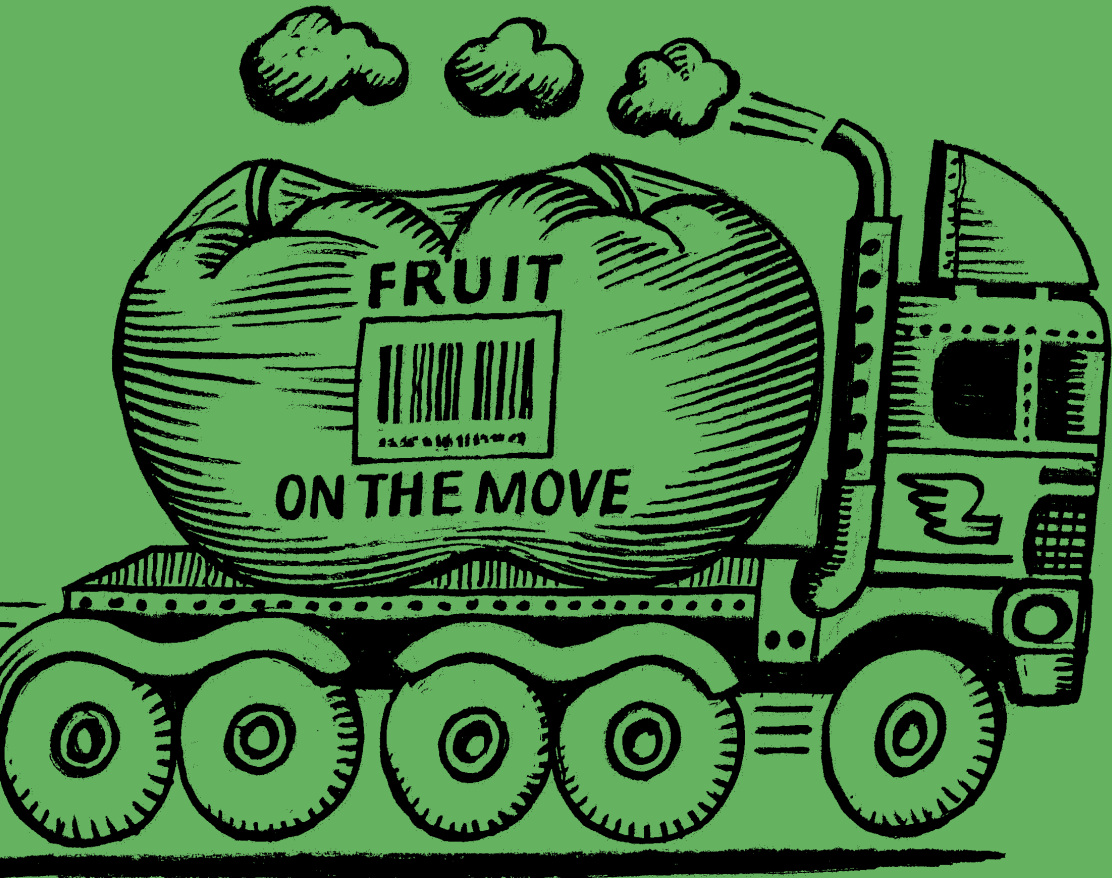


Spring 2009

junkmail

Devon Community Recycling & Community Composting Network News

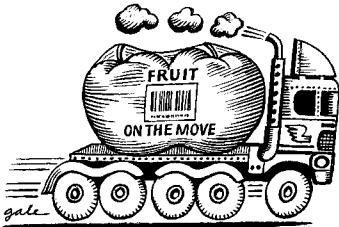


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Ban the Plastic Bag
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DCRN DCCN Strategy

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**Packaging Conference at
County Hall November 28th –**

It's a Wrap

Packaging has become a popular issue of late –

Modbury went plastic bag free inspiring countless communities to do the same. Supermarkets have been belatedly jostling to reduce bags. Transition Town Totnes ran a Waste Week in October including an excellent cross sector forum event on packaging. TQ Recycling got their planning permission for the first automated plastic sorting plant for Devon, and 'Don't let Devon go to waste' campaign has been promoting 'love food, hate waste'.

