
Interest in a re-use forum in Birmingham



Research paper to assess interest in setting up a re-use forum in Birmingham

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Document reference: WRAP, 2016, Birmingham, Interest in a re-use forum in Birmingham, Prepared by Octavius and Resource Futures

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Front cover photography: Octavius images

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Executive summary

Birmingham City has a population of over one million, however, the City only re-used, recycled and composted 26.6% of municipal waste in 2014/15 according to WasteDataFlow. Re-use features within the Birmingham City Council (BCC) Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2006 to 2026. As part of that strategy a re-use shop was opened in Sutton Coldfield in 2013 at the household waste and recycling centre (HWRC). It is managed by the Jericho Foundation, a local third sector group in collaboration with Veolia who manage the city's HWRC's.

However, there is more that can be done to maximise re-use in the city, ensure re-use organisations are able to benefit from the experience of others, form consortiums if and when appropriate to provide enhanced re-use services and help deliver the BCC Waste Strategy.

Therefore, Octavius LDP and Resource Futures has identified re-use stakeholders in the city and gauged interest in forming a re-use network in order to drive forward re-use activities. The views of third sector stakeholders as well as the local authority and their contractor, Veolia, are taken into account.

An initial meeting to scope interest was held in March 2016. The findings suggest that there is interest in developing a network in the City. Moreover, Veolia has affirmed that they will support a forum in-kind and with funding (value to be agreed). A second meeting is scheduled for April 2016 to confirm how the network will be coordinated and managed and allow prospective members to discover more about what could be achieved in order to determine whether to commit.

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction..... 3**
- 2.0 Background..... 3**
 - 2.1 Birmingham City Council Waste Strategy 2006 (refreshed in 2012) 3
 - 2.2 Future councils community workshops..... 3
 - 2.3 Council Business Plan and Budget 2016+ Consultation factsheets Sustainable neighbourhoods 4
- 3.0 Re-use within Birmingham 4**
- 4.0 Birmingham Re-use Forum aims and objectives 4**
- 5.0 Re-Use Birmingham 1st Meeting, 1st March 2016 5**
- 6.0 Conclusions..... 6**
- 7.0 Stakeholders..... 6**

1.0 Introduction

Resource Futures has been contracted to WRAP to provide advice and support services to WRAP and its partners on a call off basis until March 2016. The objective is to support local authorities and their partners or reuse networks who wish to establish waste prevention plans or reuse action plans. This project has been undertaken with the support of Octavius Learning and Development Partnership; a Birmingham based social enterprise with interest in supporting local communities to manage waste more efficiently and support communities to improve their local area.

This study identified re-use stakeholders in Birmingham and determined their interest in forming a re-use forum (or network as prospective members preferred to call it). The project involved researching the third sector organisations (TSOs) and other stakeholders interested in re-use in Birmingham (see Section 7).

2.0 Background

With a population of over one million, Birmingham City Council (BCC) has a sizeable and complex waste management issue. BCC recycled and composted 26.6% of municipal waste in 2014/15 according to WasteDataFlow. Re-use features within the Birmingham City Council (BCC) Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2006 to 2026. As part of that strategy a re-use shop was opened in Sutton Coldfield in 2013 at the household waste and recycling centre (HWRC). It is managed by the Jericho Foundation, a local third sector group in collaboration with Veolia who manage the HWRCs. There is no formal re-use at the other HWRCs (Tameside Drive, Castle Bromwich, Lifford Lane, Kings Norton, Holford Drive, Perry Barr and James Road, Tyseley). It is understood there is no re-use of bulky waste collected at the kerbside either.

Despite the council's desire to have reuse as a sustainable neighbourhood objective and the size of the population, only four re-use organisations are named as 're-use charities and organisations in Birmingham' on the BCC website¹.

There are a number of waste and non-waste local drivers which suggest that BCC should be interested in developing re-use initiatives, including a Forum in the city:

2.1 Birmingham City Council Waste Strategy 2006 (refreshed in 2012)

In 2006 BCC said that it would be continuing the development of re-use schemes, for example through furniture repair and refurbishment activity, in conjunction with the not-for-profit and voluntary sector partners. BCC is investigating using more HWRCs as potential sites for re-use to further enhance this activity.

The Strategy states 'the City Council has a strong track record of working with community groups (e.g. Brumcan & CSV) and for the re-use of furniture and white goods in particular (e.g. Ladywood Furniture Project, Community Transport and Betel of Britain). It also highlighted future opportunities for re-use initiatives saying that 're-use also provides the opportunity for employment and with the Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive requiring re-use as a priority this increases the opportunity for re-using redundant goods rather than recycling.'

