



Repair and Share Guide



Inside this guide

This guide includes the story of six repair and share projects to inspire you, as well as specific guidance on setting up your own organisation and marketing it. We begin with some top tips for success as well as linking to a host of useful resources for you to find out more at the end of the guide.

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Zero Waste Scotland, Ground floor, Moray House, Forthside Way, Stirling FK8 1QZ

The essentials

This guide features case studies from 6 different repair or sharing projects across the UK - MAKLab, R:evolve Clothing, Bicester Green, BELS Toy Library, Share Frome and Edinburgh Tool Library.

After speaking to the people involved in the six projects featured in this guide, we've brought together the information that will be most valuable for anyone looking to get started with a repair or share project.

The first points walk you through the things to consider when you're setting up your organisation. Everything from the legal structure, to partnerships, to funding. Secondly we focus on how to market your new project in order to get maximum visibility for what you're doing in the community and get more people involved. And finally, for each example, we share some top tips from those who are already up and running with their own repair and sharing projects.



Setting up your organisation



There are some important things to consider when you're setting up a repair or share project...

- 1.** Clearly set out your philosophy and values so that everyone getting involved with the project understands your mission and vision. This is particularly important with partners you involve because, often, people have very different views as to why two organisations would work well together. At MAKLab and R:evolve Clothing the mission statements were shown clearly at the front of the shop, as well as on their websites and social media channels, for everyone to see.
- 2.** Consider setting up as a business or charity so that you have an official legal entity and liability does not rest solely on you as an individual. One of the strengths of Bicester Green is that it has eight trustees, each of which is very involved in the wider community. Each trustee is also active with the project so this really shows in terms of the success they have seen. Edinburgh Tool Library went down the route of setting up as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) but you should look carefully at the financial and reporting requirements before going down that route, similarly if you're considering the option of being a BCORPs. It might be that setting up as a social enterprise alongside a charity partner (like Share Frome) would work better for you. Whichever route you choose, make sure you have a business mentality so that you are focused on your aims and objectives and regularly review how you're doing against those.
- 3.** Think about the right partnerships and collaborations for you. Share Frome is a good example here. They initially started talking with a different partner but this partner had so many trustees, each wanting to know lots of information, that it just slowed the whole process down. In the end, they partnered with a local not-for-profit music venue, which shares a similar philosophy and they were able to move things along more quickly.
- 4.** Organise insurance and make sure that people attending, donating or borrowing from you have clear access to information about it. At the Farnham Repair Cafe and Share Frome, they make sure people have read the terms and have signed either a membership



or a waiver form each time they borrow or repair something. At the Restart Project, they want to maintain an inclusive space and avoid putting any barriers in people's way so they include disclaimers on all online announcements and place them on each table in venues when hosting workshops. This will ensure you are covered under the insurance should anything go wrong. The cost will depend on the project size and scope, and is something to consider when you decide on your legal structure and partnerships, but you should expect to pay at least a few hundred pounds each year for insurance. As part of the insurance, you will also be required to carry out a health and safety risk assessment. Make sure you have a written assessment process for the lead volunteer to follow for each session and a process for gathering that information after each session has taken place.

5. Make sure you comply with any regulation associated with reuse and repair activities. This toolkit from Hampshire County Council provides some useful information on which regulations you need to be aware of:

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/smart-living/repair-and-reuse-toolkit.pdf>

6. Building a relationship with your local council(s), in particular the waste team, and with local groups is very important but shouldn't be your only focus. They can help you find suitable venues – potentially even for free. Even though it isn't a religious group, the Farnham Repair Cafe, has three hours each month in a church free of charge. The arrangement works for everyone because it brings more people into the church, who will often buy things from the cafe, as well as repairing their items, and involves some of the eco-minded congregation too. There are also often some grants at town/parish council level that aren't so bureaucratic. They may only be small amounts but could well be enough to pay for your insurance each year, allowing you to fundraise for other things.

7. Test out different models to see what works for you and what matches your vision. Many repair and sharing organisations want to encourage anyone who wants to get involved. Costs are kept low so that they aren't prohibitive. A good way of running a repair cafe is suggesting that people donate something if they manage to repair their item successfully. But be careful if you are suggesting a specific amount as these may put some people off, particularly in more deprived areas. With around half of products being repaired within a two hour session, you could expect to get around £40-80 a session, which at least would cover most of the costs for the volunteers.



8. Depending on your purpose, you may want to consider a specialism because it's unlikely that you will be able to do everything. Perhaps with electronics you could choose a few items to focus on – such as washing machines or lamps. Items like TVs can be very difficult because there are so many different models and the electronics are very complex now, meaning it could take hours to work out what is wrong with one item. Something more simple like a reading lamp can be repaired and upcycled in a much shorter time so overall the item is likely to bring in far more revenue over the long term. It does depend on the people involved though, because some of your volunteers are motivated by the variety and serendipity of what they might be faced with next, so for them you don't want to turn it into an assembly line. A useful resource for guides on how to fix electrical items is [ifixit.com](https://www.ifixit.com).

9. As well as small funds from councils there are some other sources of funding that you could consider. Each application can take a significant amount of time to complete, and, if successful, you will need to factor in the time it will take to report back to each funder. On pages 6 and 7 will find a table of some of the places we would recommend you look. As well as some of the environmental funds you might expect, we've also included a number of funds supporting more vulnerable groups, as many of the projects we have seen have as positive an impact on society as they do on the planet.



“ Test out different models to see what works for you and what matches your vision. ”

Funder	Notes
Big Potential - bigpotential.org.uk	Apply for a social investment, which means you have to pay back as well create positive social change.
The Power to Change - thepowertochange.org.uk	An independent charitable trust set up in 2015 to encourage new community businesses to start and enable existing ones to grow and become more self-sustaining.
The National Lottery, Good Causes - lotterygoodcauses.org.uk/funding/reaching-communities	Funding over £10,000 and for up to five years. They generally advise to apply for less to start with. Perhaps presenting a two-year plan with a series of events reaching different communities.
Big Lottery Fund - biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/funding-finder	Responsible for distributing 40 per cent of all the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery. In the 2014-15 financial year, they awarded more than £1 billion to projects with a social mission. There are a variety of grants available from £300 to more than £500,000 to community and voluntary groups and charities.
People's Postcode Trust - postcodetrust.org.uk	Registered charities in England can apply from £500 - £20,000 for poverty prevention projects or up to £2,000 for others.
The Santander Foundation - santanderfoundation.org.uk	Community Plus provides grants of up to £5,000. The scheme is open to local UK charities or local projects of national charities with funding available to cover salaries, equipment or materials.
The Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts - sfct.org.uk	Many don't accept unsolicited proposals but it is worth looking more closely at the Woodward Charitable Trust in particular: woodwardcharitabletrust.org.uk
The Tudor Trust - tudortrust.org.uk	The Tudor Trust is an independent grant-making trust which supports voluntary and community groups working in any part of the UK.
The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation - esmeefairbairn.org.uk	Esmée Fairbairn funds across four main sectors – Arts, Children and Young People, Environment and Social Change – as well as through its Food funding strand. Across all its funding it aims to unlock and enable potential, back the unorthodox and unfashionable, build collective networks and catalyse system change.
Keep Scotland Beautiful – Climate Challenge Fund - keepscotlandbeautiful.org	The Climate Challenge Fund is a Scottish Government programme that is managed by Keep Scotland Beautiful. It provides resources, training and events to support community groups taking action on climate change. Further details on the programme can be found here: keepscotlandbeautiful.org/sustainability-climate-change/climate-challenge-fund
Clyde Gateway - clydegateway.com	Clyde Gateway is Scotland's biggest and most ambitious regeneration programme. It is a partnership between Glasgow City Council, South Lanarkshire Council and Scottish Enterprise, backed by funding and direct support from the Scottish Government. Its task, over a 20-year period until 2028, is to lead the way on achieving unparalleled social, economic and physical change across communities over an area of 840 hectares in the east end of Glasgow and in Rutherglen.

Funder	Notes
School for Social Entrepreneurs - the-sse.org	The School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) empowers people from all backgrounds to create positive social change. Its courses help individuals start, sustain, and scale social enterprises, charities and community projects. It helps people build confidence and gain practical business skills in technical areas like marketing and finance. For those who have been part of a course there are some potential funding opportunities.
WEEE Project Funding - weeefund.uk	This was set up by the Joint Trade Associations Group (JTA) to communicate to Local Authorities in particular, about the availability of potential funding to support WEEE Improvement Projects. On 7 September 2015 The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) announced that £775k of funding was available to Local Authorities, to make applications against, for funds towards their local WEEE improvement projects. This is a combination of funds from: The WEEE Compliance Fee Fund administered by Mazars LLP (on behalf of JTAC); and The Distributor Take-Back Scheme (DTS) operated and administered by Valpak WEEE Retail Services.
Other parish, town, district or county council funds	With increasing pressure on council budgets, some are seeing reuse as a commercial benefit. They can lease space to charities for reuse on council sites or set up their own project to make money from upcycling. Have a look at your local council website for more details of funding opportunities.
Crowdfunding crowdfunder.co.uk indiegogo.com kickstarter.com spacehive.com	Crowdfunding could be a great way of reaching a new audience in the local community. Consider if you need to reach a particular target before money is donated, as this could mean you are left with nothing. Be specific about what each amount will go towards and offer rewards for those donating such as a VIP invite to the opening party. You can see an example from the South London Library of Things on Kickstarter here: kickstarter.com/projects/libraryofthings/library-of-things-bringing-borrowing-shops-to-the
Supermarkets	Since October 2014, all retailers in Scotland have been required to charge a minimum of 5p for each new single-use carrier bag. It's worth approaching retailers with a presence in your area to see if there is a way to apply for funds as part of this initiative. You can find out more at: carrierbagchargescotland.org.uk
Funding Scotland – fundingscotland.com	Funding Scotland provides advice on where to find funding and tips for successful funding applications. It provides an online funding search and is free to use.

