

Issue 6

junkmail

Devon Community Recycling & Community Composting Network News

BIG SOCIETY



**This issue: The Big Society
Plastic Planet
In a Pickle
Transition Town Update**

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New £2.4 million Devon Community Fund to champion local projects

Devon County Council has announced a new £2.4m Community Fund which will enable councillors to champion their local communities and provide start-up money for projects across the county. The fund will be controlled by individual councillors who will each have £25,000 for building projects and £15,000 to support revenue costs. Councillors in neighbouring areas will be able to combine their money for larger-scale projects.

Devon County Council leader John Hart said: "...We are facing serious budget cuts and I believe councillors will need to become community champions in the future. Where we have to reduce the services we provide, it will be important for local people to help to fill the gaps in their local communities. I recognise that they will need help to do that and I believe this new fund will

enable county councillors throughout Devon to pump-prime valuable self-help schemes. I have talked to people about how communities could have a greater involvement in managing or running their local services and how this could be supported in future. I have been impressed and encouraged by the commitment and dedication of the many volunteers I met. But I know we have to create even greater community resilience and give more backing to the third sector and I believe



this new fund will certainly help in that aim. We recognise the importance of the valuable work the voluntary and

community sector carries out across Devon, and have listened to their concerns about the impact of funding cuts on our communities, particularly during this challenging economic climate. The sector will need to make efficiencies like everyone else, and we will work hard with these organisations over the coming year to help them achieve sustainable, workable and measured savings that will stand the test of time.”

The Government’s Localities Bill is aiming to free up local councillors from restrictions that have prevented them championing their communities.

On the other hand....the cuts....

With reductions in national funding DCC face making savings of £54.6 million in the coming financial year, and no area of the Council’s expenditure will be immune from cuts. The Citizens Advice Bureau and the Council for Voluntary Services will be cut by £80,000 or 11.5%. We have some indications of where the axe will fall regarding recycling services. Rural waste skip provision will be cut and the numbers of Recycling Centres may be reviewed. In Somerset, Somerset Waste Partnership is looking at closing 4 of its 18 Recycling Centres.



Big Society for Devon?

Big Society

What is the potential of ‘the Big Society’ and what will it mean for communities in Devon and in particular those involved in reuse, recycling, composting, low carbon communities or Transition Towns?

The Government’s vision for ‘BS’ is still being formulated, but those already actively volunteering and working in the 3rd sector for their local communities are wondering where the cash is going to come from to sustain or enable more activity. There is actually a real danger that many projects and services will cease operating due to cuts and scarcity of funding.

The past trend has seen many community recycling and composting projects increasingly marginalised as LA’s rolled out kerbside collections for more materials and the recession hit the sector hard, exposing vulnerabilities. However, in the face of cuts we may see services reduced, which may create opportunities for communities and social enterprises to step in. Some recycling centres may close and some collections may be reduced or charged for separately eg garden waste.

London CRN see opportunities with the ability to 'challenge' LA's for services under proposed BS legislation. We may see communities wanting to take back the 'value' in some way of the materials being collected eg textiles, ally cans. As the price of oil rises we will see sense in recycling more plastics. Transition Town Totnes are running a project 'Transition in Action' to encourage social enterprise around Transition. This will include wasted resources, food, energy, transport, community services, land use, localisation. (see Transition update article for more detail)

With the cost of landfill or incineration around £90-120 per tonne, plus waste collection costs, it begs the question: at what level could communities start collecting more materials for recycling to raise funds for themselves? It is complicated by waste regulations, bureaucracy and other issues, such as an inability to get a price for taking relatively small amounts of materials to processors eg plastics and card. Perhaps LA recycling bulking depots could offer a fair price? There is already the very successful recycling credits scheme whereby community groups can receive a disposal credit from LA's for materials they collect for recycling, and this area should receive careful consideration to see how communities could be encouraged to recycle more through this scheme.

In brief there are three strands to the Big Society agenda:

- 1 **Transferring power to communities - with a focus on the current Localism Bill.**
- 2 **Public service reform. A white paper will be out in March. This will include new rights for communities and public employees to bid for and run services.**
- 3 **Inspiring more social action. A white paper will also be published in March.**



Devon stories from a big society.....



Both Recycling in Ottery and Proper Job in Chagford will be 16 years old in 2011. They were set up in 1995 by ordinary folk in their communities to reuse, recycle and compost and, in those days, people from Mid Devon and North Devon used their own trailers, garden sheds and garages to collect and store cans, newspapers and bottles for recycling. They set up fantastic community recycling enterprises which eventually led to Devon recycling over 50%... how about that! So who says we can't reach 70% soon given the right facilities?

