Co-authored by Circular Textiles Foundation and UKFT

Circular Design Playbook: A focus on fibre-to-fibre recycling

A practical guide for brands and retailers

About the guide

This guide is designed to help brand and retailer teams embed circular design decision-making into their everyday work. It is a practical, accessible introduction written for design, buying, sustainability, compliance, technical and marketing teams.

It is co-authored by the Circular Textiles Foundation (CTF) and the UK Fashion & Textile Association (UKFT), drawing on CTF's technical expertise in circular design and UKFT's understanding of the legislative landscape of circular textiles and the UK fashion and textile industry, from SMEs to luxury brands and retailers.

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Foreword from Circular Textiles Foundation

The fashion industry has spent years talking about sustainability. What it has been slower to do is redesign itself.

Circular design is where that redesign begins. Not in the way a brand presents itself, or the materials it selects for a small capsule collection, but in the fundamental decisions made every season by design teams, buyers, and sourcing managers. These decisions determine the material input and whether a product has anywhere to go when a customer is done with it.

There is a strong business case for acting now. The brands that begin embedding circular design today — building the knowledge, the supplier relationships, the internal processes and external partnerships — will face significantly lower costs of transition when legislation arrives than those that wait. Eco-design requirements will mandate minimum standards for recyclability and recycled content. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes will make brands financially accountable for what happens to their products at end of life. The question is not whether those costs are coming. It is whether you absorb them reactively, under pressure, or get ahead of them on your own terms.

At the Circular Textiles Foundation (CTF), we have spent years working with brands on these decisions. What we have learned is that the barriers are rarely about willingness. They are practical: teams without the right information at the right moment, supply chains that haven't been asked the right questions, and organisations where circular design sits in one department rather than running across all of them.

That is what this guide addresses. Developed with UKFT, it is written for the full range of teams that shape a product: designers, buyers, compliance and sustainability managers, and marketers alike. The technical standards exist. The recycling infrastructure is developing. The legislation is coming. What the industry needs now is the organisational capability to translate all of that into everyday product decisions. We hope this guide helps build it.

Tim Cross, Founder, Circular Textiles Foundation

Foreword from the UK Fashion & Textile Association

The UK Fashion & Textile Association (UKFT) represents the largest network of fashion and textiles in the UK. As the voice of the UK fashion and textiles industry, UKFT plays a central role in advancing the transition to circular textiles across the entire supply chain. It works closely with industry and policymakers, while leading major programmes and collaborations that drive circular textile transition, shaping national strategy, policy, and research. Through this work, it helps ensure that the UK sector is not only prepared for forthcoming regulatory changes but is also shaping the direction of a more circular and resilient future.

Across this landscape, businesses are navigating a period of profound change. Market expectations, regulatory developments, and shifting consumer behaviours are converging to reshape how products are designed, produced, and valued.

Within this evolving landscape, eco-design is emerging as a practical and necessary way forward, where material choices are considered from the outset. Recycling, and in particular the use of recycled content and the design of recyclable products are no longer niche considerations, they are becoming critical enablers of a functioning circular textiles ecosystem. However, achieving this requires alignment across the entire value chain, from fibre selection and product design through to collection, sorting, and reprocessing infrastructure.

This is why guidance such as this is so important. Circular design cannot sit within a single function; it must be embedded across design, sourcing, compliance, and commercial teams, and it must be embedded within the wider ecosystem. This guide positions eco-design as one part of a wider system, recognising the complex network of internal and external stakeholders involved, and providing practical guidance to support better material choices.

By supporting businesses in understanding the opportunities and the practical steps required to embrace circular design now, our sector can build resilience, unlock innovation, and remain competitive in a rapidly changing global market.

