

# Sustainable Northern Ireland

## CWIF Project

### Final Report January 2006 – January 2007

#### Context

The Choose to Reuse project was funded by the Community Waste Innovation Fund of the Environment and Heritage Service of the DOE. The project focused on producing a generic poster and leaflet containing information on places where unwanted items may become a resource, such as charity shops (including what each accepts, textile recyclers, websites and other contacts). These posters and leaflets were launched at three Choose to Reuse Conferences which were held at venues within the three waste management regions. Overall, the audience at all of the three events totalled almost 200 people and was made up of officers and representatives from councils, central government, community groups, faith communities, charities and businesses. The speakers also reflected these diverse backgrounds. This therefore created a mix and variety at each event and, as shown from the evaluation sheets submitted by delegates, each conference was a success. Credit was given to the overall content of the event, the presentations, speakers, venue and also the catering. Issues that were identified from the early events were acknowledged and acted upon so as to improve each subsequent event. Recommendations were made for future events and again these will be taken into account.

The posters and leaflets (3000 posters and 15000 leaflets, 5000 for each one) were distributed to local councils, charity shops, recycling centres, schools and many other outlets and organisations.

Sustainable NI has been facilitating three closely inter-related projects promoting waste reduction and reuse of materials, diverting them from landfill to find a future productive use either at home or abroad. The other two projects are also promoting a general 'waste reduction' message.

The Swap Shop project worked with a variety of charities, voluntary and community organisations, businesses and social economy projects to raise their awareness of waste issues and to promote the reuse of materials which might otherwise be sent to landfill.

The Swap Shop programme fitted in well with its sister project – Faith Waste. This project, also funded by Better Belfast, worked with a variety of faith communities to raise their awareness of waste issues and how environmental matters tie in with other aspects of sustainable development, specifically the social agenda appropriate to faiths. The two projects dovetailed well in that these organisations often work in partnership with the 'charity shops' who were eager to receive more material for their outlets.



## **Aims**

- To address the 'second level' of the waste hierarchy - reusing materials – to ensure goods with potential future use are not discarded
- To exchange information on good practice in reuse projects and encourage other to get involved – charities, communities and faith groups are all carrying out successful projects.
- To encourage community groups to get involved in practical, educational and awareness aspects of promoting reuse.
- To explore ways to promote both removing goods from the waste stream and encouraging people to purchase 'second life' products.
- To launch a poster and leaflet promoting reuse and providing relevant contacts.

## **Objectives**

- Liaise with local charities and reuse organisations to see what each organisation was willing to both accept and sell.
- To deliver such information in a presentable format, accessible to the general public.
- To launch the poster and leaflet at three CWIF conferences in November, one in each of the three waste management regions, comprising an audience made up of representatives from local council, charitable organisations and community groups, amongst many others.

## **Level of Involvement**

The CWIF project contacted over 25 different charities, textile recyclers and other sources of reuse businesses and outlets in an attempt to gather together as many reuse contacts as possible. Approximately 180 guests attended the three conferences with representatives from local council, charitable organisations, local government and community groups amongst many others. 3000 posters and 15000 leaflets were produced and distributed.

# **Project Outputs**

## ***The rationale for the project***

- The central theme of the project was to encourage and promote the concept of reuse within our society. It was decided that a generic poster and complementary leaflet would be a successful information pack and would be made available to the general public.
- **Recycling** alone is not going to solve our waste problem in NI and it is of vital importance that we therefore **reduce** the amount of waste we produce. One of the most significant impacts we can have is to ensure that materials that have a potential for further use in their original form are not discarded.
- The idea behind holding three conferences to launch the poster and leaflets focused on exploring ways in which we can encourage people to ensure that goods which they no longer desire are not discarded and to show that *second hand is not second best*. The economic, social and environmental benefits that this can bring, both locally and abroad, are enormous and there is huge potential for expansion in Northern Ireland.
- Three conferences were arranged for launching the material, one in each of the three waste management regions namely ARC21, SWaMP and the NWRWMG. Each conference aimed to highlight what local groups are doing to reduce the amount of useful and valuable materials being discarded to landfill and realise their potential for reuse either in the local community or to help those in need abroad.

