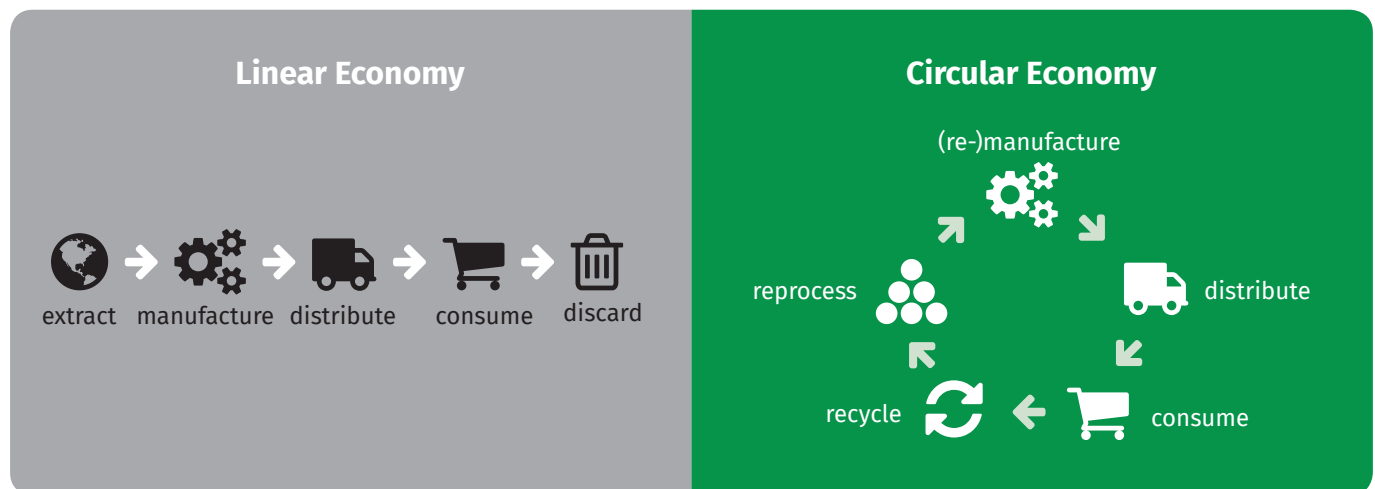




What is the circular economy?

The 'linear economy' relies on extraction and processing, followed by consumption and disposal (via incineration or landfill). Extraction and disposal deplete finite resources and cause environmental and social harm. With a circular economy the value of resources is preserved, material and nutrients that are needed to create new products are maintained, and the most is made of existing resources. Such prudent use of resources can be described as increasing resource productivity.



Social, environmental and economic benefits of a more circular economy

→ The Ellen MacArthur Foundation's list of key benefits of moving to the circular economy:

1. Substantial net material savings and reduced exposure to price volatility
2. Increased innovation and job creation potential
3. Increased resilience in living systems and in the economy

→ Friends of the Earth estimated that reaching 70% recycling would create more than 70,000 jobs in the UK by 2025.

→ WRAP estimated that by 2030 the circular economy could create more than 200,000 jobs and noted that these jobs could be focussed in areas where unemployment is higher.

→ Redesign means creating products that last longer and that are more recyclable, reusable and repairable. This is good for consumers and supports the remanufacturing industry.

The Environmental Audit Committee noted: "There are potentially billions of pounds of benefits for businesses across the economy by becoming more resource efficient" and recommend that: "Reducing the dependency on primary resource use for economic growth is an essential part of moving to a more sustainable economic system. Some businesses are showing real leadership and innovation to adjust their business models and become more resource efficient. However, the Government must do more to ensure that the right conditions are in place so that many more businesses shift from a linear approach to a circular one."

Incineration and the circular economy

Incineration has no place in the circular economy towards which we should be working. Incinerators depress recycling, destroy finite resources, and release greenhouse gasses. For every tonne of waste burned more than one tonne of CO₂ is released into the atmosphere, and this is significantly higher if one takes into account the CO₂ required to make the products in the first place. Thus, incineration is unsustainable and has significantly higher carbon intensity than burning gas or coal.