Books Galore!

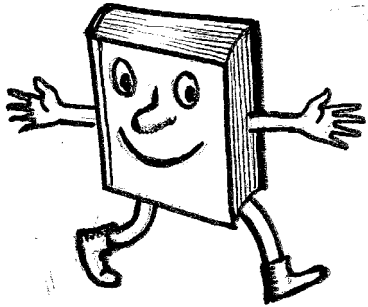
More recently, two Devon book reuse charities are inspirational examples of acting locally and thinking globally to make a real difference.

'Bookcycle', which started in Exeter has now spread across England with 9 local schemes and works with 8 partner charities in Africa and India to send much needed books.

'Bookrelief' has 2 shops in Barnstaple and Appledore and also sends books to Africa & elsewhere.

'Bookcycle' encourages anyone to set up a scheme in their community,

whether it's a shop or a 'shelf'.
Householders donate surplus books, and Bookcycle offers books for free or donation. Yes people do give and its become so successful that the shop on West St Exeter has developed 'shelfcycle', whereby a shelf of old books



is placed into cafes, restaurants, halls of residences and other places. 'Treecycle' is an offshoot whereby unwanted trees from nurseries are rescued and planted. The website is fantastic with interesting links, information and a great story to explore. Go on, have a look and get inspired! www.book-cycle.org. You can even send your own choice 'bookbox' to a community in Africa and see the photos of the books being received a few weeks later.

'Bookrelief' is a north Devon based charity whose book reuse mission includes "the promotion of higher literacy standards - in both the UK and in developing countries - through the active support of literacy advancement projects - and by working with or partnering with - other specialist organisations in this field, both here and overseas'. They have worked with schools in Bideford to support literacy and also send appropriate books to schools in Africa. They raise funds from the sale of reused books from 2 shops in Barnstaple Lichdon St, and Market St Appledore. The charity's patron is Michael Morpurgo, the renowned Devon based children's author. Michael Morpurgo also helped set up 'Farms for City Children' where kids from cities get to stay and work on a farm in Devon and elsewhere.

Bookrelief has an online bookstore too at: <http://bookreliefuk.eclector.com>

Proper Job at Chagford has expanded its bookshop resale area too, so lots more quality selected books are available.



There are now three main types of plastic carrier bag dished out by shops; the older, stronger plastic carrier, the thinner de-gradable carrier and third type made from bio-degradable plastic often used as compost liners.

The first two are made from petro-chemicals (oil) and the latter is usually made from vegetable starch, hence its bio-degradability. Plants still have to be grown to convert into plastic so it still better to have a reusable basket or bag.

Every piece of (petro-chemical derived) plastic that has ever been made is still in existence and will be for the next 1000 years at least.

That means every plastic tube, top, bottle, nappy, toothbrush... the list goes

on. Plastic has become a useful part of our lives. Can we do without it?

I ask the question because it is causing a problem so huge, most of us don't like to think about it. Ultimately though, it affects us all whether we like it or not. My daughter recently fished a fertilizer sack out of the river Teign and as she walked the mile or so home, she filled it, with plastic litter from about a half mile stretch of lane, then she stopped as it was too overwhelming.

This sack will be sent to landfill - out of sight, but not out of our minds. No bacteria have yet evolved that can break plastic down, including de-gradable plastic. Instead it photodegrades, in UV light breaking up into smaller and smaller pieces called nurdles or mermaid tears.

Meanwhile 10% of the 100 billion kilos of plastic produced every year ends up in the sea. The natural forces of the oceans has gathered much of this up into a kind of vast raft, assimilated into two parts of the Pacific 'gyre'. This is where it is entering our food chain as plankton eaters unwittingly take it into their digestive systems. Larger pieces are also taken up by some animals, 500,000 albatross chicks hatch yearly, 200,000 of them will die by consuming plastic fed to them by the parents who confuse it from food sources. Turtles confuse plastic bags for jellyfish and their stomachs get filled up with indigestible plastic and these creatures which can live for up to 200 years slowly starve to death.

No sea animal is safe from this ubiquity as it infiltrates up the food chain, releasing noxious chemicals.

We eat sea food from all over the world, we are not safe.

