economy transition in England
- indicative metrics for measuring circularity and targets to drive progress over the next 10 years and more
- summary of learning from international experience and existing place-based circular economy pathfinders
- identification of the high-level enablers required to deliver a circular transition
- an indicative prioritisation of sectors for intervention, along with initial policy recommendations requiring financial support from government within the first 2 to 3 prioritised sectors, so as to enable bids into the next multi-year Spending Review process*
- initial top priority policy recommendations of any sort or sector, to enable planning of delivery and public resources at the earliest reasonable opportunity*



*Recommendations should give due regard to committed interventions already underway or which will be bid for through the next multi-year Spending Review.

Phase Two (January to October 2025)

A complete Circular Economy Strategy for England that looks far beyond existing commitments, mapping out the interventions required to deliver a circular transition in England and contribute to that across the UK over the next 10 years and beyond.

Outputs from this phase need not be based on existing practice, analysis and evidence. Specific deliverables include:

- final metrics for measuring circularity and targets to drive progress over the next 10 years and more
- a final prioritisation of sectors for intervention
- firm policy recommendations across all of the prioritised sectors, in the form of clear and costed roadmaps detailing the reforms that the UK Government will make in order to deliver a circular economy. Each roadmap will set out:
 - the interventions that will need to be undertaken, by whom, and when, including the necessary consumer engagement across the product lifecycle
 - what outcomes (ideally quantified) the interventions will deliver
 - the costs and benefits of interventions (proportionate analysis in line with green book guidance)
 - how the success of the roadmap will be monitored
 - an evidence/data/R&D strategy to support the roadmap
 - action owners, delivery dates and metrics for tracking progress
- a clear understanding of the interdependencies between interventions, including spillover benefits and unintended consequences
- a clear role for behaviour change initiatives to ensure that the Strategy and supporting roadmaps can deliver the widespread behaviour change necessary to deliver meaningful circularity
- a monitoring and evaluation plan for the Strategy and a supporting evidence report detailing the evidence behind the actions set out in the strategy and roadmaps – this will contain a proportionate assessment of the costs and benefits of interventions suggested (in line with the Green Book)

6. Governance of the Circular Economy Taskforce

The Taskforce will report to the Circular Economy Small Ministerial Group ('the CE-SMG'), comprising ministers from Defra, DBT, DESNZ, DfT, HMT and MHCLG. The role



of the CE-SMG will be to direct the aim of the Taskforce in line with the UK Government's stated Missions, govern, join up and drive collaborative work between departments and feed into formal decision-making structures across the UK government, such as the Industrial Strategy IMG and relevant Missions Boards. The CE-SMG will be co-chaired by Defra and DESNZ/DBT (see CE-SMG ToR).

The Chair of the Taskforce will lead and direct the development of a strategic vision for England that seeks to drive economic growth through resource efficiency and foster a cultural shift towards sustainability. They will make final recommendations to the CE-SMG on behalf of the Taskforce, and escalate any issues. The Chair will be supported by a Deputy Chair with expertise in evidence and analysis, as well as a non-executive membership of expert industry, academic and policy leaders.

A senior officials group, the SMG (Officials), will represent the interests of each of the core UK government departments and take place before each meeting of the SMG (validating agendas, approving papers/advice, and reviewing recommendations from the Taskforce). Recommendations from the SMG (Officials) will be reflected in SMG discussions, and the SMG (Officials) will integrate similarly with formal governance across government, such as the Industrial Strategy IMG and relevant Missions Boards. The SMG (Officials) will also raise synergies and be aware of priorities between different departments to ensure a consistent approach to specific sectors.

Officials from across UK government departments will support with facilitating meetings of the Taskforce, drafting papers, policy formation and analysis, and working with taskforce members and their organisations. Officials will support the Chair and Taskforce to shape the Strategy and to ensure alignment with wider UK government priorities.

The Taskforce will be supported by a secretariat, based in Defra. The secretariat will be responsible for arranging meetings, circulating papers and recording minutes of meetings. The secretariat will be overseen by a senior civil servant with responsibility for ensuring the working groups have the resource needed, and that the meetings are effectively run, making efficient use of policy and delivery team resource, and external expertise as required.

7. Mode of Operation of the CE Taskforce



The Taskforce will meet at least monthly for decision-making meetings. Extraordinary (additional) meetings may be called as required by the Chair. Steps will be taken to ensure that discussion within the taskforce can be held in confidence, for example through the use of NDAs.

Subgroups will be set up at the discretion of the Chair in such format as will best achieve the Taskforce objectives. It is the expectation that subgroups will meet weekly to discuss specific areas of business in facilitated workshops. A proposed 10-session workplan will be provided to the Chair. Separate terms of reference may apply to subgroups. Subgroups will use co-design and participation to build in stakeholders, including citizens, as active contributors in the delivery of circular economy agendas and/or smaller actionable policies.