Councillors, community recyclers and activists, business reps and Recycling Officers were among the packed delegates at this Conference organised by Devon County Council to explore some of the complex issues around packaging and waste - including carbon footprinting, design,

product life cycle analysis, supply chains, food issues, plastics, and the difficult task of reconciling different needs and functions. This illustrates clearly how waste is not a single issue – but cuts across inter-related subjects and sectors, and needs to incorporate carbon reduction issues to a greater extent. However, we live with systems that are divided into 'different departments', so how can we foster more joined up thinking and action and speed up change?

The conference:

Speakers included Guy Watson of Riverford farm, Mark Shayler of Eco3 environmental & design innovation consultancy who has worked with large corporate clients, Paul Davidson of WRAP, Marks & Spencer, and Trish Carrington, from a Devon recycling business.

Cucumbers and coconuts?

We've all seen daft packaging but did you know that wrapping a cucumber in Clingfilm increases its shelf life by up to 10 days, coconuts are cling-wrapped because a bar code sticker won't stick on the shell, and some vegetables are packaged as checkout staff cannot be relied upon to distinguish between cauliflower and broccoli?! Apparently retailers like apples wrapped in 4 pack protective trays because they can reduce wasted apples due to damage.

How much waste is packaging?

Between 11% and 18% of residual household waste is now plastics, mainly packaging –and it is high on the public's concerns about waste and resource use. Commercial packaging waste recycling is governed by packaging recovery targets by material, with recycling rates set by Government. The 2012 recycling rates for commercial plastic packaging are 33%, aluminium 42%, paper and glass are higher. These rates are condemned by FoE as incompatible with the Government's stated carbon emission reduction targets and also because it is relatively easy to clean-stream business waste for recycling.

Reducing the need for packaging

Riverford Farm's business has grown to £35m a year turnover, and Guy Watson reckoned the only solution was to minimise the use of packaging altogether by sourcing locally and seasonally so as not to need lengthy supply chains that create the need for complex packaging, transportation, refrigeration, and long shelf life. He said, however, that in researching the carbon footprint of Riverford, some card packaging, though renewable, has a higher carbon footprint than some plastic packaging, due to transportation weight and bulk, and that paper and card manufacture is not as clean and benign as many think. But using reusable plastic crates, boxes and containers presents major investment and storage issues. Packaging represented 17% of Riverford's carbon footprint.

Carbon foot-printing and reducing emissions?

This has been a recent driver in forcing business to look at packaging. There is also a strong case that waste should increasingly be viewed in relation to cutting carbon emissions and our unsustainable consumption – not just in Waste Directive terms. Some argue that we need a clear

price for carbon to enable various drivers to start reducing emissions and to include materials recycling in carbon offsetting so incentives could be paid to make plastic recycling more cost effective. Wrap highlighted the carbon saving of recycling plastic over

throwing away a third of their weekly food shopping – that's 6.7 million tonnes of food waste per annum, and equivalent to £420 per annum per household. Food waste generates the equivalent of 18m tonnes of CO2 emissions per annum – the



disposal to energy from waste. How long before people look back on the 'cheap oil' era of single use disposable plastic packaging and products with incredulity?

Some food issues

Linked to packaging is food waste, which accounts for over 30% of waste arising. Many consumers

equivalent of taking 1 in 5 cars off the road. One tonne of food waste = 4.5 tonnes of CO2 emissions. So it's essential to reduce food waste and packaging waste at the same time.

Questions dot questions?

But what are retailers and designers doing to reduce packaging waste

now? How can the different needs of consumers, producers, retailers and environmental imperatives be reconciled? What will be the impact of peak oil on the way we consume? What new aspects have carbon footprinting and lifecycle analysis put on waste issues? Why is packaging often multi material and combining different plastic polymers? How far are we away from a plastics recycling strategy? These and many other issues were explored on the day.