A small fraction of the plastic we use is recycled and transformed into other useful goods, such as textiles or plastic board for furniture etc. In years to come plastic will be mined from landfill as a useful raw material, this is already being done in the US and Canada.

Reduce; reuse & recycle!

Reduce the packaging; try to buy goods that are not over-packaged, or packaged at all. Re-use bags, even non carrier bags; re-use them for buying vegetables. Think "stuff". Two questions are 1. Where does it come from (it's source) and 2. Where is it going?

If the "stuff" comes from our environment close by, and can be safely returned to our environment through bio-degrading, then be happy!

Yuli Somme

In issue 4 of the new look Junk Mail (the Pink One) we reviewed James Bruges book the 'Bio Char debate' (published by Green Books as part of the Schumacher briefings). James Lovelock opined that only by making large amounts of charcoal and burying it is there any hope for the planet. The pros and cons of Bio Char rumble on and many businesses are keen to offset their carbon and see bio char as a good way of offsetting. As soon as big multinationals get interested in 'green' issues alarm bells ring for me.

I was talking about the potential of Bio Char at Schumacher college recently and afterwards was sent an article written by Vandana Shiva about the perils of using Bio Char. Now anything written by Vandana gets my full attention. What follows is a shortened version of her article, also slightly amended.

"Burning trees and biomass has ironically emerged as a "solution" to climate change.

The central argument for promoting the burning of biomass to make charcoal to put into soil is based on totally false assumptions such as only "2% of carbon

Bio Char or Bio Con?

from plant biomass enter the soil as carbon through humus" and "30% of soil carbon from humus escapes in the first year and 80-90% in the second year in organic practices which return soil carbon through recycling of biomass."

"These assumptions go against all scientific evidence that shows that organic farming increases soil carbon, and the carbon stays in the soil. It is microbial activity which stabilises soil carbon. Sir Albert Howard who worked in India and wrote 'An Agricultural Testament' in 1940 had recognised that humus is at the heart of soil fertility. According to Howard, "Humus is an essential material for the Soil, if the first phase of the life cycle is to function."



“There is another reason why humus is important. Its presence in the soil is an essential condition for the proper functioning of the second contact between plant and soil - the mycorrhizal relationship.”

In total ignorance of the living soil and its complex ecological processes, the “biochar” proponents are proposing a solution based on killing and burning trees and turning living carbon into dead carbon. On the basis of their blindness and false assumptions they state that “The drawback of carbon enrichment with conventional (referring to organic) methods is that carbon levels drop rapidly again as soon as a required careful management is not sustained.” This is a ridiculous argument. Good organic farming is a way of life, not a onetime fad.

The biochar promoters are also wrong in lumping together all systems of agriculture. Good farming can create agro ecosystems as permanent as natural ecosystems. Organic farming is the lasting and sustainable solution to climate change and food security, not blanketing the planet with charcoal.

Biochar is part of two non-sustainable practices that need to be phased out if we have to avoid catastrophic climate change. One is agriculture based on

chemical farming and monocultures; the other is monoculture tree plantations. Biochar will be used with synthetic nitrogen fertilisers which are a major source of nitrogen oxide a greenhouse gas three times more powerful in global warming than Co2. And expanding tree monocultures to then burn trees for bio fuel and charcoal is a threat to soil, to biodiversity and the climate.

Nature created humus to recycle carbon. Farmers have maintained carbon balance through good organic farming over centuries. And the contemporary organic movement has shown how we can both increase food security and climate balance through ecological processes. Biochar is another expression of arrogant ignorance which assumes nature got it wrong. It is a blind and reductionist solution which reduces both climate and soil to carbon, forgetting the millions of soil micro-organisms that make a living soil and the trace elements and micronutrients what give life and health to plants and humus. This is carbon reductionism, not ecology. Biofuel waste as biochar / charcoal is dead carbon. What we need to increase is living carbon in plants and in humus. An anti-life world view cannot protect life. We need to think like Gaia to defend her.

Government Waste Policy Review in a Pickle

The Government will be reviewing England’s waste policy this spring, so people are encouraged to submit a response (see www.foe.co.uk). Wales and Scotland have already adopted targets of recycling/composting 70% of their waste by 2025, whilst England’s target is set at 50% by 2025. Campaign groups are lobbying the Government to adopt a higher target. Friends of the Earth estimates that £650m worth of recyclable materials are landfilled or incinerated every year in England and 70,000 new jobs could be created with higher recycling & composting rates, with corresponding huge savings of energy and CO2 emissions. Previous Junk Mail highlighted regions elsewhere such as Flanders in Belgium, where 70% recycling/composting is already happening.