2.2 Future councils community workshops

Throughout autumn 2015, various BCC departments (e.g. culture commissioning department) ran a series of workshops around the BCC priority of 'future community 2020'. Sustainable neighbourhoods features within Future Community 2020 and reduce, re-use and recycle has been identified as relevant in terms of behaviour change and sustaining the

¹ www.birmingham.gov.uk/reuse-recycle

environment.

2.3 Council Business Plan and Budget 2016+ Consultation factsheets Sustainable neighbourhoods

BCC publishes an annual [business plan and budget](#), the latest of which for 2016 has a longer term focus and incorporates a vision of the future of the Council. There is a commitment to working in partnership with others to achieve shared aims. Section SN6 of this business plan and budget 2016+ says that 'savings from 2016-2018 are achieved from reducing the amount of waste being disposed of'. Reuse and waste prevention should therefore be important to BCC in order to reduce waste disposal.

3.0 Re-use within Birmingham

In Birmingham, re-use organisations struggle to remain financially viable. In the last few years a number of organisations who were supported by BCC e.g Brumcan, CSV and BeBirmingham who provided environmental partnership have ceased operation. Nevertheless, BeBirmingham has left a recycling (re-use) map as a legacy² (although it is out of date). One reason that reuse organisations struggle or there is a lack of reuse organisations in the city could be associated with the reduction in WEEE for re-use as large retailers started taking old for new and there are significant costs and regulation involved in re-using WEEE.

Another factor affecting local reuse organisations is the multiplication of national charity shops on the high street may. Local TSOs (such as the Ladywood furniture project) are often in less prominent locations and due to their constitution and social aims are reliant on funding to subsidise overheads rather than just retail.

All four of the 're-use charities and organisations in Birmingham' listed on the BCC website were enthusiastic about a forum. It is worth noting the views of both the Jericho Foundation and the Ladywood furniture project were written into the refreshed BCC waste strategy in 2012.

Fledging organisations were keen to support a forum; Big Top kitchen and Centre of the Earth for example.

4.0 Birmingham Re-use Forum aims and objectives

In order to develop a sustainable forum and maintain attendance, re-use organisations are only likely to attend if there are tangible benefits and business opportunities, e.g. new supplier sources. This is highlighted in the Setting up a Re-use Forum How to Guide, which Octavius have used to develop a Forum in Birmingham.

Suggestions for the objectives of a Birmingham Forum include:

- Preparing organisations to set up and run sustainable reuse organisations, this could include joint European and national funded bids.
- Incorporate new technology and an awards system for good behaviour on re-use, e.g. Betterpoints³.
- Developing relationships with Veolia to re-use bulky waste
- Developing communications and website messages, in particular on behalf of BCC for the BCC website

² http://www.bebirmingham.org.uk/recycling_map.php

³ Starting with a six month pilot with volunteers, Betterpoints has the technology to track behaviours and award points which are turned into high street vouchers <https://www.betterpoints.uk/rewardme>. Notwithstanding that BCC also trailed a system of nectar points rewards for recycling in Erdington and Cotteridge (BCC 2012).

- Support the Sustainable Birmingham initiative by taking re-use as a separate Forum/

5.0 Re-Use Birmingham 1st Meeting, 1st March 2016

Following on from Phase 1, a first meeting of the re-use forum was organised and held at the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter. Funded by Wrap, 15 delegates attended.

A delegate list is available on request, so too the flyer, agenda and notes of the 2 groups who split to discuss, 'what it is that they want from a re-use forum for Birmingham'.

The outcome of the workshop suggested that a Birmingham re-use forum should:

- Include the kerbside (bulky waste collection) contractor, Amey in the Forum
- Using the term 'network' was preferable to 'forum'
- Further explore a relationship with BCC. It was noted that although several members (staff and committee) were contacted, no representative attended
- Provide networking opportunities to share knowledge and expertise amongst interested parties
- Help access more items for reuse/ develop partnerships, including green waste for composting
- Develop a reuse website for Birmingham with details of the members and wider reuse information
- Host face-to-face meetings
- Be self managing with a board representing different interested parties
- Ideally be supported by a funded coordinator. Potentially Invest to Save from the Council waste department (there are concerns about sustainability of a forum and income for managing it)

At this first meeting it was also noted BCC had begun to plan what the future of waste should look like in the city, with a BMG survey of the views of the public on issues including

- Knowledge of and use of the existing recycling services Birmingham City Council offer;
- Recycling behaviours and the likelihood of residents expanding the types of materials they recycle in the future;
- Barriers that inhibit recycling activity and the reduction of the amount of waste households produce;
- Reactions to possible new initiatives that could be rolled out in Birmingham to reduce waste and enhance recycling levels.