Too little, too late?

In the context of spiralling carbon emissions, peak oil and rapid climate change is enough being done? We are at the stage of trying to find engineering solutions to the end-of-pipe chaos posed by the throwaway culture, but many argue that we need to go right back to design concept, lifestyles, and behaviour – to design waste out of the system and move to more sustainable modes of consumption and production compatible with one planet living.

Problems of starch based plastics

There was a time when starch plastics were hailed as a replacement for conventional plastic. However, delegates agreed that starch plastics are not good

as they consume more energy (currently fossil fuel) in their manufacture than they save. They can contaminate the recycling of conventional plastics which relies on very low contamination. Most people do not home compost them, and in landfill they will create methane as they break down.

Reducing waste through design innovation

Mark Shayler spoke about design innovation, carbon reduction, and



the potentially massive savings to be made by rethinking and re-designing retail, products and packaging. For example, why are all goods packaged for fancy display when only one display item is required and the rest can be simply packaged? Men's shirts require 11 different pieces of packaging for

presentation purposes. Packaging design should consider reuse or easy recycling higher up in its hierarchy, which would make 'end of pipe' recovery much easier. How long before the sea change to 'cradle to cradle' design and production and the leapfrogging of the slow pace of incremental change?

The difficulties of segregation, collection, & recycling of plastics

Trish Carrington highlighted that plastics recycling is about polymer separation (7 different polymer types) and getting a clean stream of material – and that is much easier from business waste than from households. She also supported the export of plastic recyclate to China because they can do it so much cheaper than we can and container ships return empty. The west has become dependant on China for recycled markets and is now reaping the consequences with the recent price collapses – but having exported much of our manufacturing base more consideration needs to be given to how else the loop can be closed. Recycling needs consistent markets.

Local Authority perspective

LA's have a difficult task of balancing public demand for more

plastic recycling with the need for cost effective recycling and material recovery. LA's also have weight based targets, which tends to favour heavy materials over light ones like plastics.

Huge investment will be required to take on segregation, collecting, sorting and reprocessing and what level of source separation can the public cope with?

The future

This newsletter previously reviewed 'Cradle to Cradle' by McDonough and Braungart and 'Zero Waste' by Robin Murray, which contain many radical ideas for a more sustainable future where packaging and products will be designed to have a longer life, be reusable, easily recyclable, or bio-degradable as part of the bio-cycle where waste is food, as in nature. In the meantime, there were calls for a plastics collection and recycling strategy to be developed for Devon and the region.

www.eco3.co.uk – environmental and design innovation consultancy

www.wrap.org.uk - Wasted Resources Action Programme

www.zerowaste.org -

www.recycledevon.org – the 'Don't let Devon go to waste' website

Richard Gomme

Can't Pay won't Pay!

Do we really want the Government to impose a charge on all schools, community groups, National Trust properties, in fact anyone composting except in the privacy of their own garden?

At present there is no charge and we, in the Community Composting Network cannot see why people who are working extremely hard often for nothing, helping Government strategy by diverting compostable materials from landfill should have to pay for the privilege. I'm sure that an exemption from payment could be worked out for schools and not-for-profit organisations.

A consultation event was held in Birmingham on the 7th October 2008, where DEFRA and the Environment Agency outlined their proposed



We needed to hear it from them and respond – which we did.

Although the official time to respond is long expired (23rd October – which gave virtually no time to respond) it is still vital to get your voice heard – Tell your MP, school, allotment association, local press etc.

changes to Waste management licensing. This particular session was focussed on the organic fraction and covered everything small to large scale, I had to shout a lot from the back of the room to try and get the community voice heard – we did also have representation from the CCN Nationally – four of us from the Community Composting Network committee were there as well as another two members and Tamzin Phillips from the National Trust.

The full document which was sent out previous to this meeting I couldn't read or understand (and I certainly wasn't the only one at the meeting struggling to understand it, I don't think the officials were much clearer than me about a lot of it!)

