Building societies in the U.K. distinguish themselves by their ownership structure. Unlike banks that have shareholders, members of building societies actually have an ownership in their financial institution. “Almost two centuries ago, we started by looking to help ordinary people save for their first home,” said Debbie Hubbard, who manages End User Services and IT Operations & Service Delivery.

Nationwide is the largest such institution in the world, with over 16 million members. It’s headquartered in Swindon, England, and is the 2nd-largest mortgage provider in the U.K., providing a full-range of financial services including current accounts, credit cards and insurance investments.

In addition to putting its members first, Nationwide cares deeply about its impact on the environment. They are a Gold Triple Standard partner of the U.K.’s highly—regarded Carbon Trust, which works with businesses and governments to create a sustainable, low carbon future. The accreditation from the Carbon Trust means that Nationwide sends no waste to a landfill and is using 100 percent renewable electricity.

Therefore, when it came to supporting its employee base with workplace devices—such as PCs and smartphones—Nationwide looked at the issue through the prism of helping to contribute to the circular economy.

A good example is their recent acquisition of 30,000 devices. In this scenario, the laptops will be used for a period of time, and then are decommissioned and given new lives, as opposed to simply recycling them—or worse: having them deposited into a landfill.
The immense challenge for Nationwide, however, was that a global pandemic had just hit, and suddenly thousands of Nationwide’s team members were now working from home.

The company’s protocol for decommissioning technology was no longer as simple as when everyone was in a branch location. Not only was it more complex, they needed a way that allowed them to manage the process with the strictest of security protocols, which is foundational to their organization.

“When we take the device on, we look to build it through its lifecycle with the user,” said Hubbard. “Then, once we’re finished with it in our own estate, we send it off to be upcycled so that it can have its next life.”

The heightened complexity of Nationwide’s situation made this process all the more critical.

Nationwide turned to HPEFS to help solve this unprecedented problem. Within just a few short days, HPEFS established an entirely new return protocol that allowed for individuals to return their tech from their homes.

The process not only needed to be secure, but also contactless, in order to preserve everyone’s health and safety in a dramatically disrupted world. Once the tech reached the HPEFS renewal center, it was audited, cleansed, and redeployed back to Nationwide. For tech they no longer needed, it went on to its secondary life. A Circular Economy Report was generated by HPEFS to provide transparency on the entire process. This all encompassing report gave Hubbard and her Nationwide team an official documentation on the energy, material, carbon, and landfill savings achieved through the upcycling program.

The asset renewal program will be supporting Nationwide’s sustainability strategy and carbon reduction goals through the assets processed and sold back into the circular economy. “There’s an economic benefit working with HPEFS, but it’s also about doing the right thing,” said Hubbard.

Being a financial services institution, there are lots of regulations that we’ve got to comply with, but also the data we hold for our members is very precious,” said Hubbard. “We’ve got to have confidence that when that device goes back, it’s very securely wiped and there’s not a risk to our members or their money.”

– DEBBIE HUBBARD, END USER SERVICES AND IT OPERATIONS & SERVICE DELIVERY, NATIONWIDE