Adam Mansell, CEO, UK Fashion & Textile Association

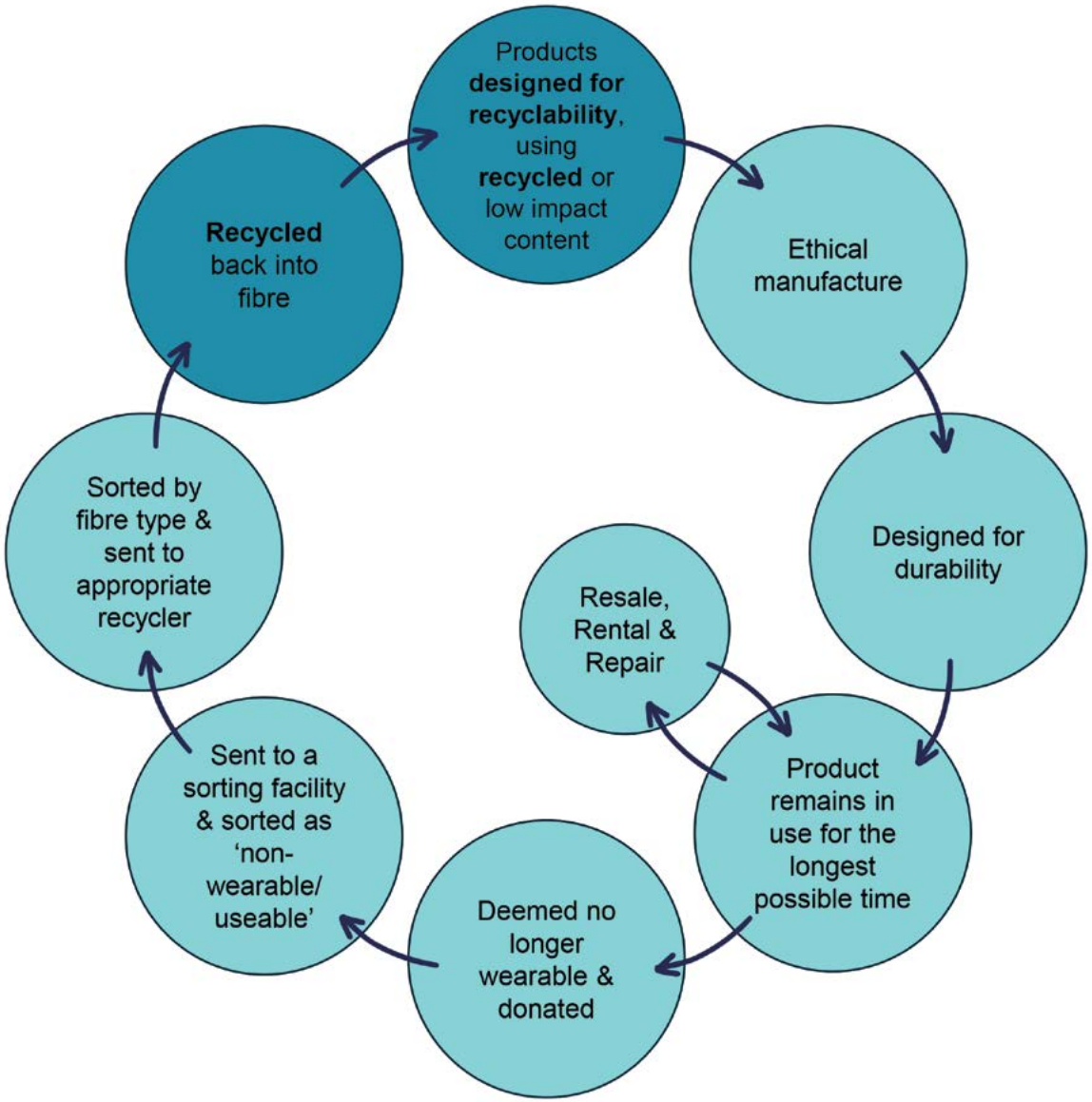
Circular Systems

FROM LINEAR TO CIRCULAR

Our existing linear economy sees us take, make and waste materials. It presumes infinite resources for extraction and the infinite regenerative capacity of our Earth, which we know is not sustainable. The fashion and textiles industry is one of the most resource intensive in the world. Millions of tonnes of non-renewable resources turned into fibres are extracted, processed, worn briefly, and then lost to landfill or incineration every year. Even where sustainability efforts have made genuine progress, those gains are ultimately undermined when the product itself has nowhere to go at end of life.

A circular economy offers the fashion and textile industry a solution. Rather than a line, it describes a loop. At the CTF, **the vision** of a circular economy starts with garments designed from the outset for recyclability and durability, using a percentage of recycled content. These garments remain in use for as long as possible: their lifespan extended through a variety of circular business models. Finally, when they can no longer be used, the materials they contain can be recovered and fed back into production for the fashion and textiles industry to use again. Circular design is not a sustainability add-on. It's a systems redesign that ensures maximum resource and value retention within the industry.

THE VISION



THE ROLE OF LEGISLATION

Circular design is no longer solely a voluntary commitment. Regulation across the textile supply-chain is reshaping the circular textiles landscape rapidly, and brands need to understand what is coming.

Under the EU Waste Framework Directive (WFD), all EU Member States were required to establish separate collection systems for textile waste from January 2025, leading to a significant increase in segregated textile volumes across European markets.

Moreover, under the WFD, the EU has officially mandated Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). EPR schemes for textiles are advancing in several European markets, meaning brands will increasingly bear financial and somewhat, operational responsibility for the end-of-life management of the products they place on the market.

Whilst an EPR for textiles is not yet in place in the UK, it is under consideration as part of wider reforms to waste and resource management. EPR funds, if redirected to fund circular textile infrastructure, will result in a flourishing ecosystem, including fibre-to-fibre recycling, which will in turn drive a higher output of recycled content expected to be pulled in the market.

