Innovation in waste processing to achieve circularity

Christopher Cheeseman
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
Imperial College London, London SW7 2BU

There is no doubt that we need to move towards a circular economy in which materials remain in the economic cycle. This is critically important given the estimates for global waste generation in the coming years. What is not so clear is how we can make this transition happen, because industry alone is often not in a position to drive forward the necessary changes. This presentation highlights the critical role of identifying opportunities for the circular economy and the importance of research and innovation. It is also recognised that research and innovation are often not sufficient to make the necessary changes in the way materials are managed. What is needed is new materials resources entrepreneurs, who recognise the potential in the many incredible materials we manufacture that currently form wastes and who have the skills to use these to form new circular economy businesses. The presentation will include examples of different materials, including waste clays, disposable cups, waste glass, incineration residues and paper sludge ash, that are currently designated as wastes, but which, through research and innovation, have potential to be part of a circular economy.