

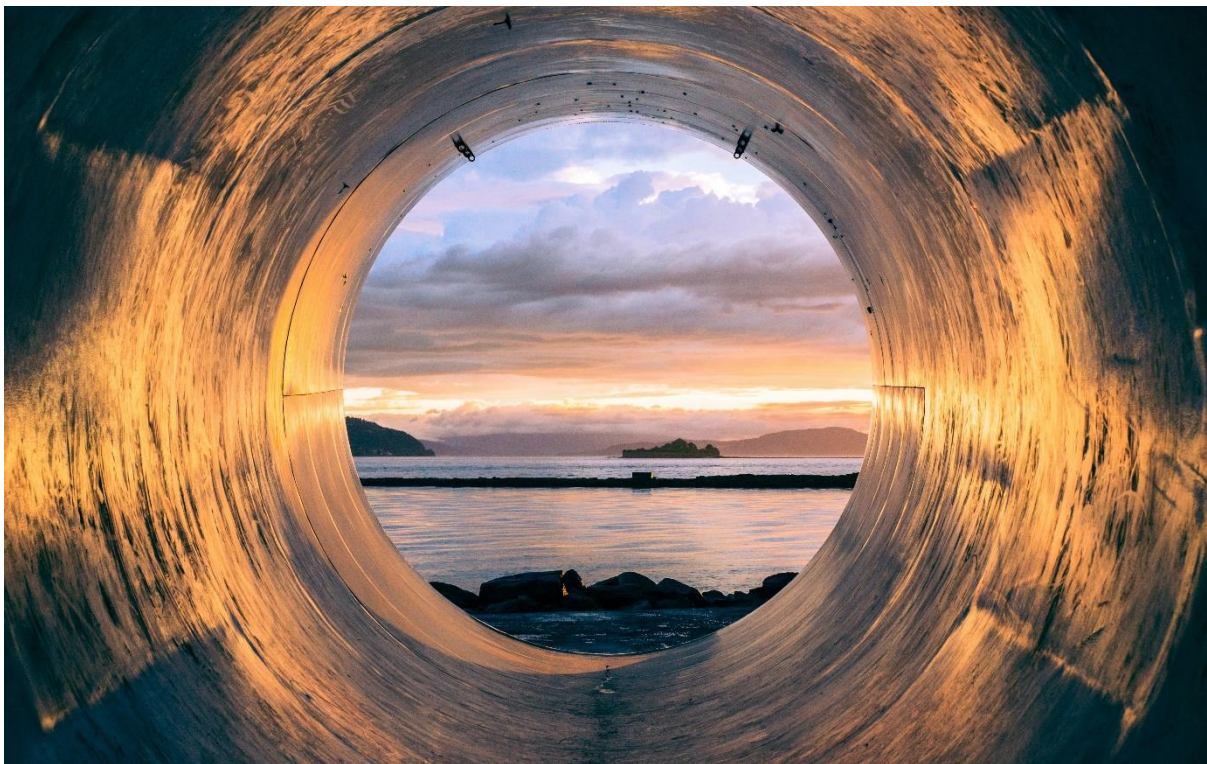
Written by 16 October 2023

Business News Northern Ireland

Welcome to our round up of the latest business news for our clients. Please contact us if you want to talk about how these updates affect your business. We are here to support you!

Applying Circular Economy principles in a business

A circular economy (CE) is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible.



CE aims to tackle global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution by emphasizing the design-based implementation of the three base principles of the model. The three principles required for the transformation to a circular economy are: designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems.

CE has been gaining popularity because it helps to minimize emissions and consumption of raw materials, open up new market prospects, increase the sustainability of consumption, and improve resource efficiency.

Introducing circular economy principles into your business offers a range of opportunities that could positively impact your bottom line, brand reputation, and long-term sustainability. Here's why you could consider adopting CE principles:

- Cost Savings – optimise your resource use and extend the life of products and materials through strategies like repair, refurbishment, and remanufacturing; reducing the need for raw materials leads to lower production costs.
- Competitive Advantage – differentiate your business from competitors by demonstrating environmental responsibility and sustainability, enhancing your brand image.
- Growth Opportunities – encourage innovative product design and alternative business models, which can lead to new revenue streams and business growth.
- Regulatory Compliance – be better positioned to comply with evolving laws and regulations related to waste management, resource consumption, and emissions reduction.
- Enhanced Supply Chain Resilience – strengthen your supply chain resilience by being more innovative and resource-efficient in the face of resource scarcity, geopolitical instability, and increasing climate-related natural disasters.