The EU Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), which entered into force in July 2024, will introduce mandatory requirements for textile products sold in the EU market. This will include product level durability, repairability, recycled content, and recyclability.

Taken together, these developments point to a fundamental shift: the alignment of waste collection, producer responsibility, and product design. As collection systems expand and recycling infrastructure scales, the connection between end-of-life systems and material inputs becomes unavoidable. For circularity to work in practice, products must be designed with their next life in mind, embedding core principles such as durability and recyclability, while also incorporating recycled content to help keep materials in the loop, ensuring that what is collected can be effectively reused, recycled, and reintegrated into the supply chain.

WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

Embedding circular design effectively is not the responsibility of one team. It requires coordinated decision making across design, buying, sustainability, compliance, technical and marketing. This guide is written for all those functions, recognising that the decisions each team makes interact with and depend on the decisions of others.

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

- → Executive leadership
- → R&D, Innovation & Testing teams
- → Sustainability / ESG teams
- → Design teams
- → Sourcing & Supply Chain teams
- → Buying & Merchandising teams
- → Product Development & Technical teams
- → Compliance & Legal teams
- → Marketing & Communications teams

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

- → Brands and retailers
- → Textile recyclers
- → Material suppliers (fibres, fabric mills)
- → Manufacturers / garment producers
- → Collectors and aggregators
- → Sorters and graders
- → Technology providers and innovators
- → Policy makers and regulators
- → Standards bodies and certification organisations

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Executive leadership: Set strategy, approve investment and resources, align circularity with business goals, and oversee performance and risk.

R&D, Innovation & Testing teams: Assess, test and validate recycled and recyclable materials, supporting innovation trials and pilots.

Sustainability / ESG teams: Set circularity targets, interpret regulations, track performance and lead implementation across the business.

Design teams: Develop products with recyclability, durability and recycled content considered from the start.

Sourcing & Supply Chain teams: Source circular materials, manage supplier requirements, ensure traceability and monitor supply risks.

Buying & Merchandising teams: Drive commercial adoption through product range, volume, pricing and supplier decisions.

Product Development & Technical teams: Translate designs into manufacturable products while ensuring quality, durability and recyclability.

Compliance & Legal teams: Ensure compliance with sustainability regulations, product standards and environmental claims requirements.

Marketing & Communications teams: Develop accurate sustainability messaging and product claims aligned with brand and regulatory requirements.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Brands and retailers: Set design requirements and drive adoption of circular products and business models.

Textile recyclers: Determine what materials can be recycled and influence design choices through recycling capabilities.

Material suppliers (fibres, yarns, fabric mills): Provide circular materials and influence their availability, quality, cost and scalability.

Manufacturers / garment producers: Produce finished products, influence material efficiency and supply production waste for recycling.

Collectors and aggregators: Gather and consolidate used textiles, providing feedstock for recycling systems.

Sorters and graders: Assess textile quality and composition, determining recycling potential and feedstock quality.

Technology providers and innovators: Support traceability, material identification, recycling technologies and digital product passports.

Policy makers and regulators: Establish regulations and reporting requirements that shape circular product design and systems.

Standards bodies and certification organisations: Define and verify standards for recycled content, recyclability and environmental claims.

Circular Design Playbook: a focus on fibre-to-fibre recycling

MAKING CIRCULAR DESIGN EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

The objective of a circular economy is to maintain material value at the highest possible utility for as long as possible and we have shown how we define this as a system that begins at the design stage and is engineered through to fibre-to-fibre (F2F) recycling.

Given the increasing volumes of non-rewearable textiles and post-consumer textile waste entering the system, F2F recycling represents a technically and environmentally preferable pathway for retaining material within the industry loop. It enables recovered textile feedstocks to be reprocessed into equivalent fibre inputs, reducing dependence on virgin material extraction and supporting closed-loop material circulation at scale.

Design for Recyclability (DfR) and recycled content go hand-in-hand. DfR creates the supply; recycled content creates the demand that makes it commercially viable. Without both, circularity doesn't scale and impact isn't reduced. The environmental benefit of recycling is realised only when recycled content replaces virgin material. Without that substitution, the environmental burden of virgin extraction remains.

Embedding DfR and recycled content effectively depends on the right knowledge existing across your internal teams: in design, buying, sustainability, compliance, and marketing. Before a brand can make progress, it needs to understand where those teams currently stand. That means asking some honest internal questions:

Do our teams understand what makes a garment recyclable?

Are our circularity commitments reflected in supplier requirements and onboarding criteria?

Does our Bill of Materials give us a complete and accurate view of everything in a garment, not just the base fabric?

What is the recycled content share of our current product offer?