There are also grants available from Zero Waste Scotland so do follow us on social media channels, sign up for our newsletter, and visit our website to keep up to date. Funding Central is also a great source of information: fundingcentral.org.uk

Marketing your products and services

For many setting up in this space, marketing can end up getting pushed aside slightly. Of course, the running of the project takes priority but a successful marketing strategy is essential in turning your start-up project into a long-term success. This is particularly important if you do not have a prime location on the high-street, as you'll need to attract people in other ways.

1. Think about where to reach your audience. If, like Bicester Green, you're upcycling furniture in a warehouse space on the edge of town, it can be difficult to reach the right audience in order to sell items at a premium price. One good way of doing this is organising to take some of the upcycled furniture to more up-market locations – this might be a market in a nearby town, a pop-up shop on a main shopping street or a country fair. Pop-ups can also be a great way of building up a following in different areas through word of mouth. On the other hand, if you're working with a university, the repair workshops might not be very well attended because students don't tend to have much stuff, whereas the swishing events might prove very popular. Always keep the audience in mind when planning activity.

2. Events are a great way of reaching a new audience and introducing them to what you're doing. R:evolve Clothing holds Make and Mend workshops, posting them on Facebook to reach a wider audience. These are held at the back of the boutique and people are encouraged to bring an item they already have to either work on repairing it or swap it for something new in the shop. MAKLab also found the repair cafes have been a useful way of recruiting new members.

3. Think about merchandise that people can wear whether that's a badge showing the brand, or a tote bag or t-shirt. Having something that people can take with them when they become a member and use regularly will help to spread the word. You could even brand the upcycled furniture or clothing with a 'reloved by...' stamp showing your brand. Remember that a good looking brand will add to the appeal of the service too.



4. Find out information about your customers because the more you know about them the more you can tailor messages to different groups. For example, in the libraries you might have specific toys for specific ages so will want to attract parents with children that age. Or you may want to send a reminder to people interested in gardening that you have tools available when it's time to plant in the spring.

5. Identify local media and groups that can help you spread the word about your project. You can then start to update them with news and invite them to try out your events to get them involved. You should also link with these contacts, or their publication and organisations, on social media so that you can also share information from them where appropriate. When you're targeting a local area don't forget about more traditional marketing materials like posters, community email newsletters and bulletin boards. These will often reach early adopters of community services very effectively and at minimal cost.

6. Focus some attention on social media as this can be a really good way to reach a similar audience to those you've already managed to attract. Once you've set up a Facebook Page, you could even set aside a small budget to target people on Facebook in the surrounding postcodes with an invitation to a clothes repair workshop. This is a great way to help people form new habits – once they have repaired one thing and gone through the process they're more likely to repair again. And if that positive experience is recorded on social media they are even more likely to share that experience with other people too.

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7. Consider posting some videos on your website and social media channels, or even live-streaming some of your events. People often think that this can harm attendance but, in general, it helps to show people what they can expect and they are then more likely to attend in person. Even just a 30 second video on how to change a fuse could be something useful to give people a taster and highlight a common reason for electrical items being thrown out. If you're feeling more ambitious, there are some great videos showing you how to upcycle lamps online – so why not try your own!

8. Think about collaborating with your local school or college. You could perhaps work with them on a fashion show or product repair event. Those interested in design, or social media and marketing, might also be keen to volunteer with you to gain relevant experience and confidence.

Top Tips

Collect data – if you are relying on grants and funding to keep your project going, then having data to show the impact that you've already had on the community and on the planet will be really important. Without that information, it will simply be too much of a gamble for many investors. Consider using a tool, such as Resource CIT, which can make this gathering of data much easier for everyone involved.

Let your volunteers be creative – they will have ideas of how to use materials that are going to waste so make sure you have a process to feed that into the project. At Bicester Green, one of the board members is focused on people - spending time talking to the volunteers each week. They then feed this back to make changes in the organisation where appropriate. For example, one volunteer suggested using tyre inner tubes to restring a seat.

Have a process to assess the cost-effectiveness of your activities – this comes back to what your mission is. If your primary goal is to re-engage people in the community through repairs, then selling items at a premium price might not be important. It's more important to start changing people's habits and get them to try out self-repair.

Match your volunteers to skills – it's all about the people. Those who volunteer for you week after week will become your strongest advocates, so listen to what their skills are and help them develop. The more that you can support people in doing something they enjoy and feel good at, the more likely they are to speak positively about their experience. Sharing skills amongst volunteers is also a highly motivating way of attracting and retaining volunteers as they have space and encouragement to learn from each other.

Target your audience through marketing – build the brand personality to attract more of the same sorts of people to your project. If most of your customers are 35-45 year old women who drive a car and like fashion then try targeting that age-group, gender and their interests on Facebook or through the materials and content you produce and see how effectively you can draw in more of the same crowd.

Insurance is a basic requirement – this is absolutely crucial before you get going, so think carefully about what insurance you need and what other information and agreements you need to have in place to make sure everyone is covered in the event of an accident.





Repairing things doesn't half feel good

Over the years the price of electronics, furniture and clothes has plummeted, leading to a throw-away culture of use and dispose. What has happened to the culture of curiosity, of pulling things apart to see how they're made? Repairing electronics, clothing and furniture has once again become all the rage in some communities so we went to see MAKLab in Glasgow, the R:evolve Clothing boutique (as part of LEAP) and Bicester Green in Oxfordshire to find out more about this switch to make do and mend.

MAKLab

Rethink design

MAKLab is an innovative Scottish charity focused on providing resources for people from all backgrounds, of all ages and all abilities to use physical making as a tool for social empowerment, regeneration, economic growth and social capital. As soon as you walk in the door of the MAKLab studio in Glasgow you can feel the brand all around you – even the door handles are adorned with the brand motif. It is a huge, open space with machines in every corner, the philosophy printed on the wall and a piano and a maker library of books from the British Council on how to make 'If things come apart' for added creativity.

Founded in 2012, MAKLab now has spaces across Glasgow, Dumfries, Dundee and Wick, with Paisley, Stirling and Edinburgh in the pipeline. Richard Clifford is one of the founders and he tells us about setting up MAKLab as a response to poor education. "Our core ethos is to empower people through making. All of the team are designers – and as designers also create a lot of waste, we need to take responsibility for this."

"Everything we've done was borne out of frustration. I was teaching architecture and students couldn't put stuff together. It is starting to change with eco-building initiatives – people are starting to understand more but we've got ourselves into a big mess with design so we need to rethink."

"If you're looking to make a difference then I would say look at what frustrates you in the world and seek out a way to change it. That's what we're doing with MAKLab and being authentic about where you come from and why you're trying to change something has taken us a long way – people really respond to that authenticity."

Learning through doing

In the basement, there is an event space, complete with DJ decks to give it a real start-up feel, but they also have a transportable fleet of flight cases which means that events can pop-up anywhere.



This is often people's first experience of MAKLab, coming to a 'meet the maker' talk to find out the thinking behind the design, or dipping a toe into making with a 'have a go' session on 3D printing or laser cutting.

The tear-down workshops are also really popular where people can pull things apart, so they can focus on design, and think about how it could be done differently – considering everything from materials, to construction, to packaging. It's a real eye-opener in dealing with the waste that you create too.

The whole point of the space is supporting people, through volunteers and information, in making or repairing things. They will bring in broken items or ideas and, for as little as £78 for the year, can access all of the facilities as well as training and advice to make their ideas come to life, or revive something they cherish.

The project is now self-sustaining through membership fees, commercial work, events and workshops. But if they want to keep expanding into new locations or new things, then they do need more funding. That's where building a strong relationship with key funders is really important.

Attracting a crowd

The shop-front location really helps to attract different people into the space. MAKLab seems to attract every type of person – some will have some money to throw at a project and might want to test out the latest in 3D printing and laser cutting technology. Students might want to find inspiration to progress a career in the design sustainability space, whilst parents might be focused on repairing things for the house, but they don't have the skills and knowledge without a little help.

The combination of traditional sewing and woodwork skills with the new technology like metal powder coating is what really sets MAKLab apart and positions them as much more than a repair shop. But it's also the wealth of experience they have across the team from dedicated people who are focused on social empowerment and equality. Richard emphasises that "getting the right team and advocates around you is really important so think about who can really help you achieve your aims and what you could achieve together."

MAKLab has also started fitting out different premises for different focus areas so in Glasgow it has a main studio, including laser cutting, 3D printing, wood work and sewing, but it also has a manufacturing premises located in two railway arches where they recondition furniture and have some space for storage. In this space, they can do everything from a sign for a house to assisting with the decommissioning of a Glasgow hospital where they will be reviving lockers and chairs to use in their own event space for 60-70 people. The repair side of things is often aesthetic so recoating a bike to give it a makeover will often be all that's needed.