Transitioning to CE requires a shift in mindset and business strategies. This is made possible by increased knowledge and innovation skills and should be part of any business's strategic plan.

If you have a vision of what you want your business to look like when it is “complete” then you are in a position to drive your business towards that vision and you can monitor how you are doing as you go along.

If you agree it is hard to accomplish anything without a plan, we can help you start thinking about putting one in place. A strategic plan also helps you determine where to spend time, resources and money to achieve your objectives.

So how do you do a strategic plan?

1. Take time to review your own personal objectives – the business is there to provide you with what you want from life; do not forget this.
2. Look at where you are now, your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Take external advice so you have a clear understanding of your position in the marketplace, the competition, your systems, the way you do things - what you are good at and what you are not.
3. Focus on where you want to be (say) in 5 years; what you want your business to look like when it is “complete” or running profitably and applying CE principles. Then you can determine your priorities – the big issues that you need to focus on – this is the strategic plan!
4. Write down your vision and define what you must achieve and the actions you need to take. Monitor how you are progressing towards your vision each

month, what actions have been completed and what needs to be done to keep you moving towards your plan.

5. Allocate responsibility for taking the actions.
6. Monitor, review, and adjust your regular activities to keep you on track towards your plan.

The long-term benefits regarding sustainability, cost savings, and business growth can be substantial, making it a worthwhile endeavour for forward-thinking businesses. Talk to us about helping you achieve your objectives; we have considerable experience in helping our clients take their businesses to new levels.

The UK government's policy statement on CE can be seen here: [Circular Economy Package policy statement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/circular-economy)

UK businesses support Britain's plan for digital trade borders

UK businesses have given a thumbs up to incoming changes set to digitalise Britain's trade borders and make the UK the third country in the world able to accept electronic trade documents.

This move will take the UK a further step towards having a digital border system that is important for the improvement of the efficiency and sustainability of international trade for generations to come.

Research from a recent poll, commissioned by The Institute of Export and International Trade (IOE&IT) finds that the majority of UK businesses welcome this move to digital trade.

The poll finds that 75% of businesses who attended a recent IOE&IT event on the Electronic Trade Documents Act (ETDA) believe it will have a positive impact on their business, 29% of which feel it will have a 'very positive impact'. A quarter say it will have a neutral impact – and, significantly, none believe it will have a negative impact on their business.

The ETDA came into force on 20th September, and allows for key trade documents, such as bills of lading and bills of exchange, to be accepted in both paper and electronic format at the border and allowing for a streamlined process of the movement of goods.

See: [Electronic Trade Document Act enters into force with backing of UK businesses - The Institute of Export and International Trade](https://www.ioeandit.org.uk/news/electronic-trade-document-act-enters-into-force-with-backing-of-uk-businesses)

Understanding the right to work and minimum wage eligibility

All employers in the UK have a responsibility to prevent illegal working. You do this by conducting simple right to work checks before you employ someone, to make

sure the individual is not disqualified from carrying out the work in question by reason of their immigration status.

Most people employed as employees or workers must be paid the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage, but are you aware of how to check if they are entitled?

Joint HMRC and Home Office webinar: understanding right to work and minimum wage eligibility

The Home Office Immigration Enforcement and HMRC's National Minimum Wage (NMW) teams are offering joint webinars covering:

- when an employer needs to conduct a right to work check;
- what type of right to work check they need to conduct;
- how to use the Home Office Employer Checking Service;
- civil penalties and prosecutions when employers do not comply with the right to work legislation;
- how to report immigration crime;
- who is a worker for NMW purposes;
- how to establish if someone is self-employed; and
- exemptions to minimum wage eligibility.

Register here for the 17 October webinar: [Registration \(gotowebinar.com\)](https://www.gotowebinar.com)

Working from home and the £6 per week allowance

During the COVID pandemic the government relaxed the conditions to enable those working from home to be paid £6 a week tax free by their employer, or, where that was not paid by the employer, they could claim relief for £6 a week against their employment income for a tax refund from HMRC. Those relaxed rules applied for 2020/21 and 2021/22. Many employers and employees may not be aware that from 6 April 2022 the rules reverted to the strict statutory position. Employees can claim tax relief if they have to work from home under a homeworking agreement, for example because:

- their job requires them to live far away from the office,
- their employer does not have an office, or
- the office is closed every Friday and employees are required to work from home that day.