Are we prepared for incoming ESPR and EPR legislation?

Can we communicate our recyclability and recycled content credentials compliantly?

Most brands will find that the answers reveal gaps in data, in process, and in knowledge. That is a normal starting point, not a failure. The rest of this section is structured around those internal teams, what each needs to understand, and where to begin.

THE DESIGN TEAM: BUILDING RECYCLABILITY INTO THE BRIEF

F2F recyclers can produce high-quality recycled materials capable of replacing virgin inputs like-for-like, but they depend on brands to drive the demand that makes that investment viable. Designers sit at the heart of that relationship: the choices made at the design stage determine both the quality of the feedstock that enters the recycling system, and whether recycled materials find their way back into new collections. For design teams, this means working within the parameters of what existing recycling technologies can process and making creative decisions accordingly. Those constraints are more workable than they might initially appear, but they do require designers to be briefed differently, and to understand the reasoning behind the constraints, not just the rules.

WHAT DESIGN TEAMS NEED

1. **Clarity on which fibre types and compositions are compatible with current recycling technologies**

2. **An understanding of how component choices - labels, zips, buttons, elastics, interlinings - affect the recyclability of the whole product**

RECYCLING PARAMETERS

Common disruptors

- **PU** — Found in print, adhesives, backings, fabric coatings
- **Metallics** — Found in threads, yarns and printing inks
- **Elastane** — Found in trims and fabric-based elastane

	Cotton **Min. 95% Cotton, 5% other** Aim for monofibre: 5% a limit, not a target	**Wool** **Min. 95% Wool, 5% other** Aim for monofibre: 5% a limit, not a target	**Polyester** **100% Polyester** **All** fabric and trims must be 100% polyester
Thread / yarn	Cotton preferred. Other fibres within 5%	Wool preferred. Cotton or polyester within 5%	100% polyester
Interfacing	Cotton preferred. Other fibres within 5%	Not accepted	100% polyester
Adhesive (bonding, interfacing)	No PU	Not accepted	100% polyester-based adhesive only (Co-PES). No PU
Elastane	Must be within 5%	Not accepted	Not accepted - polyester-based stretch only
Embroidery	Cotton OR must be within 5%. No metallic.	Wool OR must be within 5%. No metallic.	100% polyester
Embroidery backing	Cotton preferred. Must be within 5%	Must be within 5%	100% polyester (including any adhesives)
Buttons, eyelets, poppers	Polyester or metal accepted	Polyester or metal accepted	100% polyester
Zips	Polyester or metal accepted Cotton tape preferred. Other fibres tape counted in 5%	Polyester or metal accepted Cotton tape preferred to synthetic fibres	100% Polyester zip teeth and zip tape. Metal zip head and pull accepted for durability
Drawstrings, tapes, binding	Cotton preferred. Other fibres within 5%	Wool preferred. Cotton or polyester within 5%	100% polyester
Velcro	Must be within 5%	Not accepted	100% polyester
Print	Water based inks only (no PU/plastisol)	Not accepted	Water based inks only (no PU/plastisol) Transfer prints must use polyester-based adhesive (Co-PES)

3. **Knowledge of available recycled content**

4. **Guidance on which print techniques, finishes and embellishments are compatible with recyclability and what these look like in practice**

PRINT

What is accepted?

Water based inks

What isn't accepted?

Heavy, raised or plastic-like prints that stick to the surface of fibres. PU based adhesives are not accepted.

For polyester only -
Adhesives can be used, but must be polyester based (Co-PES) only

Techniques such as:

Flocking | Foiling

Puff print | Plastisol inks

DECORATIVE TRIMS

Embroidery

Use a thread that matches the base fabric where possible. Ensure no disruptors in additional construction materials

Appliques

A way of reducing 'other' fibres – cotton appliques on cotton base fabric would reduce amount of polyester embroidery thread.

Sequins

Not accepted on cotton or wool, but polyester sequins on polyester base fabric, stitched with polyester thread, would be accepted through a thermo-mechanical polyester recycling system.

5. **Permission to prototype and test circular versions of existing products, rather than treating circular design as an all-or-nothing redesign**

One of the most consistent findings from brands working with the CTF that have gone through this process is that knowledge unlocks creativity. When designers understand why a particular fabric or component is problematic, they typically find alternatives.

THE BUYING TEAM: MAKING CIRCULARITY PART OF THE COMMERCIAL CONVERSATION

Circularity can feel like an added cost and an added constraint; and it is worth being honest that some changes do carry short term implications, but the bigger picture is positive. Brands that start building circular ranges today will have competitive advantage. For buyers, this is a commercial argument, not just a sustainability one.