Social impact

MAKLab was set up as a social project – it's about getting people to realise their impact through personal experience and helping to build skills and ultimately get people into work. One of the ambitious projects on the cards is teaching young people to build their own houses – it should cost £50,000 to build a two-bed eco-house and because Scotland has relaxed the rules around self-build, this could revolutionise how people think about getting on the housing ladder.



“When you have people setting fire to materials as fuel to get rid of them, you have to wonder if there is a better way,” says Richard. “We’ll be exploring how you can use those leftover materials as insulation or for construction or storage.”

“When we’re looking for funding to expand into new areas like this, we often get asked about how we measure success. For me, it’s not just about what tonnage you divert from landfill. It’s about the less tangible benefits. It’s about provoking a culture change and having an impact on someone’s life and community. Glaswegian kids tend to be very vocal – so seeing someone come to a workshop and going home at the end holding something they’ve made is a really special feeling. It’s that emotional impact that is the true measure for me. The robot making workshops where people create something really creative out of old components are something we’ve recently introduced and they are really fun and get a great reaction.”

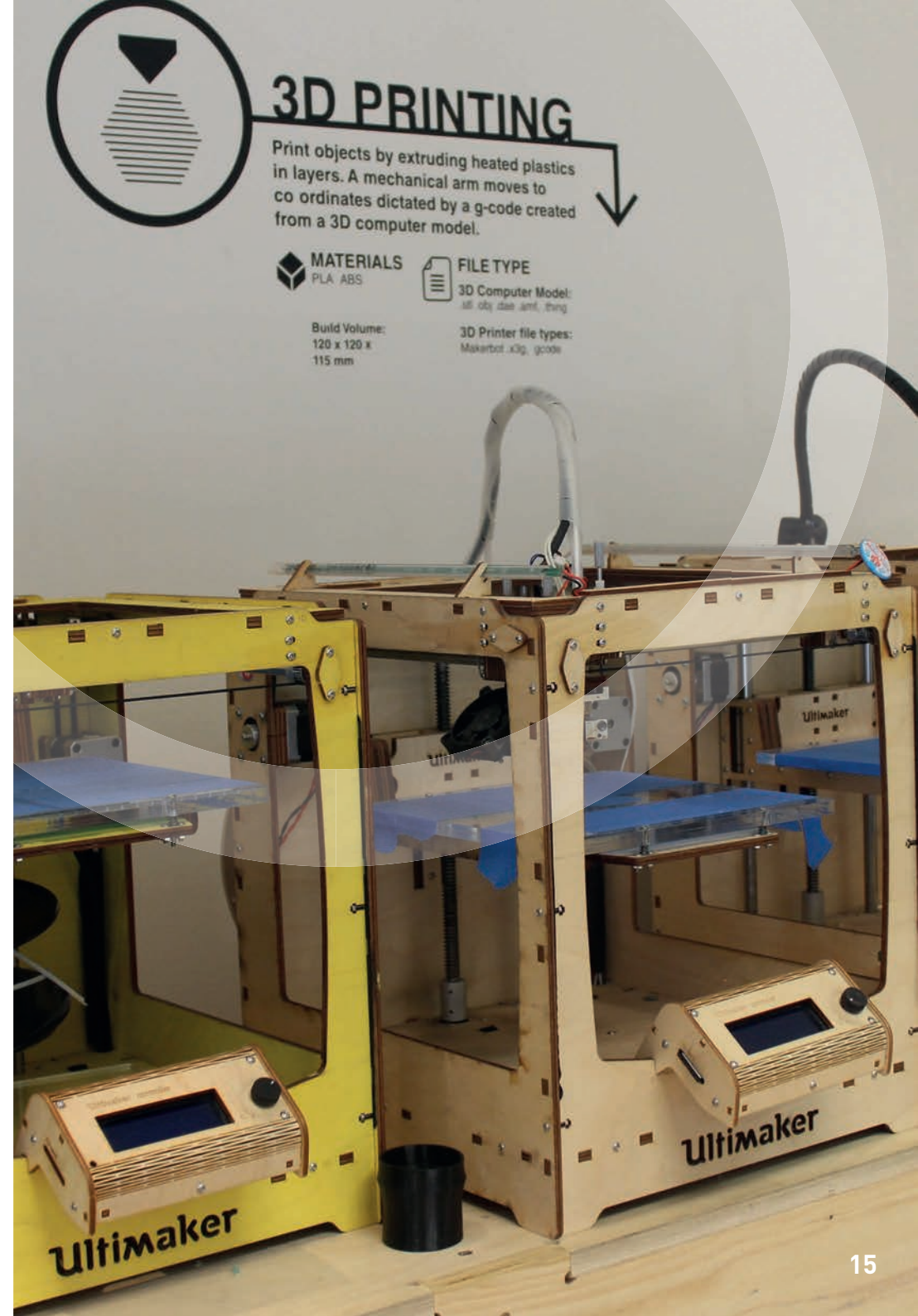
Growth

At the moment, eight people work at MAKLab split across three places. Three of those are very focused on running workshops and there is a team of around eight volunteers to support if they need any help. The next challenge for Richard and his team is to replicate what they have found works well more widely across Scotland and beyond. They’ve only recently put in place a more formal structure but this is necessary, as your project grows, so that each person has a sense of ownership and responsibility over their role and others can step back a bit to take more of a strategic view.

This is exactly what Richard is doing at MAKLab, where he is taking his experience of teaching in design and architecture to think about establishing an academy so there is accredited and recognised learning in this area. He’s also focused on developing the network and with three new spaces in development in Scotland and the opportunity to cross over the border to Newcastle the MAKLab looks set to keep on growing.

An important part of that, is building relationships to generate funding but also focusing on developing a self-sustaining business model as part of each location and initiative that is added to the MAKLab stable.

Unfortunately as of August 2017 MAKLab has officially closed.



MAKLAB

Maker Library

MAKLab are part of the Maker Library Network; a programme that connects young creatives in South Africa and the UK. By collaborating and sharing knowledge, Maker Libraries aim to enhance imagination and skills.

Top tip from Richard: Try running a monthly repair cafe. MAKLab makes sure that this is a regular thing in every location so people start to get into the habit of attending. The sessions are also structured to make sure that people attending get value out of it too – they're fun and engaging and you can be sure to walk away with something that is functioning or at least to have learnt some valuable skills. MAKLab is also experimenting with video links to the repair sessions so people can watch along and fix things live.

Maker Library Network



R:evolve Clothing

Make do and mend

R:evolve Clothing is one of those places that has much more to it than first meets the eye. From the outside, with an old butcher's bike pointing you to the front door, the shop looks like a high-end boutique, which wouldn't be out of place on George Street in Edinburgh. Inside, the clothes are displayed using reclaimed wood and vintage furniture, put together by volunteers who were keen to put their DIY skills to good use. Old Singer sewing machines are used as decorations and the window display changes regularly to catch people's eye.

But the story behind LEAP's R:evolve Clothing project is far more down to earth. LEAP is an older people's charity in South Lanarkshire, working since 1992 with anyone over the age of 50. These older people were saying that they didn't see any outlet for them in the community and in many cases were feeling lonely and isolated. They also felt that there are skills they have learnt throughout their lifetime, like sewing and DIY, that younger generations are often just not being taught at home or in schools. Many of them remember having one pair of shoes and one good outfit to wear out. It's now a completely different way of life and the desire to just consume more and more is something older people are concerned about.

Wendy Russell is the Project Manager at R:evolve Clothing, and she joined LEAP to set up the clothing project after completing a leadership course through the social enterprise academy. At the outset, she surveyed the local people on their attitudes to clothing and addressed all of the barriers they stated to set up R:evolve Clothing. It is the newest project from LEAP and it is something that is hugely successful in bringing together people from across different generations. It is also very focused on cutting CO2 emissions and reducing waste by focusing on repairing and skills sharing to mend clothes and textiles.

Getting it off the ground

With a clear objective of supporting people across generations they secured some funding from the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund and Clyde Gateway so they were able to put a lot of their initial ideas into practice in the pilot to see what worked.

Many volunteers who had been part of the LEAP 'Handy Person' service got involved to fit out the shop with on-trend pallet furniture and rails to give it that boutique feel. They then invited people in to swap any unwanted, ill-fitting clothes for something nearly new and haven't looked back since.

Wendy tells us more about the business model they chose, "we have played with the model a little to get it right but a really important part of it is giving people limited points for the items they bring in, so that they are also getting into the habit of taking things away with them. It's all too easy to just give away your unwanted things but if you're starting to really pay attention to where it goes and realising that items that have been used by someone else are equally good and attractive you really start to change your behaviour."



A leveller

The basic model is that people get points for the clothes they bring in – one point for children’s clothes, two points for adults clothes and three points for special items like fancy dresses or winter coats. They are attracting around 35 new members a week across the two stores and have around 90 swappers coming in each week.

“Providing a non-monetary way of exchanging value is also incredibly important. We allow people to trade without having money so we are able to do something to tackle poverty without discriminating. We also need people with good quality clothes so there is a real need for people of all incomes and social statuses to be a part of this.”

R:evolve asks quite a lot of questions when people register – things like household income, where they have travelled from and how much they usually spend on clothes in an average month. When looking at income: around 30% earn under £12,000 a year; 40% between £12,000 and £24,000; and 30% over £24,000. This is a great mix from the perspective of the project. It is also a really important part of feeding-back to funders, and is something that Wendy reports on each month to show the momentum of the project.