The main points to note

1 At the moment under an exemption you can compost 1,000 cubic metres at any time (roughly 500 tonnes of garden clippings, prunings, branches, grass cuttings etc – well if it was just grass it would be a lot heavier – but on average)

2 The proposed limit is just 25 tonnes under import – export (which is what we do and is strictly speaking illegal but we have the compost clubs for that – so at least this change will make our activities fully legal – but the drop from 500 tonnes to just 25

tonnes is bonkers. We must push this level up – Cath Kibbler from Community Composting Network (CCN) proposed 200 tonnes. Small projects tend to have compost maturing on site for some time and can easily have a pile of 20 – 40 tonnes or so quietly maturing and being sieved and bagged, by hand over a period of time, reducing the limit to 25 tonnes could mean that this compost is shifted from the site prematurely. Proper Job in Chagford has roughly 140 tonnes on site capacity so we would have to have a permit – the trouble is we don't know how much that is likely to cost as it is subject to another consultation!

*(The site is has four bays at
 $2.5 \times 2 \times 3 = 15$ cubic metres
 $\times 4$ bays = 60 cubic metres
3 bays at $7.5 \times 2 \times 3 = 45$
 $m^3 \times 3 = 135 m^3$
total $135 + 60 = 195$*

If we estimate density at 0.7 per cu metre that would give a capacity of 136.5 tonnes)

3 There could be limits set on a) materials awaiting shredding, b) actively composting materials and c) maturation – which could include compost bagged and ready for sale.

4 Payment. For the privilege of doing this work, we also have to pay. £50 for three years, less if you do it online (they didn't say how much less!) simple form, name and address – which is good. They are trying to be helpful - I think! Not-for-profit groups doing these small scale operations should be exempt from payment – or there should be a mechanism within Government to fund us better. In Devon we are lucky, the Local Authority pay us recycling credits. It varies across the Country and still the Waste Management companies get more per tonne for hauling and landfilling waste but at least we get the payment. The treasury cream off most of the landfill tax money (I think it's 80%) surely they could put some back into core funding the community – not-for-profit sector! – yet another petitioning letter to your MP perhaps!?

5 Registration. But under the new proposals, **any waste operation is subject to a requirement for Registration**, apart from:

1 Any waste operation carried out within the curtilage of a domestic property by a person who is not an establishment or undertaking. (see

page 7 of Regs)

2 Temporary collection of waste (prior to moving elsewhere) by an establishment or undertaking where the establishment or undertaking does not:

- (a) receive payment for collecting the waste, or
 - (b) collect waste as its main business activity
- (see Page 43-44 of Regs)

Other than the above exceptions, there is no de minimus, below which you do not have to register.

6 De Minimus – There is no De Minimus.

For those of us unfamiliar with Latin it basically refers to operations that are so small that they should have no regulation. We discussed things like – shredding some woody stuff for a neighbour (that's Ok apparently) getting manure from a local stables and taking to an allotment group (not intended to be covered by the legislation. I was also told that schools would not be exempt but reading the above now it seems to me that they would be exempt – no payment for compost used on site so Ok – if they are collecting cans for payment that is another matter though.

7 Permits – the consultation on permits will be in the Spring 2009. We don't know how much they will cost – if they follow seamlessly from exemptions – payment wise (as I've mentioned above) then I can see the argument being logical – as far as I can tell before the consultation meeting! If there is a huge price hike – and there was a rumour going around that permits would start at £600 – then obviously that would wipe out most of the sector. You have more than 25 tonnes on site? You must now have a permit and you have to pay each year - how about starting at £20 a year for 26 – 50 tonnes – I can pluck figures out of the air as easily as DEFRA or the EA!

Summary

Write some letters – send some e-mails to Defra – your MP – school - composting group – allotments etc exemptions@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Exemptions Review Team
Waste Permitting Unit, Defra
Area 6D, Ergon House,
c/o 17 Smith Square, London
SW1P 3JR



The great debate

DCRN - DCCN strategy

Our last Devon Community Recycling Network (DCRN) management team meeting sparked a lively debate about the future strategy of the networks. There are both threats and new opportunities to be addressed.