The CE Taskforce will co-design its recommendations to the CE-SMG by engaging members of different disciplines to understand the systemic challenges of CE. Rather than breaking the problem into siloes, co-design will be applied to facilitate a network of experts, government and partners to share knowledge, resources, mutual understandings and learn while creating and exploring new ideas.

This iterative process will use innovative methods for the co-production of knowledge and future-oriented roadmaps across 10 sessions, while feeding in context specific research and insights from the CE community on the ground.

Members will be expected to prepare for, attend and reflect on weekly facilitated co-design sessions and monthly meetings. Deputies may be nominated to cover absences.

Taskforce members will bring advice and expertise from their respective areas of interest, acting as necessary to facilitate the success of the project by addressing any barriers that arise. They will ensure that their teams and the organisations they represent are appropriately briefed on project progress. They will prepare for, attend and reflect on co-design meetings, undertake analysis, provide evidence of working practice and draft content for the Circular economy strategy for England. Taskforce members will work together to achieve consensus on the recommendations they make to the Chair and Deputy chair of the Taskforce.

The Secretariat will undertake all functions in respect of the organisation and administration of any meetings. Key actions will be recorded and circulated after each



meeting. To support the secretariat, meetings can be transcribed using the Microsoft Teams function if there are no objections from Board members and it is appropriate to record.

The papers will be issued no less than 2 working days in advance of the meeting. Exceptions will be agreed by secretariat after consultation with the Chair. Longer papers should have a cover sheet with key points and authors should consult with all relevant partners during the drafting process.

All Taskforce members are responsible for ensuring that any actions (for which they have been assigned ownership) arising from decision taken at the meeting are completed within agreed timescales.

8. Devolved Governments

While the scope of the Strategy will be England only (except where policy is reserved), the Taskforce's recommendations are likely to (if accepted) come with policy and delivery implications for Devolved Governments and cover areas where Devolved Governments could share relevant research or experience of implementation.

The Devolved Governments will therefore be an important stakeholder and will be invited to attend meetings of the Taskforce, but may not have sufficient resource to take up full membership. The Taskforce secretariat will ensure the Devolved Governments are properly informed and able to manage their involvement with the Taskforce as they see fit.

At a minimum, this will require supplying the Devolved Governments with the final Taskforce workplan (as agreed with the Chair), and sighting named Devolved Government representatives on any papers, meeting minutes, and other materials developed in support of the Taskforce's work. In line with the agreed working arrangements, it will also involve updating Devolved Governments on the emerging workplan and developments via the relevant Common Framework Working Group, in particular to identify where proposals have interdependencies or implications for other nations and to establish arrangements for joint working for any proposals that may potentially be taken forward on a UK-wide basis rather than the England focused role of the Taskforce.



Some materials may need to be legitimately withheld or distributed on a secure basis, but the default assumption is that the Taskforce will work with the Devolved Governments on the basis of full transparency and established IMG working principles.

9. Decision making

The Taskforce will provide recommendations to the CE-SMG, supported by robust analysis and evidence, seeking to bring a wide range of views and challenge with the support of all members.

The Chair, advised by the Deputy Chair and the CE-SMG (Officials) group in accordance with their accountabilities, will make final decisions on the recommendations that are proposed to the CE-SMG in the case consensus cannot be reached by the Taskforce.

For decisions regarding specific topics, the appropriate member(s) must be present – for example where recommendations around sector prioritisation are being agreed, Industry and academic members must be present; for recommendations which may affect local authorities, local authority representatives must be present.

The CE-SMG will decide how to respond to those recommendations and have ultimate responsibility for the content of the final Circular Economy Strategy for England. SMG members will be able to defer their consent to alternative decision-making structures as required to ensure full collective agreement of the Strategy's contents (for example, Mission Boards). The CE-SMG may choose not to accept all of the Taskforce's recommendations, or may choose not to accept particular recommendations in full. The Taskforce's recommendations and any difference between them and the final Circular Economy Strategy may be captured by whatever mechanism is used to ensure the integrity of the Taskforce's work, for example NDAs.

10. Decision making outside monthly Taskforce meetings

Internal decisions on the work of the Taskforce may be made through email correspondence, when there is insufficient Taskforce meeting time, or the decision is urgent and required between meetings where necessary.



Papers for such decisions will be circulated to all core Taskforce members by email with a deadline for responses. The proposal will be taken forward based on the Chair's decision considering the range of all responses, including the advice of the Deputy Chair. No response received by the deadline will be considered a positive response to the proposal.

11. Agenda, inputs and outputs for monthly meetings

The agenda for monthly meetings will include a standing item for the following matters:

- review of the previous meeting actions
- regular updates
 - delivery update
 - plan on a page
 - review of risks, issues, and mitigations
 - decisions Tracker
- papers for decision/discussion

Meeting Inputs will be an agenda, monthly report and papers for discussion/decision

Meeting Outputs will be minutes with attendees, actions and decisions.