Find a space

One of the biggest challenges was, and still is, space. “The two shops are bursting at the seams,” Wendy tells us. “But if we’re offered some good quality clothing from a retailer then we have to find a way to bring in the stock so we can keep expanding as well as raising funds to make the existing stores self-sustaining.”

“The Council has also been really supportive in finding premises because we found that many owners of empty premises on the high-street would just rather let them stay empty than offer them for use by a charity at a lower rate. I would say this is something where building a close relationship with the Council will really help as they can help you explore other avenues and even use their powers to free up space. We have ended up slightly away from the main street but our maintenance costs are low here and people are starting to hear about us. Plus we have the butcher’s bike positioned on the main street encouraging people to come and take a look so definitely find something distinctive to raise awareness if you can.”

Pass on the skills

“One of the core things that the volunteers wanted to achieve with this project was bringing back the ‘make-do-and-mend’ culture. Lots of the female volunteers learnt to knit with their Gran and want to share that skill with their community. Textiles industries have also been a really strong influence in the area, they were really thriving and brought employment to local women so it’s something that has real meaning here too.”

The regular Make & Mend workshops also help to emphasise the environmental impact of clothes and teach something as simple as sewing on a button to upcycling a dress. In the UK, we throw away around 350,000 tonnes of clothes every year and when we consider that it takes seven gallons of water to produce one cotton t-shirt, isn’t it about time we thought differently about our clothes? “People can just drop in and either bring things in with them or get something from the shop. One of our volunteers will then take them through the steps and show them how to upcycle their piece of clothing,” says Wendy.

“The workshops are one area where we are looking to expand, so we may charge for more detailed sessions, or even take this offer out to businesses in the area that are looking for an innovative team building activity.”



One of the most popular events held so far was 'Bling it on' where a high street store gave the project its overstock of formal dresses. The team publicised the special day and had queues of people waiting to come in and they raised over £1,300 in one day. Often this sort of overstock is just shredded in the textile industry so building a relationship to make use of this is a great way to raise extra money and awareness.

Build on the success

After the runaway success of the swap-shops and Make & Mend workshops, R:evolve Clothing is looking to secure funding to focus on a few more developments. One of the services they offer is formal wear lending. This means that if someone has a job interview or another formal event to attend, they can drop in and get an outfit and some help pulling off the perfect look. They are also working with schools to put on 'trashion' shows and deliver sessions educating them on the effect clothes have on the environment.

"We're very lucky to have funding opportunities through the Scottish Government and will keep our eye open for more opportunities to expand. But we also want to make sure that, once a shop is up and running, the rent and running costs are low so they can sustain themselves," says Wendy.

In terms of staff, they have one full time project manager as well as two part-time posts with a volunteer development office and shop supervisor. Between them, they do everything from managing stock to reporting on results, implementing marketing and social media work and making sure the shops and the volunteers give the best impression of the project. They also have the support of a team of volunteers, who tend to be long-term sick or retired or are there to get experience in the workplace.

One young person joined through a local work ready scheme and has not only learnt a lot about mending clothes but also gained a huge amount of confidence in interacting with people of different ages.

Most important lessons

For R:evolve Clothing, it's important to have the aims and objectives available for everyone to see – so they have them pinned behind the desk and share them along with results on the Facebook Page. "We really want people to know they are part of the movement and contributing to something positive in the community," says Wendy.



It's also really important to show success, especially to those who have funded the project. Volunteers input data from the store which means that they can produce a monthly report on the number of swaps, tonnes of clothes collected and resultant saving in CO2 emissions. In fact, having the right mix of people to contribute is also really key. You may have someone who is happy entering data and building charts but doesn't want to talk to the public or you could have a very creative person who wants to create a special window display. The most important thing is getting people with the right attitude and appetite and then upskilling where you need to.

The final point that stood out from R:evolve clothing was about working with the right partners. For example, they knew that they would need a solution for disposing of the items that couldn't be re-used so built up connections with charity shops as well as Nathan's waste recyclers. They give money to R:evolve for the clothes they take away and genuinely use everything they can, and what they can't they send to developing countries. Checking exactly what happens to items when they leave your premises is vital if you want to be sure that the whole operation is supporting the values of the project.



Top tip from Wendy: The damage is done when the clothes are on your back so we must try and prolong the life of the clothes by getting the community on board and finding innovative ways to share our already abundant resources.

Bicester Green

Embedding reuse and repair into a growth town

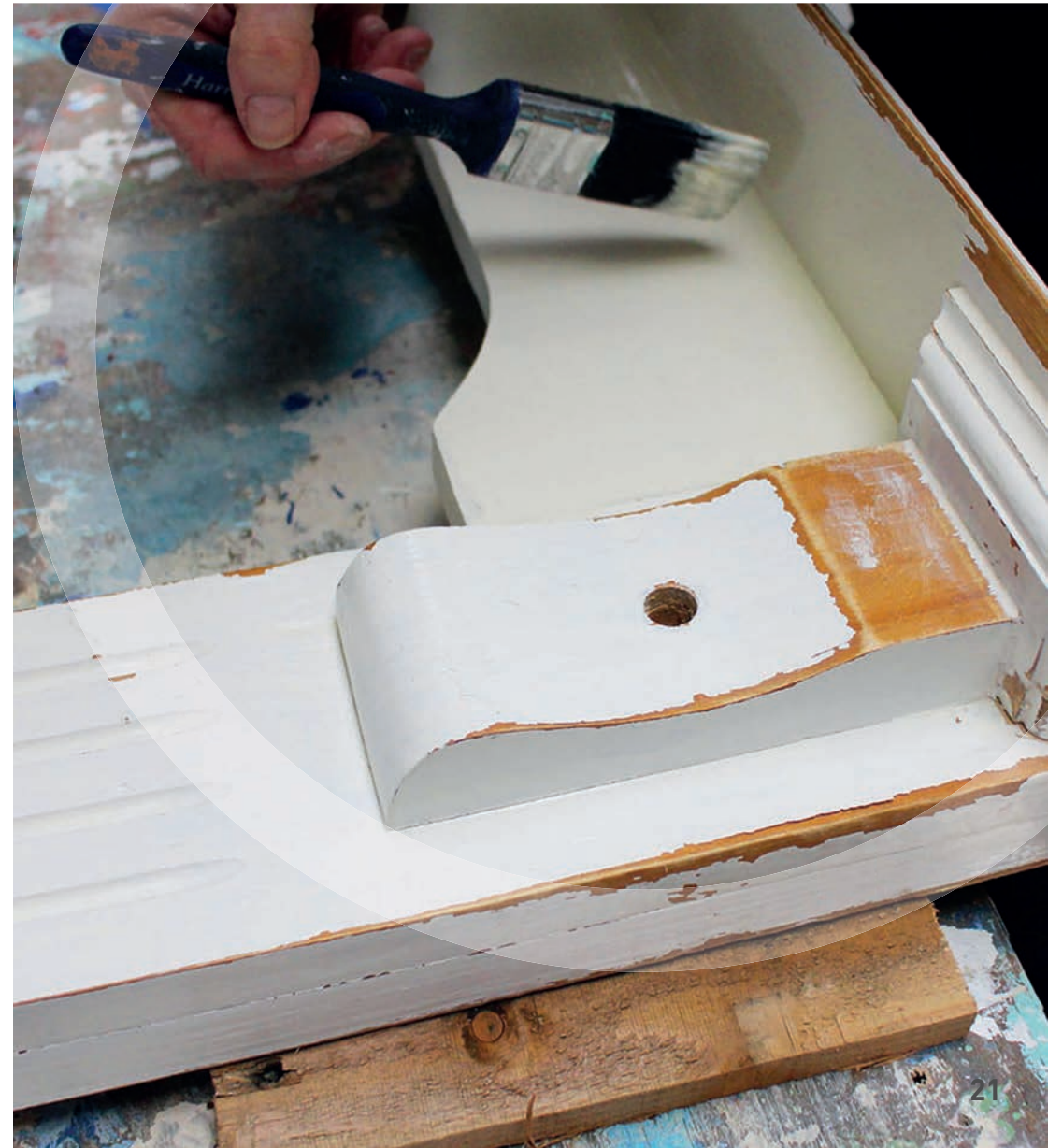
Bicester is one of the fastest growing towns in Europe with 13,000 new homes expected to be built as part of its garden city status. Simon Kenton, the project manager for Community Action Groups in Oxfordshire and Gavin Hull, Commercial Waste Reduction Officer at Oxford County Council, took the idea of Bicester Green to the Eco Bicester team at Cherwell District Council and secured £40,000 to start the project. This meant they could set up a place where reuse and repair could be more accessible to the general public. Three years later, they employ one person to manage the workshop, volunteers and marketing of the project with the aim of encouraging more reuse and repair in the town.

Social value as important as environmental and economic value

The volunteers don't always have the skills they need so it's all about upskilling. In fact the Bicester Green motto is 'skills, sustainability and second-hand stuff' and its aim is to reduce waste, to reduce hardship, and to reduce isolation. Azul is on the Board of trustees and looks after volunteer wellbeing and HR, coming in once a week to see the team and feeding back any needs to the board. She's a Bicester resident and works with disadvantaged people as part of Oxford City Council's community team. She has been involved from the beginning, having spotted a gap in terms of a place where people could reuse and repair things in Bicester.