The last two years have seen a massive fresh wave of action by new community groups in Devon because of the twin challenges of Peak Oil and Climate Change. Some groups have achieved a remarkable profile such as Modbury's 'Ban the Plastic Bag' campaign, Transition Town Totnes, Bovey Climate Action, and The Dartmoor Circle of 13 Climate Action Groups.

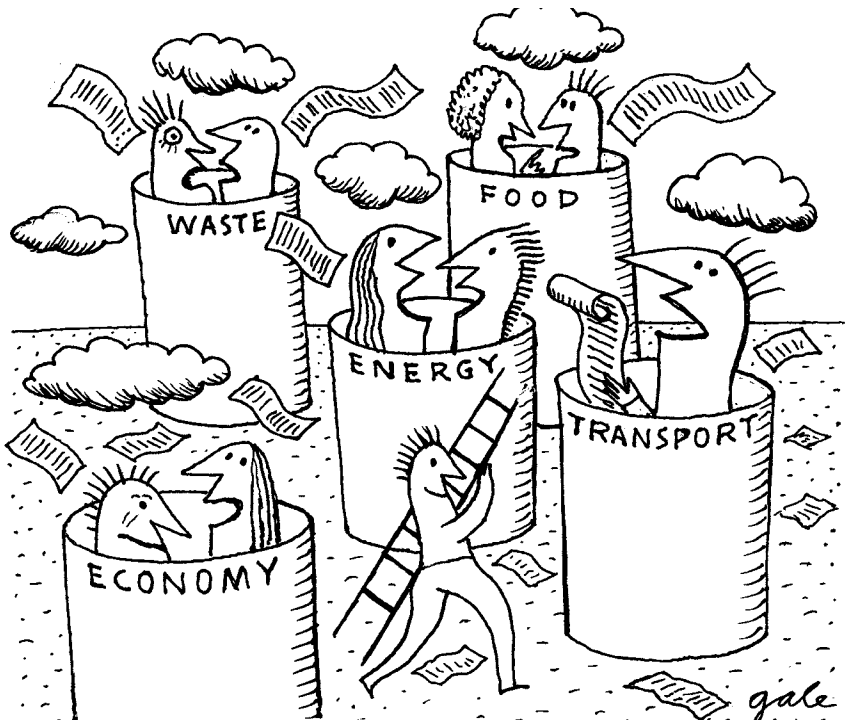
Avid readers of the JUNK MAIL will be aware that we have been

running related stories because we believe carbon issues are cross cutting and more joined up thinking and action should be encouraged. This new wave of action illustrates some of the best things about the community sector and how community groups can innovate, inspire and achieve things in ways that Local Authorities cannot – and why LA's need to support the community sector and work in partnership so that the strengths of both sectors can complement each other to reach shared objectives.

When our networks started in the early 1990's recycling was radical, now that it's mainstream we need to look to the future. Our joint achievements in composting, reuse and recycling have been recognised at the highest level as national best

practice and have won awards. So we want to do the same thing with incorporating more cross cutting climate change issues in our work, develop new partnerships with LA's, and work closer with these new groups to build more sustainable communities and pass on the benefits of our experience. The next frontier is climate change which will see far more radical changes if we are to tackle the challenges of reducing emissions. The community sector can make a valuable contribution but we need resources to do it!

DCRN and **DCCN** have set up a combined network office so we can work closer together and more effectively, and we believe another post should be created to support a Devon Low Carbon Community Network – so that the work of community groups across composting, reuse, recycling, waste reduction and climate change can be better joined up. That way, the combined networks could work with any emerging community group and help them develop their activities, link them up, raise awareness, co-ordinate strategies,



provide advice, guidance, and representation and give voice to communities.