Tax relief cannot be claimed if the employee chooses to work from home.

See: [Claim tax relief for your job expenses: Working from home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

New one-stop shop to find the topics government is interested in researching

A new database of Areas of Research Interest has been developed by the Government Office for Science and the Economic and Social Research Council. The new tool which brings together all Areas of Research Interest (ARI) documents from across government departments in a one-stop shop is now live.

ARIs are lists of research questions or topics which government departments and agencies would welcome more research on to inform their policies and help close the evidence policy gap.

This [new database](#) allows anyone accessing it to search for particular areas of research interest and find out what are the main research questions facing government departments.

If applicable, the database will also find research already funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and connected to the searched topic, thereby making it easier to identify existing evidence and experts in the field.

This new tool improves accessibility, transparency, and openness around the knowledge priorities of departments, improving opportunities for collaboration and prioritisation. ARIs can be found in the database via keywords, year, government department, and via other basic metadata.

The tool has been developed and co-funded by the Government Office for Science and ESRC, as a response to widespread demand to improve both the awareness and accessibility of ARIs. To date, over 1,500 ARIs have been published and are publicly available in pdf or html format on GOV.UK.

The database was produced by Overton, a pioneering technology start-up whose mission is to support evidence-based decision-making across the world.

See: [New one-stop shop to find the topics government is interested in researching - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Latest UK Export Academy webinars

Listed below are upcoming UK Export Academy webinars to help business owners and entrepreneurs across the UK boost their exporting skills and sell their goods and services to new markets worldwide.

The UK Export Academy is delivered in various stages depending on your skill level. These include:

Essentials

Build your knowledge and confidence if you're relatively new to selling internationally or interested in learning how to start. These webinars offer a step-by-step guide to becoming an exporter.

[20 Oct - Understanding export controls](#)

[24 Oct - How to sell your services overseas \(Part 1 of 2\)](#)

[26 Oct - How to sell your services overseas \(Part 2 of 2\)](#)

[27 Oct - Intensive series: An introduction to exporting \(part 1 of 2\)](#)

[31 Oct - Intensive series: Getting your exports from A to B \(part 2\)](#)

Masterclasses

Already have a good understanding of the export basics? Attend these masterclasses to broaden your knowledge.

[23 Oct - Fuel your vision: Grantify's guide to grant funding for innovators](#)

[25 Oct - Say it just right: the importance of translation!](#)

[30 Oct - Ask an exporter: Round table with DBT Export Champions](#)

[31 Oct - Top tips for understanding VAT in Europe](#)

See: [UK Export Academy — Great.gov.uk](#)

Regional Talent Engines programme

The Royal Academy of Engineering has opened a new round of applications for its Regional Talent Engines programme.

This six-month pre-accelerator programme for early-stage founders aims to support entrepreneurial mid-late career engineers who wish to bring an innovative concept to market.



The poster features a dark blue background on the left and a teal-to-green gradient on the right. In the top left, the Royal Academy of Engineering logo is next to the text 'Royal Academy of Engineering | Enterprise Hub'. The main title 'Regional Talent Engines' is in large white font. Below it, a paragraph describes the programme as a six-month pre-accelerator for early-stage founders in Northern England, Northern Ireland, and Wales. The bottom left corner states 'Apply by 30 October, 4pm'. On the right, the hashtag '#RegionalTalentEngines' is positioned above a network diagram of black and white nodes connected by lines.

Royal Academy of Engineering | Enterprise Hub

Regional Talent Engines

A six-month pre-accelerator programme for early-stage founders in Northern England, Northern Ireland and Wales to transform great ideas into new engineering startups.

Apply by 30 October, 4pm

#RegionalTalentEngines

The programme is open to individuals in Northern Ireland, Northern England, and Wales.

The Regional Talent Engines programme offers a unique package of support as a startup accelerator, including:

- an equity-free grant of £20,000 towards for living costs;
- hybrid training workshops, roundtables, and speaker events;
- one-to-one business coaching and mentoring support; and
- access to co-working and meeting spaces in London and Belfast.

Successful participants will also get a lifetime membership of the Royal Academy of Engineering's Enterprise Hub, including access to facilities, training, and networking within a supportive entrepreneurial community.