There are nine people on the board of trustees and they nominate people when there is a lack of resource or skill amongst them. For example, they've recently had someone take on the treasury role with accounting skills as this was a gap. Each board member commits 10 hours a month plus the board meeting.

Azul is really passionate about the impact the project is having on people. She says "at first it was about diverting waste but, more and more, it's about the people and the skills-sharing. We really feel like the project is reducing the waste of people as well as resources. There is the potential for them to be so much more.



There's one volunteer who loves to take the staples out of furniture ready for reupholstering. Whatever it is, we can help them to build confidence and a social network through their work."

Bicester Green has a party every three months for the volunteers. They want all of them to be able to get together and share experiences, even if they don't overlap whilst they are actually working. Last summer they did a lunch in the local park and got all of the food from Fresh Direct (surplus food) and cooked together. Azul says, "the project is actually now quite big so it's useful for people to interact and share skills even if they don't see each other day-to-day."

Focus on bikes, electricals and furniture

Bicester Green has volunteers who manage the workshop areas of bikes, upholstery and electricals. The main volunteer who repairs electricals has been there for 18 months. He can't work because of operations on his back but this helps give him something to do.

Many of the electrical items are put aside at the local Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) – and usually just need a clean, a wire or fuse fixing, then PAT testing.

Clive is a volunteer who looks after bike repairs. He started at Bicester Green in July 2014 and does a couple of half days a week. Clive was an engineer all of his working life and now he looks after the bikes with a couple of others, sharing skills between themselves.

A big problem is getting a higher price for second-hand bikes, because you can get them so cheaply now. They don't seem to have the demand or the demographic coming in to buy the higher-end bikes at a higher price. Safety is really important so the minimum they will do is check the bikes are roadworthy. But they have to balance the safety and cleanliness with spending too much time working on them as it just isn't worth the time if they won't get much extra money for them.

Alex came to Bicester Green from the local job club, which helps people to find training or work. He's been volunteering for 18 months, focusing on furniture repair, and is gaining plenty of skills and confidence. He says "it is very satisfying when you fix something or give it a new coat of paint and then see it being bought.

It's difficult to sell brown furniture so we'll often paint these pieces to make them more appealing." One volunteer has professional experience restoring furniture so they're really lucky to be able to use his skills and share them with the team. They also deconstruct and use pallets to make furniture. There is a lot of waste wood that they can get their hands on for this, including free pallets from industrial estates. It's also been a real success in terms of doing pallet workshops at festivals – and they've had a presence at Tandem and the Wood Festival over the past few years. Festivals are a great way of reaching a new audience and raising awareness of Bicester Green.

Upcycling is all the rage

Bespoke furniture commissions also seem to be gaining in popularity - people may come in and see an item they like but want it to be done up to match their own colour scheme, for example. Because Bicester Green has a fairly narrow demographic coming in to the workshop (it is only open during the day on weekdays), they try to take some of the upcycled furniture to the regular craft market to spread the word. They are looking at ways to make the brand stand out at the market, for example with a 're-loved by Alex at Bicester Green' stamp on each item.



“People are starting to recognise that they can upcycle with us”, says Emma who runs the project. “We have some really popular shabby-chic workshops and ladies DIY classes that are helping to bring new people in.” One of the trustees is focusing on communications so Bicester Green is using the marketing tools on Facebook to target people for workshops. This generally fills up the class pretty quickly.

Volunteers are also always looking at ways to minimise waste across the teams. For example, some of the used tyre inner tubes have been used to create a new mesh for a chair and they send some of the old tyres to a company that makes them into children’s play areas. “The more creative uses we can find, the more we can divert from landfill,” says Emma.

The pros and cons of prosperity

Lewis works for the district council on the sustainability team. He’s been a director at Bicester Green since 2013 and tells us this is one of the town’s flagship projects. He focuses a lot of his time on funding applications because even though Bicester Green generates around 40% of revenue from sales, it is still reliant on grant funding to keep going. This was ok at the start-up stage but many funds don’t seem to want to support running costs.

“We are very lucky that we have a great relationship with the HWRC, which really helps in terms of getting materials in,” says Lewis. “Oxfordshire is a very affluent county so the donations are often really good quality.”

Sharing a space with the charity warehouse Sobell House is also a real benefit because many people stumble across Bicester Green from there. They go to Sobell but end up buying from Bicester Green instead. Sobell doesn’t do any up-cycling so it works for both parties. They secured that space because Sobell needed a training element to secure planning permission.

“Bicester isn’t like Oxford but affluence is coming to Bicester,” Lewis says. “There’s a new station with trains direct to London and with all the new properties being built we have seen a slight increase in sales. But the station is also a threat for us because as it becomes more prosperous and more desirable we have to question how long we’ll be able to afford to stay at this site.”

Having a real variety of influential people on the board really does help. For example, one of the board members is the general manager of the main supermarket in the town centre. It owns quite a few of the shop units in the town so offered one to Bicester Green for a six-week pop-up shop in the run-up to Christmas.

Everything takes time so sales and marketing often slip but getting the word out is a really important part of what you’re doing. Try and get a volunteer in to dedicate some time to this, perhaps even approaching people at a local college or university (e.g. Oxford Brookes University) and tap into the other newsletters in the area that might be happy to share information regularly.





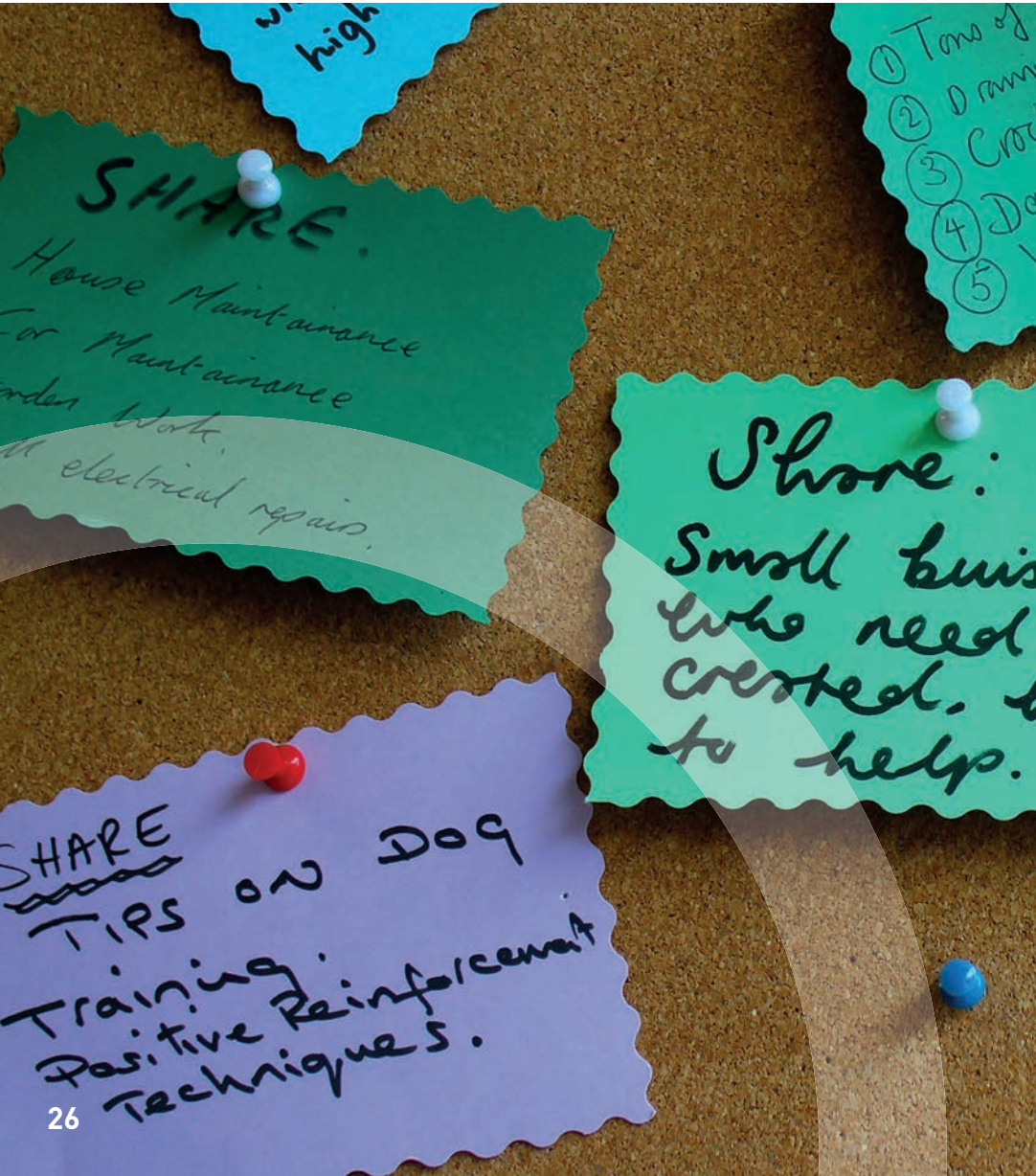
Top tip from Emma: Everything takes time so sales and marketing often slip but getting the word out is a really important part of what you're doing. Try and get a volunteer in to dedicate some time to this, perhaps even approaching people at a local college or university (e.g. Oxford Brookes University) and tap into the other newsletters in the area that might be happy to share information regularly.