Readers may have picked up on **Eric Pickles** views on people’s rights to throw rubbish away, urging a return to weekly residual waste collections and criticising Local Authorities for having too many

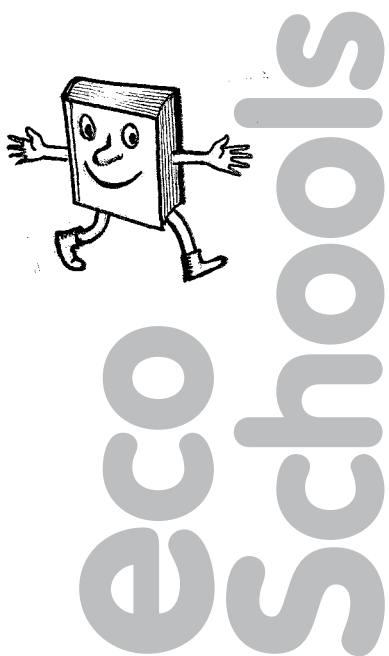
recycling bins. Incentive reward scheme ideas seem to have been ditched too. Where producer responsibility, waste-ful behaviour, cost savings, and higher recycling fits into this picture is not clear.

Is kerbside sort recycling best value?

A new report by Eunomia for WRAP, ‘Kerbside Collection Options: Wales’ study, examined the relative merits of different dry recycling collection systems.

By looking at existing research and carrying out an in-depth study of six local authority collection schemes (two commingled, two twin-stream and two kerbside sort), it concludes that the kerbside sort option is cheaper and “consistently outperforms” the other two systems and that this is particularly the case when looked at as part of an ‘enhanced performance scenario’ where recycling rates could reach 70%. The main cost saving is that material does not have to be sent to a MRF, and is higher quality thus achieving a better market price.





Orchard Vale Community School

always worked hard to ensure that they recycled and were 'Eco aware' there was no formal recognition of this. Therefore, two years ago we formed a group of children from across the school who called themselves the Eco Warriors. Their task was to encourage the rest of the school cohort to spread the 'green word' to their parents and to the wider community of Barnstaple.

They decided to sign up for Eco Schools (an internationally recognised sustainability award scheme) and worked towards their Bronze award, followed by the Silver and most recently the Green Flag award. To begin with Eco Warriors ran as an after school club, where the children discussed how they would like the school to improve its eco credentials.

They took each of the 'gateways' of Eco Schools and tried to address them in some way. They looked at the work that was already embedded within the school ethos and promoted it – eg our links with a school in Nepal was the focus for the 'global perspective' topic. The amount of rubbish that the school was generating was reasonably large so they booked a waste audit with Resource Futures to see exactly

what was being thrown away, where in the school it came from and whether it could be recycled in any way. Using an Owl monitor, they measured the electricity the school used and encouraged the rest of the school to cut down on this.

In addition to this the Eco Warriors became involved in Barnstaple Town Council's Green Team and the Tidy up our Town schemes as well as attending the Environmental Schools Forum. This extended the links with the wider community and was picked out by the Green Flag inspectors and being one of the strongest aspects of our application.

Guest speakers are invited into the school to engage the children in the cause and a variety workshops run across all Key Stages. After a successful application for the Cutting our Wasteline grant offered by Devon County Council, the school now has its own Ridan composting system which is operated by the children who collect the fruit waste from each class every day.

The club has now become a little more formal, and is currently run on a basis similar to School Council. This means that each class votes for two children as their representatives and are responsible for ensuring that all students are aware of any new activity the Eco Warriors are undertaking. For two years running we have taken part in the Switch Off Fortnight run by The Pod (www.jointhepod.org) as well as building a Bug Hotel and running an annual

Green Day where the whole school joins together in increasing awareness of the importance of sustainable living.

An annual 'Green Goblet' is given to the class which, when spot checked, has kept their rubbish to a minimum, recycled their scrap paper and had lights and IWBs turned off when not in use.

All children at OV are now ecologically aware and are quick to promote this at home as well as at school. They understand and enjoy the responsibility that they hold to change the way our society behaves and put sustainability right at the heart of their every day lives.

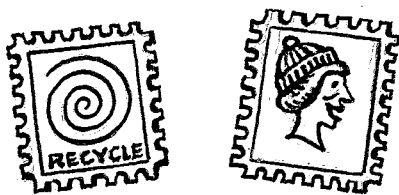
Okehampton college aims for 90% recycling!