We have been working with climate action groups to encourage the incorporation of 'waste' issues in their work. Of course by recycling and composting we are also tackling our carbon footprint and the Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) has a new business plan out in which carbon reduction clearly underpins the challenges ahead of us. But climate change work is not strictly what DCRN and DCCN are funded for by the Local Authorities. So are we in the community sector a step ahead of Council thinking and policy?

Whilst social change and community action on the ground can be several years ahead of LA policies, the trouble is that inter-connected issues are divided between different council departments or may fall outside their remit. LA structures can be so big that sometimes a 'silo' mentality may prevail which can hinder joined up concerted action. For example, people working on the County Hall campus do not get many opportunities to exchange ideas with colleagues from other directorates, climate change does not seem to have

a clear cross cutting remit across different departments, LA's do not yet have climate change Officers (although DCC now has one in post), and the business sector falls outside the remit of LA's which restricts co-ordinated action on waste across society. The community sector is not hampered by such restrictions and we have a track record of breaking new ground with different approaches.

However, the situation is that we are funded by DAWRAC which is great and long may that continue. A Low Carbon Network would mostly fall outside of the remit of that committee – so what we really need is resources from another directorate within County Hall or elsewhere to fund it.

We want Devon to be in the forefront of change again and believe the new wave of community action on climate change deserves all the support it can get, and will strengthen the cause of recycling and waste reduction.

Do you have a view on the future of the Networks? If so please let us know.

Nicky Scott & Richard Gomme

Ban the plastic bag

A community action plan

By Rebecca Hoskins & others

Pub Sawday's

£4.99

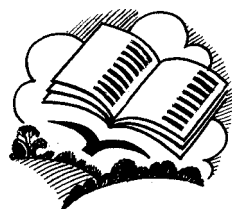
Book review

This is a small book which if you can bend the pages back far enough to read to the end of the sentences, packs quite a punch for its diminutive size. Why the publishers chose such a dinky format is beyond me as it severely hampered both my reading and enjoyment of the book – surely the medium should be a part of the message? I'm right behind the message of this book and who better to talk about it than Rebecca Hosking the woman behind the Modbury bag and that amazing film 'Message in the waves' (see www.plasticbagfree.com for more on the Modbury campaign and the film) but sadly I do find the book difficult to navigate through and muddled which is shame as I was very eager to review it for these pages. However – on the positive side the book is handily put into sections Part 1 is 'motivation' why do people get so worked up about plastic bags – well watch Rebecca's film and you too will be motivated – I would urge all community

groups to start a bag campaign – but where do you start? – Part 2 is 'Plastic facts' – you must have good solid information to start a campaign so knowing about the enemy so to speak is vital – then Part 3 'making a start' is full of good information when you tease it out from the text about how Modbury and other groups around the country have gone about their campaigns and it is good useful information and advice for a whole raft of community action – e.g. 'come to joint agreements on everything' 'involve everybody' 'keep the decision making process simple' – 'have clear goals'.

Part 4 is 'the bags' it's easy to get caught up in another minefield and end up with a 'Bag for life' which is still made from plastic or a cloth bag made in a sweat shop, so this is a really useful section to have at your side. As with all campaigns, keeping up things going is really important so part 5 'challenges and momentum' address his and the book ends with FAQ'a and resources. So all in all a mixed reaction to this little book – like the content hate the style – I much prefer the plastic bag free website I'm afraid – sorry Sawday's but get the 'Big Earth book' which I reviewed in the Spring 2008 Junk Mail – it's a great book from them!

Nicky Scott



DCRN & DCCN Conference 24th June 2009

Boniface Centre, Crediton, Devon

Unrivalled opportunity for networking with community activists, social enterprises and local projects, volunteers, Councillors and Recycling Officers from across Devon involved in composting, recycling, reuse, climate change local action, and transition towns.

- Explore key issues and challenges facing communities
- Plenty of time for discussion and debate
- Keynote speaker
- All welcome
- High quality lunch from organic local food sources

Bookings: please contact Jan Freeman by e-mail on:
dcrn-ccn@hotmail.com £10 community sector, £20 LA,
free bursary places available.

