



Prepared on 28/09/2017 by Liz Cooper.

# Living Lab project summary – Circular Economy in procurement

## Description of the paper

This paper describes a dissertation project undertaken by masters' student Amanda Midhamre in summer 2017, working with SRS, the Procurement Office, and the wider sector, to examine opportunities for utilising public procurement as a mechanism for moving towards a Circular Economy model (maximising the re-use of resources and eliminating waste).

## Research question

**How can public procurement encourage new developments in Circular Economy?**

## Objectives/sub questions

1. What are the main barriers to procuring (in a public sector context specifically) for a Circular Economy?
2. What are successful examples of procuring within the public sector, for a Circular Economy across Europe?
3. What mechanisms are available in the sphere of public procurement in the EU that promote innovative product and service development?
  - a. How are these mechanisms useful for Circular Economy innovations?
4. Are there any Circular Economy products and/or services that could be a feasible starting point for the University of Edinburgh, wishing to procure for a Circular Economy?
  - a. How could such a product and/or service practically be taken up by the University?

## Findings and recommendations

Amanda highlighted several barriers to procuring for a circular economy, including lack of knowledge and capacity, limited availability of tools and guidance, limited buy-in, associated with perceived cost, time and risk barriers, the need to influence other institutions when establishing collaborative procurement frameworks, and the devolved nature of purchasing in a university. Her recommendations include education and capacity building, the development of context-specific tools and guidance, and more focus on whole life cycle cost.

Amanda points to three examples of 'circular' public procurement that the University of Edinburgh could take inspiration from: Ronneby Municipality in Sweden, ProRail in the Netherlands, and University Medical Centre Utrecht in the Netherlands. She assesses the process used, learning, and challenges in each case.

She then examines innovative procurement mechanisms and sustainable procurement networks in the EU. Finally, she recommends carpet tiles and furniture as potentially feasible starting points for the University of Edinburgh regarding circular economy in procurement.

*Detailed report available on request from Department for SRS.*