Discover almost anything in a Library of Things

Most people are familiar with libraries full of books, even if only in the depths of their childhood memories. And, in that context, the notion of borrowing something and giving it back is completely normal. But why, when we use some things so infrequently, do we feel the need to 'own' everything? A library of things can open up a world of possibilities without people having to store, pay for and maintain a myriad of tools and equipment. We found out more about the sharing phenomena from BELS toy library in Newcastle, Share Frome's general Library of Things and the quirky Edinburgh Tool Library.

Share Frome



Eight people + six weeks + £7,000 = Share Frome

What's interesting about Share Frome is that it was set up incredibly quickly with minimal resource so it really shows that, with the right people and determination, anyone can give it a go.

It helps that Frome is a wonderfully creative and progressive town with a really strong sense of community and its own independent newspaper to boot. Anna Francis started working at the town council as its Sustainability Officer around two years ago. It's an independent town council and she is the only Sustainability Officer at town council level across the country, in fact very few city or county councils have anyone performing that role. In Frome, there is a real sense of responsibility for the town and the council chooses to do far more than just the typical street scene and parks. It was Anna's interest in reuse and her involvement with Sustainable Frome which was the trigger to get the project started.

The idea for SHARE was born in early 2015, as a partnership between Frome Town Council, social enterprise Edventure, Sustainable Frome and The Cheese and Grain, the local charitable music and events venue. A group of eight young people were part of specialist training in community entrepreneurship, run by Edventure and they set up the shop with funding from the town council and all of the items were donated or lent by people in the town. The local community also contributed in the form of advice, expertise, time, money, opinions and enthusiasm!

Donate time, money and skills

Over 350 people have joined Share Frome with membership options starting as a yearly donation of £1-£10 where you donate between £1 and £4 for a week to borrow items as and when you need them; right up to 'SHARE Extraordinaire' for a £10 monthly donation, which means that you have unlimited borrowing, as well as a membership pack, free tea and coffee in the shop and free entry to any of the events.



All members have to provide ID and they sign an agreement to say that they are lending the item at their own risk. This is really important for insurance purposes so think about what agreements you need people to sign when they are volunteering or donating to make sure you and they are both covered. Building in an ongoing donation option is crucial to the longevity of the project and the more people who get involved through borrowing things or donating items or their time, the more they build a habit and affinity with the project.

Another way the team has tried to build this affinity is by asking everyone who donates an item to have their picture taken and to write a short explanation of its history or why they are lending it out. These picture cards are positioned around the shop and it often acts as a conversation starter in town, as people know the people they are borrowing things from.

As well as donating money and things, people are also encouraged to donate time. Keith is one of the regular volunteers. He's a full time artist but spends two days a week at Share Frome to escape. Doug is a dab hand with DIY so will help with any shelves that need putting up.

They also have a team of retired women who come to give back to the community and it really does become a big part of the volunteers' lives. Anna often hears things like 'Share Shop changed my life - I get to meet so many different people and feel like I'm contributing to the town.'

It shows that the project isn't just about reducing waste, it's also about giving people a sense of pride and purpose. Anna talks about Share Frome being an antidote to austerity – something that is incredibly important in the current economic times.

Engage the community

At the moment they don't collect much information about their members but with two new shop managers in place the team is now working on getting people to confirm what categories they are interested in so they can keep people updated on the things that are of interest to them, whether that be children's toys, tools, or gardening or cooking equipment.

Share Frome also has an online database running on myturn software. This means that people can look at the stock online and then contact the shop by phone, email, or on social media to reserve it and organise to come and pick it up.

The co-ordinators are continually working to update the system with new items and add tags and descriptions to help people find the right items for what they need.

Another way they are finding they can reach the community is through skills sharing. Where there is a real skills gap they run workshops and skills sessions to help people learn how to use the equipment and there's a board on the wall of the shop where people can ask for help or offer their services. For example, someone is asking for help to learn how to use their sewing machine properly.

Events form an important part of the business model, with everything from DIY sessions for women, to a sharing festival where the DIY doctor was on hand to help and advise people. It can be difficult to get volunteers with the right skills so they will be focusing on finding people with experience to help with workshops on sewing and electrical repair to keep expanding this area.

Another regular event they run is a jumble session. Because the shop is constantly being offered items to include in the inventory, when they find that items aren't popular and are taking up valuable space, then they would go into a jumble session where people are able to take these items for a small donation. This is the sort of thing that they do at the Independent market that runs on the first Sunday of each month and can also help to bring in more revenue for the shop.

Location, Location, Location

The most important thing is acquiring a shop in a good location. Avire is the organisation that helped Share Frome find its shop and it has a department that focuses on the charitable rental sector so is worth looking at. There are also other companies like The Ethical Property Company that could help.

In this case the shop is owned by Lloyds Bank but there was no demand for the property at full market rate so they were happy to have it occupied by a good cause at a lower price. Landlords don't have to pay business rates on their shop if it is occupied by a charity but they do on an empty property so many are open to taking minimal or even no rent for a good cause because they have someone maintaining the space and paying the bills at least. For Share Frome it is on a two year contract with a one month notice period but Avire says that around 80% of charities they place are still in the property at the end of the two years.

Project upkeep

The initial funding from the town council was about £7,000, which paid for the team of apprentices to work together to set up the shop, conduct market research, develop branding, promote the shop and run it for six months. The main ongoing costs are the two part-time shop co-ordinators and utilities. There are then around 15 volunteers that help with various things and that's from a population of 28,000 people. It's quite similar to a charity shop model in that the paid co-ordinators manage the volunteers.



Frome Town Council, Edventure and the shop managers also meet once a month to make sure everything is going well.

The initial funding ran from May 2015 to January 2016 and they now have some more funding from the WEEE diversion fund. To support this, they are running repair cafes to support the objective to reduce WEEE to landfill. They have also done One Planet Sunday and repair cafes in the past.

People going along to the repair cafes are asked to pay what they can because they don't want anyone not to be able to go because of cost. As a social enterprise, they are also very careful with the way they word everything on their marketing materials - always talking about donations rather than fees or a service. They also recognise other types of contributions, such as time or food and drink, as these are equally valuable for the project.

More recently, they've also secured some Housing Association funding to engage with them and go into the community centres on the local Aster Housing Association sites.

The aim is to get rid of the stigma attached to borrowing second hand things and make it the new normal. But neither do they want to be patronising so this has to be done quite carefully. These are all good routes to revenue but Share Frome will need more funding to keep the operation running. It costs around £900 a month to keep the shop open (broken down in the table below) so the next year will see the team working hard to figure out how to make the project self-sustaining.

Item	Cost per month
Staff	764
Food and drink	20
Materials	20
Utilities	67
Other	25

^ A basic breakdown of the costs

Anna suggests, “ask to get a water meter installed if there isn’t one already – we were charged £800 for water for the first six months as it was assumed to be an average business (but only has two sinks and a toilet)”.

Partnership working

Anna clearly has some very good connections in the town and she recommends “if you’re not a charity yourself then you should look to link with one to set up. This is what Share Frome did and it meant we could rent the shop for peppercorn rent as only charities get business rate exemptions.”

“Some charity partners might need too much certainty and have you jumping through many hoops to get their full team in support. So it can often be more effective to work with a smaller, more nimble partner. We approached Cheese & Grain, which is a music venue in the town but is also a charity.

The team now work together to promote Share Frome as well as promoting the music venue in the shop. Another option is to set up as a charity yourself but this would take a little more time.”

Other important partners are the local charity shops, which in this case helped with volunteer recruitment and gave advice around shop management. As part of the recent funding, Share Frome has committed to diverting five tonnes of WEEE before the end of the year.

They’re exploring partnerships with charity shops on this as most of them don’t accept electrical items. Share Frome managers are qualified PAT testers and so could help local charity shops to divert their electrical waste from landfill.

Impact measurement will include all of the borrowed electrical items and those items which are fixed, because effectively it’s avoiding the need to buy (and ultimately dispose of) either of those items. So they’re looking at direct and indirect effects. They are using standard average weights of items provided by the Somerset Waste Partnership to measure this.

Share Frome has also put together a toolkit to help you get started and this includes things like forms and legal documents that you could use to get started. They also offer guided tours and consultancy. You can find it online at:

<https://edventurefrome.org/project/set-up-share-a-library-of-things-in-your-community/>





Top tip from Anna: Share Frome was set up as part of the Edventure apprentice scheme but don't be put off if you don't have a similar programme in your area. You only need a small budget to get started and could set up as a co-operative or in someone's garage as long as it was well promoted and people knew where to find you. Her biggest piece of advice is to copy what others are doing that is working well. There is no need to reinvent the wheel just adjust it for your local area.

BELS and Toy Library

Easing the cost of parenting

The Baby Equipment Loan Service and Toy Library (BELS & TL) in Howdon, North Tyneside on the outskirts of Newcastle has been operating since 1985. The project loans, at a minimal cost, essential baby and safety equipment to local families on low income or benefits. In 2003, it established a Toy Library for children from newborn to 15 years old.

The project grew from the Rosehill Young Women's Project when a Project Worker recognised there was a need in the local area. In the beginning most of the equipment was second hand and had been donated to the project. The items were then cleaned and safety checked to get them ready for new users. Over time, funding was raised from a variety of sources that enabled BELS to purchase some new equipment.

