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How to set up an electric amnesty



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What is an electric amnesty?

An electric amnesty is a campaign to encourage householders (or businesses) to donate unwanted electrical items for re-use and/or recycling.

Why set up an electric amnesty?

- In the UK alone we hoard approximately 70 million unused mobile phones. For the householder, holding on to the phone for too long means it goes from having a reasonable resale value to being worth nothing. So financially they lose out, and may even end up just binning the phone. In terms of the environment, this is a major loss as mobile phones contain valuable resources and could have been re-used, or at least recycled.
- An electric amnesty raises awareness of the value of electrical items and the fact that they can be re-use and/or recycled
- You can collect electrical items to sell or donate to raise funds or provide to those who can't afford to buy those items new
- You can help stop electrical resources going to landfill where they are wasted.

Planning an electric amnesty

Zero Waste Scotland ran an electric amnesty as part of Pass it on Week 2017, so the steps below are what we recommend – with some comments from our learning. Consider what you want:

- Do you want computers, computer accessories like printers, cables etc? (We found people are nervous about personal data, so can you get the data wiped?)
- Do you want phones?
- Do you want small domestic appliances such as kettles, toasters etc? (NB. Many of these items are difficult to sell on, so consider if you have a market for these items)
- Do you want large items such as white goods etc? (Consider transport, storage etc).
- Do items need to be in good working order or can you take items that are broken? If you take broken items, can someone fix them, or will they be used for parts or recycled? (We found a lot of items weren't working, and couldn't be re-used – which may be down to our marketing/instructions not being clear enough)
- Who will take the items – can your organisation deal with them or do you need a third party involved? (We worked with 3 organisations; CCL North, Retek and Moray Waste Busters. The campaign actually cost them money, so think carefully about what you want out of a campaign and if you have budget if necessary. So think about transport, processing and disposal costs).
- Where will you collect items from? You could offer collection boxes to organisations in the area such as supermarkets, libraries, council offices, schools, community halls, businesses etc.
- Consider the style of boxes (we had ones made from a strong cardboard. They looked good, but some partners found that once they had heavy items in them, they were difficult to lift/move and could break).



- How long do you want to run the campaign for or will it be a permanent fixture? (We ran it for a week, but were told it wasn't long enough. People would see the boxes, but then didn't have time to rummage in their houses for items and bring them back. It was suggested that collection boxes should be out for at least a month).
- How will you measure success? Can you count the number of each type of item collected and/or weigh the items? How will you differentiate between what is re-used and what is recycled? Can you calculate the Carbon?
- Where will you store the collected items?
- How will organisations sign up to get a collection box, and how will they tell you when the box is full and needs collecting?

Communicating your electric amnesty

Promotion is extremely important in order to raise awareness, as people can't participate passively – they need to dig out stuff and know where to take it. Here's some things you can do:

Raise awareness by:

- holding a photo shoot with the types of electrical items you want
- getting the local media involved
- providing some information about why electrical waste is such a problem

Provide partners/people hosting a collection box with:

- posters, press releases, social media posts etc
- make the labelling on the boxes very clear as to
 - what's accepted
 - how long the boxes will be there etc.
- who will benefit from the items donated

After the event:

- thank those who took part
- publicise the success of the amnesty
- tell people where they can donate electrical items now that the amnesty is over so they can continue the good work.

Useful links

A blog from Retek about the issues involved with re-using electrical items
recycleforscotland.com/news/2016-03-08-gadgets-galore

Reports and information about Sustainable Electricals
www.wrap.org.uk/sustainable-electricals



Case Study – Perth WEEE centre

Perth WEEE Centre is based at Perth College UHI Campus, and refurbishes, resells and recycles e-waste. They aim to increase the volume of IT and office equipment that is diverted from landfill, raising awareness of e-waste re-purposing and recycling, supporting their students and providing affordable refurbished IT equipment for sale to students, staff and members of the public. They accept either working or damaged IT and office equipment including desktops, laptops, mobile phones, tablets, keyboards, mouse controls, cables, DVD and video players, portable music players, games consoles, printer cartridges, batteries, projectors and flat screen working monitors, but not CRT (cathode ray tube) or broken monitors.

Every item they receive supports their work providing training and other opportunities to students, local and international charities. By selling refurbished equipment it also helps people who might not have otherwise been able to afford IT equipment. They take collections at the college, but also at local recycling centres and can arrange pick-ups for larger donations.

They re-use as many items as possible, to give them a new home. Their technician removes all the data from the donations and refurbishes them. Items for resale are sold on with warranties and an operating system installed. Equipment is available at affordable prices for students and the public, with proceeds from the resale of refurbished equipment going back to benefit the students, such as funding scholarships and field trips.

They also often provide equipment to local and international charities (such as Still Water Perth, The Salvation Army, Computers for Africa). Some items are damaged or beyond refurbishment, however, they often have parts that can be used to repair other equipment. Anything that they can't use is taken by their partners Re-Tek and stripped for parts that can be further reused or recycled.

They operate for the benefit of the students at Perth College UHI, providing valuable work experience opportunities to computing students to gain hands on experience of fault finding, repairing IT equipment and employability skills in a real work environment. This opportunity takes the students out of their classroom time giving them the freedom to learn in a practical environment, which recognises and values their skills. Weee Perth also offer scholarships to NQ Computing Technologies students and their partner Re-Tek offers an annual trip to their facility for students and funds the WEEE Award for excellence, presented to students at the annual prize giving.





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