Okehampton college, with around 2000 students, has a new recycling collection system which includes crisp packets, sweet wrappers, plastic packaging, plastic containers, plastic bottles, as well as the more familiar materials such as paper, card, tins, glass. The new system could achieve 90% recycling of the college's waste. The college produces about 30 tonnes of waste per year, and the new 3 bin system will save around £6000 per year in waste collection costs. Biffa will collect recycling commingled and send the material to a MRF materials sorting facility.

Orchard Vale Community School was built with the theme of sustainability at its core.

Much of the interior is wooden and comes from sustainable forests; maximum use is made of natural light by having an open plan central area and large windows; and children are encouraged to walk or cycle to school and use the large amount of cycle racks available to store their bikes. All lights in the toilets are now operated by motion detectors and taps automatically turn off after a certain time. The toilets all work on a low flush basis so that the minimum amount of water is used. However, although staff and children

Bits & Bobs



What to do with used stamps.....31,000 hits!

A woman's voluntary efforts to set up a diy website with a list of local collection points for used stamps was so successful that she was completely overwhelmed with the amount of work to maintain the information. The website, to help people find their nearest place for donating used stamps to raise money for charity, attracted over 31,000 hits, with people wanting to update new collection points, delete old ones, find out how to sell them etc....

In Devon the RNLI, RNIB, and various other charities accept them. You can enquire locally or send them to RNLI c/o 7 Speddwell, Brixham, TQ5 9MJ.

Mines a pint please...

Milk dispensing machines supplying local milk direct to customer's reusable containers are used in several European countries including France and Italy...

Bring your own bags and boxes...

At weigh and save type shops food can be bought by weight with customers bringing their own containers to refill. Hello supermarkets.

Chicken and egg....

Householders in the Belgian town of Mouscron were given 50 pairs of chickens between them, to eat leftovers, scraps and peelings. People had to agree not to eat the chickens or give them away for at least 2 years..... except the supply of free eggs.

Midwife action...

Disposable nappies make up 3.6% of household waste. In the Isle of Mann, midwife Mary O'Connor campaigned within the local hospital for reusable nappies. The Stork-eco nappy was introduced with an outer wrap crafted from hospital mattress covers. As a result disposable nappy waste went down by 99.9 % and clinical waste went down by 83%.

Eco-toothbrushes

The UK has over 60m toothbrush users – that's a lot of plastic ending up in landfill. Brushes with replaceable heads are available from www.naturalcollection.com

www.junkk.com

Find out various ideas to reuse your junk, even better did you really need it in the first place?

It is estimated half the clothes in Britain's

wardrobes are unworn, that's around 2.4 billion items.

It takes 7 litres of water to make a 1 litre plastic water bottle...

Computers for Charities

offers low cost ready to go refurbished PC and Mac computer systems for Charities, Voluntary groups, Churches, Schools and educational establishments. Their £99 complete computer package includes Microsoft Office software, Monitor, Keyboard, mouse and cables plus three months warranty. All refurbished equipment is VAT zero rated. All proceeds raised from sales support the ongoing work of Computers for Charities including "African Schools on Line" educational program.

For further information on refurbished equipment, see their website:

www.computersforcharities.org
Telephone: 01323 840641

Computers for People in Rural Areas

"Computers for Rural People" scheme aims to provide computers at low cost to people and groups in country towns and villages. The Arthur Rank Centre can provide a computer, pre-loaded with Microsoft software, and free delivery to your address, with a 3 month warranty. A fully functioning computer costs from £109 with Pentium4/Celeron 1.5Ghz, 20Gb disk, 17" CRT Monitor, keyboard and mouse. Lap-tops with equivalent specification £190.

Contact Details: Tel. 02476 853066
info@arthurrankcentre.org.uk

PLUSS 'Recycle IT Right' offers end of use waste electrical services.

'Recycle IT Right' has been set up by Devon Pluss to provide waste electrical recycling and reuse for small businesses and Local Authorities. Pluss is a social enterprise that provides high-quality employment, training and equipment for disabled and supported people.

Recycle IT right will carry out full audits, refurbish for redistribution or reselling or recycle end-of-life equipment in an environmentally-friendly manner. All recycling is carried out according to Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations, IT Data Security and Environmental guidance and applicable legislation.