Items such as pushchairs, cots, high-chairs and baby monitors are provided on a six or 12 month loan, with the option to extend if need be. When items are returned, sometimes little life is left in them. If the team believe there is any inherent value retained, the items will be sold at a table-top-sale, or repaired (e.g. new wheels) and made available for a new customer.

More recently, the BELS has been extended to short-term hire. For example, grandparents can hire for a weekend or a week when their grandchildren come to visit. This is a great way for the organisation to raise some extra income and is a service available to anyone, not just those on low incomes.

As you'd expect, over the years there have been some changes in the types of items that can be loaned. Fire guards and stair gates used to be available to loan - but due to the nature of their being used to protect children and now subject to stringent safety regulations, these items are no longer loaned. Instead BELS now provides parents and carers in need with subsidised stair gates or fire guards to purchase, but not loan. BELS and the toy library have been in three different premises, moving to its current location in 2011. When selecting premises, space, proximity to the previous premises and to core membership, as well as cost were taken into account. Whilst the rent is not as cheap

as some nearby shop fronts, the benefit of the current location is that all utilities and maintenance costs are included and it is extremely helpful to know in advance what the monthly outgoings will be.

The project is overseen by a volunteer management committee and staffed by two part-time project support workers. The treasurer oversees staff supervision and other trustees contribute where possible, through raising funds, supporting funding bids or managing the toy library when staff members are on annual leave.





Volunteers are warmly welcomed and have roles such as meeting new customers and attending staff meetings, choosing toys to buy, administration work, publicising the service and fundraising. The team are currently fundraising for a one-year part-time BELS project support worker to give this part of the project the attention it needs.

The Toy Library

In 2002 the toy library began as a volunteer led six month trial. A small amount of toys were purchased, but the popularity of the service and success in obtaining grant funding meant that project support workers could be employed. The toy library now has an impressive array of toys which means children can benefit from their parents being able to regularly change the toys they play with –enjoying the changes in stimulation this provides. The toy library is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, including until 6.30pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays which allows families to pop in after school.

Stock is purchased ad hoc when specific funding is obtained or there are sufficient funds to allow new toys to be purchased. The toy library has benefited from corporate free gifts, including a large amount of Lego from the Lego store, and toys from Tesco, John Lewis and Fenwicks department store. However these are one-off gifts and it could be worth investigating the possibility of regular donations or sponsorship from these corporations. Most toys are purchased new, but an annual toy appeal is successful in bringing in new toys. Other donations are received on an ad hoc basis. If these toys are not suitable for the toy library, they will be sold at the monthly table-top sale or community fairs to raise funds.

Membership of the toy library is £6 per child, per annum. With this membership, the child is allowed to borrow two toys per month. However, toys can be swapped more frequently should the child or carer / parent wish. There are currently approximately 180 members, and numbers fluctuate depending on the ability of the project support workers to promote the library. The most popular toys are those for ages 2-8.

Growth

The BELS has been established for over 30 years - its longevity illustrates its success. It has achieved this through regularly re-evaluating the projects and listening to feedback from members and volunteers. A large amount of data is recorded, in terms of members and their location and demographics, as well as stock control and popularity of toys.

Service targets are developed through feedback from users, partners and groups and they adapt as the service changes. The long-term nature of the project (along with the good service provided) has transformed it into a mainstay within the local area. Children whose parents used the service for them are now visiting for their own children. Applying for funding is a constant task for the project support workers.

A project of this nature, which receives little core income from members, is very reliant on grant funding, making their work more precarious. It is important to ensure the project is supported by a wide-range of funders to make it less financially vulnerable. It may also be useful to look into initiatives to improve the financial self-sustainability of projects. One way BELS & TL has done this is by providing an outreach service and stay-and-play sessions in the community. Many of these sessions are provided for free because they are targeted at those disadvantaged within the community.

However, this has changed over time, as the demographic of the area has changed, enabling the project to raise additional funds. Another avenue the team is considering, is managing a temporary pop-up shop in order to sell donations to raise funds and awareness of the library.

It is worth considering how the premises impacts on the ability to raise more income for the project. The BELS and toy library is located within a community centre which is closed on weekends. This restricts the activities the project can participate in. For example, the centre regularly has requests for parties to be held within the meeting room on Saturdays which cannot be accommodated. If children's parties were allowed at weekends, the toy library could supply toys, for a small fee.

The premises may also impact on the size of the project. BELS & TL would like to grow but the shelves and cupboards are full within the Toy Library and therefore there is a limit to how much the project could expand within its current premises.

Regular interaction with a wide range of different organisations and professionals to promote the project within the community is invaluable for maintaining the projects profile. With two part-time workers, this is often a challenge, but its importance should not be underestimated.

A promotional effort is currently being undertaken to inform local midwives, health visitors and social services of both the toy library and BELS projects.



Top tip from Deb: Make the best of the people around you. The services that complement you, the people that have used your service in the past, they will be your strongest advocates so get them involved in spreading the news about your project.



The Edinburgh Tool Library

“I went to Toronto to visit friends in October 2013 and spent a day at the Toronto Tool Library. I could already see the environmental benefits but the social benefits really struck me on that visit. Lots of people have their own struggles in the Leith community so I just thought, if I can do something that will help them improve something in their own home or to get started in a job that might change their life, then I will. That’s why I set up The Edinburgh Tool Library.”





Bringing the tool library model to the UK

The idea of a tool library can be very flexible. For The Edinburgh Tool Library, it means every Saturday Chris and a team of volunteers open a police box on Leith high street for four hours. They get people to sign up in person so that they can check ID and get them to sign an agreement, but this is also the space to pick things up and drop them off. “For the first year of the project, it’s a cheap option,” says Chris Hellawell, the founder of the first tool library in the UK. “But importantly it’s also practising what we preach – we’re telling our members that we’re about maximising the effectiveness of objects. We hire the police box for four hours on a Saturday morning, but you might have someone selling jam there on a Friday or sharing campaign information on a Sunday. None of these organisations can afford a permanent space but we all benefit from having a highly visible location that everyone knows.”

Out of the headlights

The quirky space certainly helped to turn heads at the launch, as the Edinburgh Tool Library featured on local TV and in the national news. All of the PR and Marketing was done by Chris himself, “it is a start up so I had to learn lots of different skills – how to write a press release, how to write a funding bid, how to manage accounts.” It’s a good idea to build a team around you with a mix of skills so that between you all of the different elements of running a business are covered. You will also have people with varying availability offering to volunteer. Some might be happy to commit a couple of hours every

week, but for others, getting involved in one-off workshops is a lot more feasible, so Chris encourages both. The Edinburgh Tool Library started out with a £4,000 grant from the School for Social Entrepreneurs. After the initial splash of funding and coverage, it’s about building relationships. Chris has secured a few small pots of funding along the way and they have some money coming in from membership fees, but it’s the local relationships that really matter. Forming relationships - with the people working and living in the Leith area, with local neighbourhood partnerships and community groups, and with councillors and MSPs that can see the real value in what the library is delivering - is key to securing a long-term future for the project.

The practicalities of getting started

Chris got his inspiration from the repair and share scene in Toronto where a friend introduced him to the people at the Toronto Tool Library (<http://torontotoollibrary.com/>). There is also a Toronto Repair Cafe (<http://repaircafetoronto.ca/>) and Kitchen Library (<http://thekitchenlibrary.ca/>) making it a really vibrant place for repair and share.

“There weren’t any tool libraries in the UK at that time so the initial set-up took a long time because people weren’t familiar with the concept,” says Chris.

One of the big hurdles was setting up as a charity (charitable incorporated organisation) but this is something that he insists was essential. “Until we had a formal structure, anyone who was donating things was basically donating them to me,” says Chris. “I didn’t want any question of me benefiting personally from the donations but I also needed to make sure that I was protected personally, so I waited until we were officially constituted before accepting any donations.” The Edinburgh Tool Library is set up as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). Chris spent some time with OSCR, the Scottish Charity Regulator, to lay out what a tool library is all about. Essentially he explained it as a library, but for tools - a place where people can go to learn, grow, escape and be a part of a community, not just access things.

Getting technical

Without a permanent space, it is really important to have a good website and, linked to that, the tools in place to manage your inventory and bookings. Chris uses myTurn software, which is free for charities to use. It means that people can reserve items online and see the whole range of tools that they have to lend. “Having this system makes the management of the tools so much easier. They’re also making a lot of changes so that it is more UK-friendly, which is great.”

“Another element that we’re looking at expanding on is the data it helps us to collect. We’re already collecting certain baseline data when someone joins, things like how many are in their household, and their age, sex and income bracket. But we also want to be able to assess the CO2 emissions we’re saving through the library. That’s a bigger question of ‘If the tool library didn’t exist, what would you do?’ So we’re thinking about ways to measure that.”

The Edinburgh Tool Library has calculated that in just one year it has saved two tonnes of carbon just associated with cordless drills – and they only make up 1% of the inventory. It’s this sort of data that could be hugely compelling for future funders so do keep an eye out for tools like myTurn and ResourceCIT that could help you capture this.

Next steps

“We’ve proved that the model of an online library works, but because I always have the guy in Toronto in my mind I keep coming back to the idea that this should have wider social value,” explains Chris. “I want our library to help people who have had a tough ride or have done something a bit stupid and need a second chance.” The next move is to get a larger space for the library to maximise the use of the tools they have. They want to give members the space to use the tools there, enabling them to learn new skills from each other and from the volunteers.