## **Activities**

- Contacting a number of charitable organisations in an attempt to identify what each accepts and sells.
- Researching other reuse outlets and council facilities etc.
- Encouraging networking and identifying areas/materials where a co-operative approach is beneficial.
- Encouraging partnership working with councils, government departments, business and other organisations to provide 'whole sector' solutions.
- Organising three CWIF conferences, one in each of the three waste management regions, attracting audiences of approximately 60 guests at each from all sectors.
- Developing mechanisms to promote reuse.

## **Outcomes**

One of the hallmarks of our method of working has been the positive relationships forged between the participating charitable organisations, individuals and the SNI project workers. Regular review visits, good communication and aligning our work to the needs and desires of the charitable organisations have delivered a comprehensive set of outcomes.

All the objectives have been accomplished and the aims of the project have been addressed. The main outputs are:

- The Reuse poster and supplementary leaflet, which have been distributed to all local councils, community centres, recycling services, leisure and recreational facilities, schools, libraries, charitable organisations and many other outlets.
- Partnerships have been formed to raise awareness of the inter-relationships of the environmental, social and economic aspects of reuse, and also to aid practical work. This has involved establishing linkages between:
  1. The charity shops and other groups involved in social projects to promote re-use (e.g. websites)
  2. All such groups and other organisations (councils, central government, waste conglomerates such as Arc 21, business and faith communities) which can impact upon them.
- Partnerships have been established through networking within the retail sub-sector, between different sub-sectors, and with outside organisations.
- Groups have worked together to increase the range of services they can provide by partnership working.
- Education and promotion of waste minimisation and the need to reuse, as well as recycle and reduce.

## **Lessons and Recommendations**

### ***What has been accomplished?***

- The main outcome of the project has been the successful development of the reuse poster and leaflet, which is easy to read, cleverly thought out and the leaflet is very informative and useful.
- The posters and leaflets have been distributed to many different sources and outlets, enabling the message and importance of reuse to be emphasised as much as possible.

- The three CWIF conferences enabled much networking and liaison to occur between all those who attended from local councils, charitable organisations, and community groups amongst many others.
- Partnership working has been facilitated amongst those involved in reuse.
- Reduction in the waste stream – increased business and income for local charitable organisations.

### ***What can the future hold?***

- Continuing to explore and develop the concept of partnership working and how it can deliver better outcomes.
- Updating the current leaflets periodically, adding more charitable organisations and making changes to those already listed as and when necessary.
- Developing another series of posters with a similar theme to encourage the promotion of reuse even further.
- Distributing the material to an even wider audience.

### ***Lessons from the work***

- Charity groups can be used as focus groups for waste management practice in society.
- There are many different charitable organisations and sources of reuse outlets and centres available to the public, which need to be better publicised to the greater public so that such facilities can be made better use of.
- While we tried to be as inclusive as possible, not all charitable organisations could be contacted or included in the leaflet so there is the potential to update the leaflet in the future.
- Encourage all organisations participating in the project to take part in the charity forum – a forum which resulted from the Swapshop Project undertaken by SNI.
- Provide logistical support and advice to participating groups and facilitate contacts for them.
- Apparent competition between charities, retail outlets and rival organisations can be overcome by promoting the advantages of common approaches and of a united sector-wide lobby to the key decision-makers and stakeholders

## ***Conclusion:***

The CWIF funded project has successfully resulted in the production of 3000 posters and 15,000 leaflets which successfully promote the concept of reuse. Such material has involved close workings with local charitable organisations, local government and many others in an attempt to convey as much information as possible to the wider public and in turn reduce the amount of material going to landfill. The success of the programme has been down to the relationships built up by the project officers, the client groups, and the other agencies that assisted in the delivery of the goals of this project.

The publicity material was launched at the three CWIF conferences in November where a wide variety of guests attended each from all sectors of both community and business sectors. The conferences enabled all those attending to network with those from different sectors, to gather new ideas and to identify other possible organisations that can help encourage reuse and as a result divert material from reaching landfill

It is hoped that the wide distribution of posters and leaflets within all council areas via recycling centres, community centres, leisure facilities, charity shops, schools and many others will make this information readily accessible to all members of the public and encourage the importance and need for reuse in our society.