The practical steps are more manageable than they might seem. Range planning is a good place to start. Most ranges already contain products that are close to meeting circular parameters with modest changes and identifying those early, rather than trying to redesign everything at once, allows teams to build momentum and confidence. Supplier conversations are equally valuable: suppliers often know more about the recyclability of the materials and processes they use than buyers realise, and involving them early frequently surfaces solutions that a brand working in isolation would not find. It also signals that circular design is a sustained commercial expectation, not a one off ask.

Many suppliers, particularly at fabric and yarn tier, already have experience working with recycled content, even if largely centred on pre-consumer waste and PET to date. Building on those relationships and including recycled content targets as a standing agenda item at trade show meetings and line reviews, embeds recycled content into the commercial conversation rather than treating it as an exception.

SUSTAINABILITY, COMPLIANCE AND TECHNOLOGISTS: TRANSLATING REQUIREMENTS INTO PRACTICE

In many organisations, the sustainability team or technologists are closest to the levers for circular design: recycling technologies, legislative requirements, certification standards, innovation. The challenge is translating that knowledge into guidance that design and buying colleagues can use at the point of decision, because circular design that isn't understood by the people making product decisions simply won't happen consistently.

The internal groundwork matters most. Circular design needs to be anchored in sustainability strategy and reflected in material standards, recycled content targets and waste reduction goals owned across the business, not held within the sustainability team alone. That means embedding circular parameters into range planning, supplier briefs and material selection criteria, so circularity becomes a standing commercial expectation rather than a project.

External partners can accelerate that work. Circular design specialists, F2F recyclers and takeback providers can bring the supply chain to life for internal teams in a way that no internal briefing document can.

THE MARKETING TEAM: UNDERSTANDING WHAT CAN & CANNOT BE CLAIMED

Designing a circular product is one thing. Communicating it responsibly is another and the stakes are high. Marketing teams are often the last to be involved in circular design conversations and the first to face questions about what they are allowed to say.

The UK Competition and Markets Authority's Green Claims Code sets out clear expectations for any environmental claim made in a consumer facing context. Claims must be truthful and accurate, must not omit material information, must be clear and unambiguous and must be substantiated.

Circularity communications are strongest when they sit within a broader sustainability strategy, linked to targets, progress and evidence, rather than presented as isolated product claims. That context is what transforms a marketing statement into a credible commitment.

We encourage every marketing team to familiarise themselves with both before signing off any circularity related communication and to consider the following for on-garment, instore and online communications:

Be specific and transparent. Avoid broad or vague claims such as "this product is circular" and instead clearly explain the environmental attribute being referenced.

Be accurate about scope. If only certain products in a range meet circular design parameters, do not make range-wide claims.

Substantiate. Claims should be supported by robust evidence, such as verified data, third-party certifications, accredited standards, Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs), forensic testing records, or other credible forms of scientific verification where relevant.

Avoid absolutes. A percentage of waste is inevitable, so avoid using '100%' or 'fully' when communicating the recyclability of products.

Don't get ahead of the infrastructure. F2F recycling requires functioning take-back and sorting systems. Unless a verified scheme routes products to appropriate recycling, brands should not imply that consumers can simply recycle their garments.

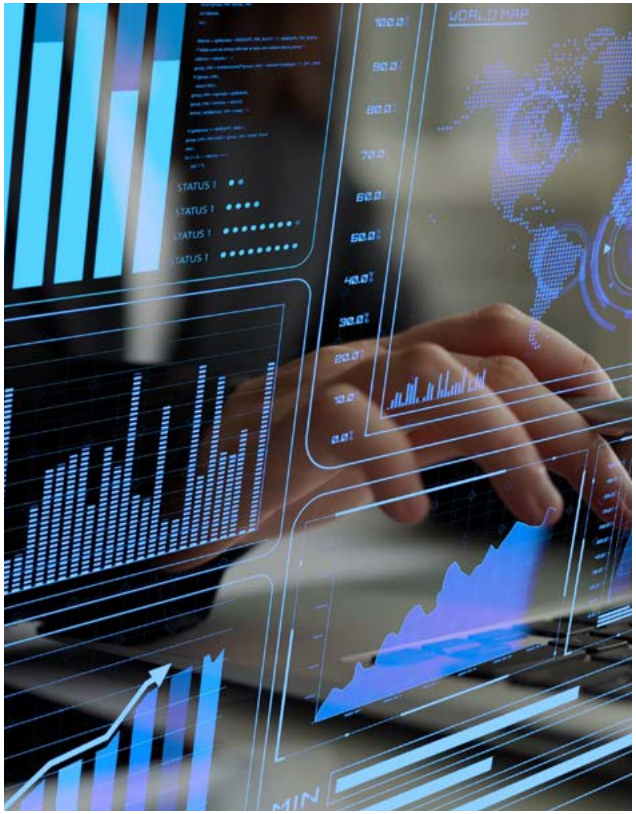
Consider the international context. Businesses should also consider international legislation when making claims. Being able to demonstrate that a product is recyclable within the EU does not mean it would be recyclable within another jurisdiction as it depends on that country's infrastructure.