Chris is already doing a lot of outreach work but this could also be brought in to the workshop. One recent project was with Dads Rock, where they did a session for young fathers who don’t have much contact with their children. Chris worked with them, and a local craftsman, to make balance bikes, which they could then give to the kids for Christmas. “This simple activity filled them with pride and really built up their confidence. What’s even more amazing is that these Dads now want to do another course to build something for the community – they’re walking taller, they’re having fun and they want to give something back,” says Chris.

An employment project is next. Chris wants to pair a young person who’s struggling to get a job with a volunteer mentor - someone who’s retired but wants to share their skills and life knowledge. Perhaps an ex-trades person - they often go from working in a very social environment to suddenly finding themselves at home, and are at risk of social isolation and loneliness.



Having a workshop space is the Holy Grail because it opens up so many opportunities for extra revenue too – you could hire out to makers, teach evening classes and offer team-building days for businesses. Chris says, “Using your own hands to create something can be really therapeutic so I’d say it’s something that everyone should try.”

As of October 2017, the Edinburgh Tool Library has expanded to more venues and is also running workshops.



Top tip from Chris: Get your timeline sorted and then multiply it by three – things always take longer than you think they will! As the lead on the project you will also need to put in a substantial amount of time so be prepared to give it your all.

Useful resources

More inspiration...

There are some fantastic resources out there to help you get started on your repair and share journey. In particular, we would recommend taking a look at the following information from our contributors in more detail.

Professor Martin Charter

Martin started working on sustainability issues in the late 80s and attended The Rio Earth Summit in 1992. He has been running The Centre for Sustainable Design for over twenty years and hosted the first workshops on WEEE in 1996. Martin is a recipient of a World Green Design Contribution Award for his personal contribution to the development of sustainable design worldwide. He also runs an annual conference on sustainable innovation – where he is starting to see far more interest in social aspects as well as economic and environmental benefits of innovation. Martin is a former Visiting Professor in Sustainable Product Design and now Professor of Innovation and Sustainability at University for the Creative Arts. Martin he a member of BSI Circular Economy steering board and was past chairman of ISO 14006 (eco-design management systems) and previous UK expert to both ISO and BSI groups on ISO TR 14062 (eco-design). Martin is the (co)author and (co)editor of various publications, notable Eco-Innovate (a guide for SMEs on eco-innovation) which has had over 50,000 downloads.

Martin also launched the Farnham Repair Cafe and conducted work with Hampshire County Council on reuse projects across the county with WRAP funding. As part of his work in Hampshire, Martin has helped to put together a repair and share toolkit, which includes lots of information on common things to repair. It also lists some key regulations and permits that you should be aware of when setting up a repair centre. You can download the full toolkit from point 8 of the 'Love your home for less' page:

hants.gov.uk/smartliving/inthehome

Janet Gunter

Janet is the Co-founder of the Restart Project: a London-based social enterprise that encourages and empowers people to use their electronic equipment longer, by sharing repair and maintenance skills. Janet leads on communications strategy and implementation as well as community building in this small, award-winning social enterprise. Spearheading strategy to scale social and environmental impact as well as leading on monitoring and evaluation. The project achieved major media attention including from BBC, AFP, Bloomberg, and The Telegraph.

You can find out more about the Restart Project, including a guide on how to host your own restart party at: therestartproject.org

Lucy Chamberlin

Lucy is Head of Programme for the RSA's Great Recovery project. She has a background in research, marketing and environmental technology and previously worked as a Business Analyst at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Whilst at the RSA, she led workshops and gave presentations to a wide range of audiences, expanded the Great Recovery's network of participants and collaborators and led on two Design Residencies involving waste management entities, local authorities, reuse networks, manufacturers and professional designers culminating in a new report and film to be broadcast on national TV.

The RSA has recently published a report on reclaiming power in the sharing economy: <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/fair-share-reclaiming-power-in-the-sharing-economy>

Simon Kenton

Simon works for Resource Futures and is the Project Director for Oxfordshire's network of Community Action Groups, delivering financial, structural and personal support to over 60 community sustainability initiatives. He specialises in communications, media, facilitation, capacity building and non-hierarchical governance. He designs and runs training for groups, individuals and organisations on hard and soft skills ranging from Portable Appliance Testing and thermal imaging to public speaking and promoting personal resilience. Nationally, he has delivered many training workshops for WRAP on working with community groups and sits on the Management Group of the Low Carbon Communities Network and Climate Action England.

You can access a quickstart guide and various other useful files for community groups on the CAG website: cagoxfordshire.org.uk

Baby Equipment Loan Service and Toy Library (BELS & TL)

BELS & TL is a local charity providing essential items of baby equipment to residents of North Tyneside. This service is available to those claiming benefit or earning less than £15,000 per year. The Toy Library is open to all children who live in North Tyneside and are under 12 years of age. An annual fee is charged, and members are then able to borrow two toys at a time.

W: belsnorthtyneside.org.uk/

F: [facebook.com/Baby-Equipment-Loan-Service-Toy-Library-289076737788468/?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/Baby-Equipment-Loan-Service-Toy-Library-289076737788468/?fref=ts)

Bicester Green

Bicester Green is a Centre for Skills, Sustainability & Second hand Stuff. It operates by intercepting items that are destined for landfill and uses them as a catalyst for learning in its workshop. It is a place for sharing skills between people - inviting those with knowledge of repair of bikes, furniture and electrical items to share their skills with those who would benefit from learning.

W: bicestergreen.org.uk

F: [facebook.com/BicesterGreen](https://www.facebook.com/BicesterGreen)

T: twitter.com/bicgreen

Edinburgh Tool Library

Edinburgh Tool Library is the UK's first tool library, promoting sharing as a way of reducing our environmental impact. It lends its members tools for DIY, gardening, decorating and machine repair, so that they don't need to own them. Not only does this collaborative approach make sense environmentally, it also helps our members financially.

W: edinburghtoolibrary.org.uk

F: [facebook.com/edinburghtoolibrary/](https://www.facebook.com/edinburghtoolibrary/)

T: twitter.com/ETLchris

R:evolve Clothing

R:evolve is a swap shop boutique in Rutherglen and Cambuslang, just outside Glasgow, where you can swap your unwanted or ill-fitting clothes for something nearly new.

W: leap-project.co.uk/revolve-recycle/4589479527

F: [facebook.com/revolverecycle](https://www.facebook.com/revolverecycle)

T: twitter.com/revolverecycle

Share Frome

SHARE: A Library of Things is a community space for Frome, tailored to local people's needs. A place for people to borrow objects, share skills and connect with others, in a welcoming and fun environment.

W: sharefrome.org

F: [facebook.com/sharealot](https://www.facebook.com/sharealot)

T: twitter.com/SHARE_frome

Other useful sources and tools

OSCR – Scottish Charity Regulator

If you're considering setting up as a charity there is a wealth of information on the OSCR website to help you decide the structure that is best for you. oscr.org.uk

MyTurn

A tool to help you organise, optimise resources by making it easy to rent, track and share goods and services. This is used by Share Frome and Edinburgh Tool Library as well as many repair and share centres around the world. myturn.com

Eventbrite

An online tool to manage ticket sales or registrations for your events. It is free for free events with a small charge on paid tickets, with a reduced rate for non-profits. eventbrite.co.uk

Meetup

A good place to recruit tech volunteers and to get people to come along to regular sessions and get involved with your project as a volunteer. meetup.com

Resource CIT

A modelling tool used by Bicester Green to estimate the impact that community groups taking action on climate change are having. The new tool has been developed by Resource Futures and is currently being tested with Oxfordshire County Council and Leicestershire County Council. It is expected to be available for public access from summer 2016. cagoxfordshire.org.uk/impact-model

Avire

Specialises in the short-term leasing and letting of business premises across the UK. It operates as an agency, matching prospective commercial tenants with suitable premises available for short-term lease. avire.co.uk

The Ethical Property Company

A social business, managing commercial property that supports the work of some of the UK's most dynamic and influential charities and not-for-profit organisations. ethicalproperty.co.uk

Funding Central

A great source of information on funding opportunities: fundingcentral.org.uk

'Fixometer' from The Restart Project

Currently available to Restart Party hosts around the world to track the impact of their electronics repairs. Expected to be more widely available later this year. therestartproject.org/impact/

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This guide was created for Zero Waste Scotland by Resource Futures, a non-profit distributing sustainability business, focused on minimising the impact of consumption and instigating positive change.



About Zero Waste Scotland

We're on a mission to create a circular economy

Zero Waste Scotland exists to create a society where resources are valued and nothing is wasted. Our goal is to help Scotland realise the economic, environmental and social benefits of making best use of the world's limited natural resources.

That means reducing energy generation, reducing waste and reducing water use. It means recycling, reusing, repairing and remanufacturing as much as we can.

It means developing a circular economy where we rethink linear business models of production, consumption and disposal so that we keep materials in use for as long as possible and then turn them into new, high quality goods.

We are funded to support delivery of the Scottish Government's circular economy strategy and the EU's 2020 growth strategy.

Further copies of this guide can be downloaded from the Zero Waste Scotland partners site zerowastepartners.org.uk

Find out more at zerowastescotland.org.uk

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