Using online data collection in December 2015 and January 2016, BMG Research gathered views from 1,426 residents which BCC are using to develop some of the principles within their strategy.

It was also noted that there are significant challenges in social housing with regards the requirement to clear void properties and potentially the lack of available low cost goods for vulnerable tenants. The Forum are keen to explore how more re-use can be accommodated as part of the housing re-let process. BCC is the largest social housing landlord in the country. Up-cycle Birmingham are already successfully integrated with Castle Vale housing association and Midland Heart representative could see the benefits for them in streamlining a process where TSOs were able to collect good quality items from voids properties. The Forum has been directed towards the WRAP How to Guide for reuse within Housing Associations.

They noted that not all delegates who attended on the day would or could continue as active participants in the forum, but that it was useful to have residents involved at this stage.

At the end of the meeting delegates were overwhelmingly in favour of having a second meeting, initially set for the 15 April 2016.

6.0 Conclusions

Stakeholders that have engaged with Octavius during the research phase have indicated they have enthusiasm for a Re-use Network within Birmingham and other relevant organisations will be approached to become members too. Most significant are BCC themselves and Amey (the kerbside bulky waste contractor). Veolia has implied they will support a local network in-kind and with a small level of financial support.

The network will host face-to-face meetings and develop communications messages (e.g. website text) and will be an opportunity to share knowledge and expertise, develop partnerships and allow access to more items for reuse.

Consideration of how it will be coordinated and managed will be discussed at the next meeting. It is worth noting that smaller networks that deliver tangible benefits for its members have longer term sustainability. Other organisations with an interest in re-use can and should be involved at a later stage when momentum has been gathered and there is a solid network already established.

7.0 Stakeholders

Organisation	Contact	Interest
Jericho Foundation	Helen Worrall 07811 687614	Run the re-use shop at Sutton Coldfield HWRC. Also wood re-use and recycling
Birmingham Play scheme network	Becky Coley and Emma Payne 0121 236 2917 emma@bpcn.org.uk	Scrapstore
Ladywood Furniture project	Conor Barry and Richard Girling conorbarry@btconnect.com Richardgirling@btconnect.com 0121 455 7133	Furniture
Freegle	James Robertson Birmingham Freegle moderator 07970 678 133 james@onlinemarketingexpert.co.uk	Online exchange
Up-Cycle Birmingham	Upcycle Birmingham CIC 0121 748 5795 07966 598844	Castle Vale Tenants & Residents Alliance
Amey	Lara Thorns Communications Officer 07843368954 lara.thorns@amey.co.uk	Bulky waste collection contractor
Octavius learning and development limited partnership	Barbara Quarless 07807012369 Bq@Octavius.org.uk	Birmingham SME with a 'Don't skip it' waste prevention project
Veolia Environmental services	Toby Terlet 07748703696 Toby.terlet@veolia.com	Waste management company with a contract to 2019 for Birmingham
Birmingham City Council*	Chloe Tringham ⁴ 0121 464 3897	Waste contract manager
Birmingham City Council*	Jackie Homan jackie.homan@birmingham.gov.uk	Sustainability manager
Bike 2 Life*	Jim Everett 07838 890362	Reuse bicycle project
Centre of the Earth owned by	Lynda Mc Farlane	Re-use and recycling for art

⁴ On long term sick leave. Alternative contact found after initial meeting: Phil Palmer (phil.palmer@birmingham.gov.uk)

Organisation	Contact	Interest
British wild life society	lynda@jdvtherapy.co.uk	and garden
Big Top Kitchen	Mark Jastrbreski 0787 802 1085	Food
Bishop Latimer community Church and the Lanson project	Adella Pritchard adellapritchard@gmail.com	Clean streets
Faith Pearson	Faith Pearson www.faithpearson.co.uk	Garden and Art
Hobscan sports Part of BCC	Gemma Goode Gemma.Goode@birmingham.gov.uk	Food Re- distribution of leftover food from the German markets
Betterpoints	Hannah Bowden	Reward system for re-users and volunteers
Birmingham Transport	Ian Murphy	SME transport
GLUE	Simbi Folarin simbifolarin@yahoo.co.uk	

An excel spreadsheet with details of all organisations contacted and their response and contact details accompanies this report.

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