Avoid forward-looking claims that cannot currently be evidenced. Statements that imply future recyclability or recycling infrastructure that does not yet exist are increasingly subject to scrutiny.

Enabling Mechanisms

DATA

Understanding what circular design requires of each team is one half. Building the organisational infrastructure to make it happen is the other. This section covers practical enabling mechanisms that allow circular design to be standard practice across a brand.



Data is the key to unlocking what is already recyclable within your range and to knowing where to direct resource for greatest impact. For many brands, getting a clear picture of what their products are made of is more difficult than it sounds, but it is the essential first step.

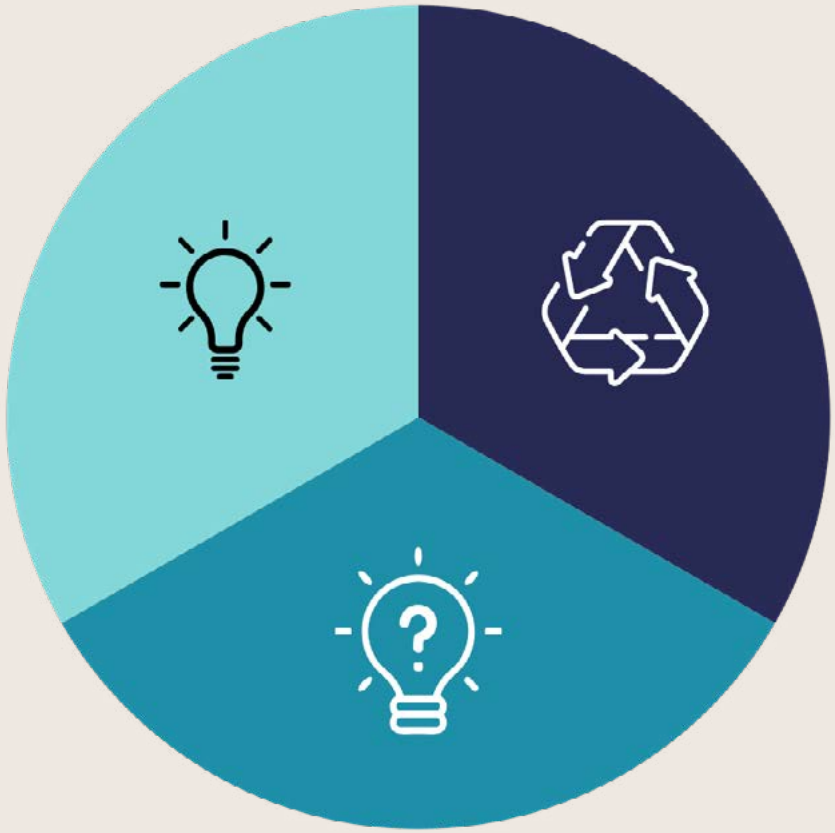
A good place to start is your Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) system — if one is in place. Where it exists, auditing product specifications against circular design parameters and recycled content targets will quickly reveal which products are close to compliance and which present greater challenges. Most brands find that this exercise is itself illuminating, surfacing gaps in data quality, inconsistencies in how materials are recorded, components that have never been formally captured and opportunities to increase recycled content. But the presence of a PLM does not guarantee the data within it is complete, consistent, or structured enough to be actionable. For many brands, the first task is not the audit itself, it is getting the underlying data into a state where a meaningful audit is possible.

Equally important is understanding where your products go at end of life. Brands that can trace where their post-industrial waste is processed and where post-consumer products end up, are in a far stronger position to make meaningful decisions about circular design and recycled content sourcing. That data, even where incomplete, starts to map the material flows that circular strategy depends on and identifies the relationships with sorters, recyclers and waste processors that are worth building.

From there, the goal is to build a robust material data infrastructure: accurate, verified fibre composition data at component level (not just the base fabric), supplier-verified materials declarations ideally supported by third-party testing, recycled content claims that are evidenced and traceable and systems that make this data accessible to design, buying and compliance teams at the point of decision-making. Without reliable data, brands cannot assess recyclability, cannot make credible green claims and cannot comply with emerging legislative requirements.

FRAMEWORKS

Theory of Thirds: Transitioning an entire product range to circular design overnight is neither realistic nor necessary. Through our ongoing research, the CTF has found that clothing collections can broadly be divided into three categories:



Recyclable: Garments that are already readily recyclable using existing F2F recycling technologies. By identifying garments with fibres and construction methods that are compatible with current recycling systems, brands can capture the quick wins that immediately lower overall impact.

Design Opportunity: Garments that could be recycled with relatively small design changes, without compromising aesthetic, performance, or function. The next step to lowering the impact of garments is through understanding where simple redesigns can unlock recyclability.

Challenging: Garments that are harder to redesign due to commercial requirements, durability needs, or because current recycling technologies cannot yet process them at scale. Even when a garment is difficult to design for recyclability, there are still effective ways to reduce its impact, including using recycled content and prioritising durability so it stays in use for longer.

The encouraging news is that two-thirds of a typical range are already within reach — existing F2F recycling technologies can process them today, either as they are or with modest changes. That is a significant opportunity and it is where brands should focus resource first.

Rather than attempting to redesign everything at once, start with your 'Recyclable' products to build confidence and capability, then work through your 'Design Opportunity' category systematically. Volume lines and hero products are often the best starting point within those first two categories: the business case is stronger, the supply chain relationships are established and the impact is greater.

Your 'Challenging' products need not be ignored, even where DfR is difficult, using recycled content and prioritising durability can meaningfully reduce their impact and keep them in use for longer. In relation to DfR, they are best approached once internal knowledge and supplier relationships are more established and as recycling technologies continue to develop.

A Circular Bill of Materials:

A Circular Bill of Materials captures and assesses the circularity of a brand's product at component level. It extends the conventional Bill of Materials (BoM) to include the level of detail that circularity and forthcoming legislation require — a fully itemised breakdown of all materials and components, going beyond base fabric to include every component fabric, construction material, trim, label and finish.

For many brands, building out this level of detail for the first time is the most significant step in the circular design process and one of the most valuable. A complete, accurate Circular Bill of Materials serves as a comprehensive digital record for each product, making it possible to assess recyclability, identify where changes are needed and track progress over time.

The Circular Bill of Materials is also important from a compliance perspective. With a growing industry focus on transparency, accurate and detailed product documentation is becoming essential. Maintaining a clear, itemised Circular Bill of Materials for every garment will help brands mitigate potential future costs and stay ahead of upcoming regulatory requirements, making it an investment worth making now, rather than under pressure later.

SETTING TARGETS

The most effective place to start is where alignment already exists. Most brands will have some sustainability commitments in place, whether that is a broader net zero strategy, existing material standards, or waste reduction goals. Circular design targets do not need to be built from scratch; they need to be connected to what is already there.

From that foundation, targets can be introduced progressively. Recycled content is often the most accessible starting point, as brands may already be using some recycled materials and formalising a target around increasing that percentage is a natural next step. Design targets, such as the proportion of a range that meets circular design parameters by a given season, can follow as internal knowledge and Circular Bill of Material data develops. Waste targets (tracking and reducing material waste from development and sampling through to post-consumer product) complete the picture.

What matters most is that targets are grounded in data, owned across the business and reviewed regularly. A recycled content target sitting only with the sustainability team will not move. One that is written into supplier briefs, range planning conversations and buying decisions will.

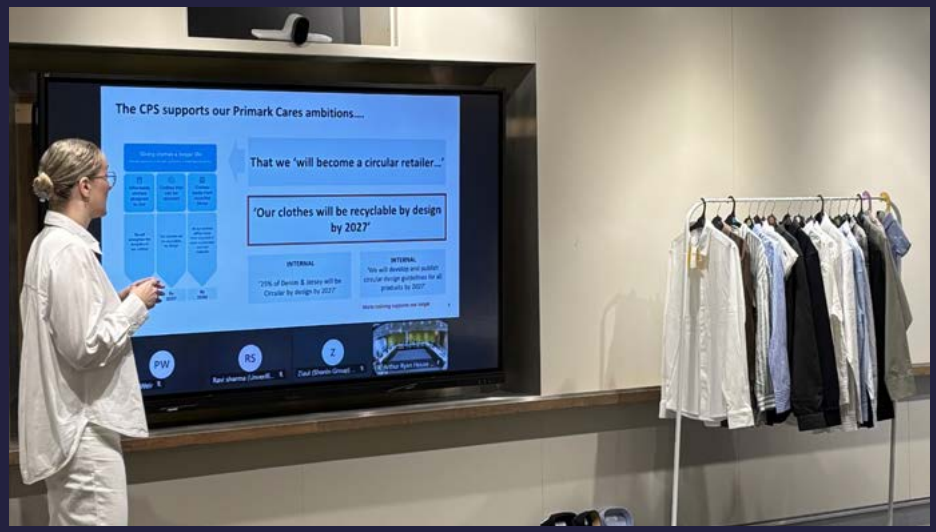
CASE STUDY:

Primark — From Training to Standard

Primark's partnership with the Circular Textiles Foundation (CTF) shows how circular design can be embedded across a large retail organisation, moving from training and framework development through to product-level implementation.

The CTF partnered with Primark in 2024 on a new training programme with recyclability at its centre. The programme supports and upskills teams across buying, design and quality, as well as key suppliers, to apply circular design principles across clothing product categories. Through category-by-category workshops, colleagues can put circular design theory into practice and understand how to embed it into their everyday work.

In 2026, Primark launched its updated Circular Product Standard 2.0, bringing together three years of learning, testing and collaboration with the CTF and other industry partners. 5% of all clothing units sold at Primark during 2024/2025 financial year were circular by design. Within key categories, this increased to 20% of jersey and 8% of denim. Earlier in the year, Primark launched its first-ever denim collection made using post-consumer waste, designed to minimise disruptors that can make recycling harder at the end of the garment's life.



What the Primark model shows:

Starting with simpler product categories: Primark began its circular journey with denim and jersey, product categories that were often already 100% cotton and relatively simple in construction. This made it easier for teams to apply the standard in practice and build confidence before moving on to more complex categories.

Treat circularity as a two-pillar process: Primark's approach recognises that not every product needs to start from scratch. Some products can be converted, meaning they are already close to meeting the standard and only need specific tweaks. Others are created from the ground up in collaboration with the expertise of product colleagues and suppliers, with circular design principles built in from the beginning. Both approaches are important and complement each other in helping Primark reach circularity at scale.

Supplier expertise is invaluable: Working with trusted suppliers allows Primark to understand what is technically possible and what will work in practice. This input has helped Primark find practical solutions, like reducing elastane in kidswear waistbands without affecting fit or function and using cotton embroidery techniques that keep decorative detail while supporting monofibre design. These examples show why supplier partnerships are important in making circular design pragmatic and realistic.

Where to Start — Actions for Brands

Circular design can feel like a significant undertaking. But the brands that have made the most progress are the ones that started somewhere, learned from it and continued to build. The following actions are drawn from everything covered in this guide and are intended as a practical starting point.

- **Audit your data.** Review your PLM system and understand what your products are made of at component level. Identify where data is incomplete or unverified. This single step will tell you more about your circular design opportunity than anything else.
- **Get your BoM in order.** Work toward a fully itemised Circular Bill of Materials. This is the foundation for recyclability assessment, green claims substantiation and future regulatory compliance.
- **Start the supplier conversation.** Brief your main suppliers on what circular design means for your brand and ask what they already know. The answers will often surprise you.
- **Map your range against the 'Theory of Thirds'.** Which products are already recyclable? Which can incorporate recycled content? Knowing this tells you where to focus resource first and where to build your business case internally.
- **Integrate circular design into your critical path.** Identify the earliest point at which circular design parameters can be introduced into your product development process and make it a standard checkpoint, not an afterthought.
- **Assign a circular design champion.** This does not need to sit within design or sustainability — buying, compliance, or a commercial lead can be equally effective. What matters is that the champion has the authority and cross-functional reach to keep circular design moving across teams.
- **Know your green claims position.** Before your next season's communications go out, review your circularity related language against the CMA Green Claims Code. Know what you can say, what you cannot and what substantiation sits behind every claim.

Finally — reach out. CTF and UKFT are here to support brands at every stage of this journey, whether you are just getting started or looking to go further and faster. You do not have to figure it out alone.

Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
Bill of Materials (BoM)	A complete list of the materials, components and sub-components that make up a finished product, including quantities and specifications. The Circular Bill of Materials extends this to include recyclability parameters for each component.
Circular Economy	An economic model designed to eliminate waste and keep materials in use. In fashion and textiles, this means designing products from the outset for recyclability and durability, facilitating circular business models and enabling end-of-life fibre-to-fibre recycling back into new materials for the fashion and textiles industry to use again.
Design for Recyclability (DfR)	Designing a product within the parameters of existing fibre-to-fibre recycling technologies so that it can be recycled at the end of its usable life.
Disruptor	An element on clothing or textile products that interferes with the recycling process, such as PU, metallics, elastane and hard trims. Not all disruptors are equal – some are more tolerable than others, depending on the fibre type and recycling process.
Fibre-to-fibre (F2F) Recycling	The process of recycling cutting waste and end-of-life textile products back into fibres that can be used to make new textile products. F2F creates a closed loop within the fashion and textiles industry.
Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)	Establishing a framework of requirements for textile products sold in the EU market, including product level durability, repairability, recycled content and recyclability.
Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)	An approach either led by policy or industry, where producers are held accountable for the lifecycle of textile products, particularly their end-of life management.
Monofibre	A product made predominantly from a single fibre type (e.g. 100% cotton or 100% polyester). Monofibre products are generally more compatible with current fibre-to-fibre recycling technologies than blended fabrics.

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