

Community-based bicycle repair and the EPR scheme

CRNI's members community-based reuse and recycling initiatives

Background

CRNI is the representative body for community-based reuse, repair and recycling organisations in Ireland. Many of CRNI's member organisations specialise in material streams including furniture, textiles and paint. One of the most common reuse and repair material streams among our members is bicycle repair, which accounts for almost 20% of CRNI's membership.

From our ongoing support and interaction with these members we have learned about the challenges they face dealing with end-of-life bicycle tyres, including:

- Associated fees currently incurred from this activity
- Lack of sustainable and easy solutions to dealing with this volume of tyre waste

We sought to understand the life cycle story of the tyres more fully, and how we could support our members to avail of recycling solutions. From our investigations we learned about plans to broaden Ireland's existing [tyre EPR scheme](#) that to date has not included bicycle tyres.

The nature of our members' activities with repairing and upcycling bikes as a focus of their activities results in a large volume of end-of-life bicycle tyres generated as a result of their activities. Additionally CRNI members are motivated to find a standardised and sustainable solution to this generation of waste due to their nature as social enterprises is centred in achieving the social/ environmental objective of their organisation, which leads them to searching for an accountable process of recycling/reusing this waste.

Policy environment

As the Approved Body for operating the tyre compliance scheme, [Circol ELT](#) ensures the environmentally sound management of waste tyres by working with subcontractors who manage the responsible collection of this waste stream and revenue from associated Environmental Management Costs (EMC). This work is delivered in accordance with the Tyre EPR scheme within the Waste Management (Tyres and Waste Tyres Regulations) 2017 (S.I. No. 400/2017), and forms part of Ireland's *Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy 2020-2025*.

The [Tyre EPR scheme is due to be expanded in January 2025](#) to include tyres from vehicle categories that are not currently listed. In preparation Circol ELT has consulted with handlers of tyre types that will be included in the expanded scheme, including bicycle tyres.

Circol regards CRNI as a key stakeholder in this sector consultation exercise. Circol has met directly with CRNI member the Rediscovery Centre, and welcomes the offer of a broader dataset from CRNI's wider membership.

The current situation - CRNI's members

In July 2024 CRNI surveyed its members who specialise in bike repair to inform a response to Circol; all ten members who specialise in bicycle repair responded to the survey. CRNI captured data on –

- Current levels of tyre replacement
- Volume of used tyres in storage
- Charges made and/or incurred associated with tyre replacement services
- General sentiment on end-of-life tyre recycling

Survey findings are as follows:

- Around 10,000 used end-of-life bicycle tyres are handled annually through members' repair activity
- Individual rates of collection range from 60 units to 3-5,000 (estimated) units annually
- Most members are not currently charging customers for the disposal of tyres, but some are currently considering it
 - Feedback those who are not currently factoring it into their pricing is not discourage customers from engaging with their services in a crowded market
- Those that do charge add €1 as a surcharge, or factor it into the price of a new tyre
- Members experience the following barriers to availing of existing tyre recycling solutions:
 - Lack of tyre collection services that are willing to collect bike tyres
 - Limited collection options create additional storage demands on members to hold used tyres awaiting collection
 - Financial cost to members of recycle bicycle tyres sustainably - one member reported a monthly spend of €100 on tyre recycling
 - Incompatibility between social, community and/or environmental values of some members and some existing service providers
- All members have either looked into solutions for recycling end-of-life tyres or want to find out more

Data published by the [CSO](#) indicate that approximately 130,000 replacement bicycle tyres came onto the market in Ireland in 2023. This indicates that CRNI's members are currently involved in 7.5% of bicycle tyre consumption in Ireland annually.

Considerations for extending EPR scheme to include bicycle tyres

Circol ELT are developing a set of proposals for the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) for how the Tyre EPR scheme might be broadened to include bicycle tyres- submitting to the DECC in September, with an anticipated decision in Q1 of 2025.

All CRNI's members who responded to the survey support the introduction of a recycling scheme for bicycle tyres and tubes. They anticipate the following benefits:

- Financially sustainable solutions for waste products of bicycle tyres and tubes
- Confidence in recycling process; ability to share this with customers, stakeholders and other beneficiaries

- Standardised charges for recycling, applied at the start of product life cycle
- Easier to secure collections service by tyre recycling services
- Encourage best practice disposal
- Educate society on circular economy practice and principles

CRNI hopes to see the new Tyre EPR scheme address the challenges reported by CRNI's members. In particular the scheme should create convenient collection or drop-off options for community-based repair services to recycle used bicycle tyres. The services should incur minimal or no financial cost from recycling bicycle tyres. To aid a smooth phasing in of bicycle tyres into the extended EPR scheme, the stockpile of 'historic tyres' currently stored by repair services should also be considered. These tyres would have been purchased without an EMC applied, and the costs associated with their collection and recycling should be factored into the new EPR scheme.