For some small business WEEE there is no charge and to enable RiR to do this free the logistics need to be co-ordinated in a cost effective manner. RiR can organise for a trailer to be on an industrial estate on a specific day allowing businesses to dispose of their WEEE.

For recycling ICT equipment there is a cost and businesses can offset the process & logistics cost against any remarket value their assets may hold.

See: <http://www.recycleitright.co.uk>
email: sales@recycleitright.co.uk
phone: 01392 224440

Transition Town Update



Believe me readers, a truly amazing process is unfolding in Totnes. There is so much going on, let it inspire you, find it at <http://www.transitiontowntotnes.org/content/transition-town-totnes-newsletter-51-february-2011> or better still subscribe to the e-news.

Richard Heinberg, the radical thinker, post carbon reader and future scenario analyst, delivered a thought provoking talk in March about the challenges we face, the economic and debt crisis and the end of growth as we hit ecological constraints such as peak resources and depletion. His message was: we must use renewable resources only at the

rate at which they can be replenished, we must recycle as much as we can to conserve resources and reduce depletion, and move to a new economic and ecological way of living. Naomi Klein, radical author of 'Shock Doctrine' and critic of global corporations, will also talk in Totnes.

Over 64 out of 140 solar pv systems have now been fitted to households under the Transition Streets project, which has catalysed whole streets to take action on living more sustainably. The Civic Hall has its large solar pv array generating income from feed in tariffs.

TTotnes held a land use review open space day with the Dartington Estate to

look at all possibilities for the Estate's 742 acre farm and how it could be used for maximum benefit, as the current lease will expire in 2014. This followed a previous event, 'Estates in Transition', that brought together landowners across the south west to look at how peak oil and climate change could change land use and farming. Compost will be big, so we need to join up waste and land use more, and make sure all food waste is processed into usable compost.

'Foodlink Totnes' is a new project that aims to increase the availability of local food, by linking local farmers and producers with retailers and restaurants in Totnes.

Transition in Action' is working with 10 Transition Towns to foster social enterprise development. Social enterprise can be used as a driver for decarbonisation and economic localisation and is a growing part of the social enterprise 'scene'. A 2 day conference held in Totnes between Transition Network, Local United and Transition Town Totnes, explored the role social enterprise and entrepreneurship might play in building resilience at the local level. What would Transition SE's be like? They would be founded on an awareness of peak oil, climate change and what is happening to the world's

economy, and of what is the most appropriate scale to work on, and how changing circumstances will change those scales. They will be focused around meeting local needs, value local resources and a redefinition of 'profit', to include social impacts and other wider benefits. There would be a diversity of ownership models and of scale and business types. Social capital and trust will be vital. It would value technology but also appreciate the value of face-to-face. Businesses would be rooted in their community.

Well, we already have effective furniture reuse social enterprises, and one challenge is now to expand the range of items and materials offered for reuse and develop reuse super-centres.



Local groups updates

Volunteer opportunities

Refurnish Devon is expanding its volunteer work support programme to help people get training and work experience. Varied volunteer placement opportunities are available throughout the organisation, working with household furniture and appliance reuse, repair, refurbishment and recycling, as well as customer services, collections, deliveries and administration. Potential volunteers should contact 01752 897311.

Refurnish collect unwanted household furniture throughout south and west Devon, Torbay, Teignbridge and Plymouth and it is resold at low cost through Refurnish shops. Other furniture reuse groups around Devon serve virtually all areas for furniture reuse collections. For contact details, see www.dcrn.org.uk.

Choose to Reuse

Proper Job Chagford now has lots more low cost good quality clothing, textiles, curtains, books, household items, paint and other items for sale following the opening of expanded new sales areas for reusable items. You can pass on all your unwanted household items for reuse or recycling.

www.proper-job.org or phone 01647 432985

Low carbon communities

Dartmoor Circle, the organisation set up by 13 climate action groups around the moor has published a draft plan for a Low Carbon Dartmoor which includes a section on waste. It can be viewed and commented on the website <http://www.dartmoorcircle.org.uk/>.

Sustainable CREDITON have an excellent website full of useful info, tips and links at <http://www.sustainablecrediton.org.uk/index.html> and are running events including an eco fashion and clothes swap on March 12th at The Boniface Centre, Crediton.

ISSUES RELATING DIRECTLY TO THIS PUBLICATION

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If you have an article you would like to be considered for inclusion in a future edition, please contact Nicky Scott either at the postal address above or email: nicky.scott@devon.gov.uk