To be eligible, applicants:

- must have technical understanding in their area of innovation; and
- should normally be experienced engineers or skilled tech professionals.

You must also be resident in, and committed to establishing a new startup in, the region where you are applying to take part in the programme. Applications are open until 4pm on 30 October 2023.

See: [Regional Talent Engines - Pre-Accelerator Programme \(raeng.org.uk\)](https://raeng.org.uk)

Invest NI Review Action Plan published

The Department for the Economy has published its Action Plan in response to the Independent Review of Invest Northern Ireland.



Whilst the Independent Review Panel acknowledged that “Invest NI should remain an Arm’s Length Body” and that the organisation has “strengths to be built upon”, it also concluded that there was “considerable room for improvement”.

To address the challenge set, more than 300 staff from across the Department and Invest NI worked collaboratively to understand the problems highlighted by the Review recommendations, before developing Strategic Actions to resolve them.

The co-designed actions set out in this ambitious plan will answer the findings and recommendations to successfully deliver the transformative and profound change called for.

See: [Invest NI Review Action Plan published | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk)

Ambition To Grow – Supporting women in business

Invest Northern Ireland's (Invest NI) latest programme aims to support women-led businesses to access support, create jobs and sell innovative products or services outside Northern Ireland.

The Ambition to Grow - Supporting Women programme, supported by [Women in Business Northern Ireland](#), will provide grant support of up to £30,000 to eligible small and medium-sized businesses that have a woman in a key decision-making position.

The funding is aimed at helping to create new employment within the business and assisting with the costs of targeting markets outside Northern Ireland, technical development activities, and upskilling existing and new employees.

Successful applicants will also be able to build valuable connections, working with other women-led businesses and encouraging shared learning and leadership development.

The deadline for applications is midday on Friday 10 November 2023.

See: [Ambition To Grow | Supporting Women programme \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk)

Derry - Londonderry employer seminars - Oct 2023 - Apr 2024

The Labour Relations Agency (LRA) is hosting a number of employer seminars on various employment topics at their regional office in Derry-Londonderry between October 2023 and April 2024.

The seminars will explore key employment issues for employers, managers, and HR practitioners, including recruitment, managing staff, mental health awareness, handling difficult conversations, managing staff absences, and how to handle discipline and grievance.

The seminars last around two hours and are free to attend. All the seminars will take place at the LRA's regional office at The Diamond in Derry-Londonderry.

Employer seminars

Fair Recruitment and Selection

Date: Wed 25 Oct 2023

Time: 10:30am to 12:30pm

Venue: LRA regional office, Derry-Londonderry

[Register to attend this seminar](#)

Certificate in Effective Line Management Practice

Date: Tue 7 Nov 2023

Time: 10:30am to 12:30pm

Venue: LRA regional office, Derry-Londonderry

[Register to attend this seminar](#)

Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace

Date: Wed 13 Dec 2023

Time: 10:30am to 12:30pm

Venue: LRA regional office, Derry-Londonderry

[Register to attend this seminar](#)

Essentials of Employment Law

Date: Wed 24 Jan 2024

Time: 10:30am to 12:30pm

Venue: LRA regional office, Derry-Londonderry

[Register to attend this seminar](#)

Handling Difficult Conversations

Date: Wed 14 Feb 2024

Time: 10:30am to 12:30pm

Venue: LRA regional office, Derry-Londonderry

[Register to attend this seminar](#)

Managing Sickness Absence

Date: Wed 13 Mar 2024

Time: 10:30am to 12:30pm

Venue: LRA regional office, Derry-Londonderry

[Register to attend this seminar](#)

Handling Discipline and Grievance

Date: Wed 10 Apr 2024

Time: 10:30am to 12:30pm

Venue: LRA regional office, Derry-Londonderry

[Register to attend this seminar](#)

Recorded webinars

The LRA has made a number of their webinars available as recordings so employers in Northern Ireland can watch them at a time that suits their schedule. The current webinar topics available as recordings include:

- maternity leave and pay;
- pregnancy at work;

- flexible working;
- staff retention;
- discipline and grievance;
- managing sickness absence;
- hybrid working;
- poor performance management;
- recruitment and selection;
- essentials of employment law;
- supporting mental health in the workplace;
- handling difficult conversations;
- dignity at work;
- redundancy;
- conducting employment investigations;
- variation of contract; and
- discipline and dismissal.

See: [LRA employer webinars available as recordings \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk)