

Somerset Waste Board meeting  
24<sup>th</sup> September 2021  
Report for information

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### **Increasing reuse and repair in Somerset**

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<b>Forward Plan Reference:</b>	05/08/2021
<b>Summary:</b>	This report summarises the results of a report commissioned to look into how we can increase reuse and repair across Somerset.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<p><b>That Somerset Waste Board: -</b></p> <p><b>i) Comments on and approves the broad approach and proposed models for increasing reuse and repair.</b></p> <p><b>(ii) Discuss and provide a steer as to preferred options taking into account the indicative costs and budget setting process.</b></p>
<b>Reasons for recommendations:</b>	<p>Reuse sits at the top of the waste hierarchy with waste prevention and so should be prioritised ahead of recycling, recovery, and disposal. As part of SWP's focus on reducing waste and our work on Somerset's Climate Strategy, we aim to increase our focus on reuse and support Somerset residents and businesses to reuse goods and materials ahead of buying new, recycling or disposing of items.</p> <p>Reusing things that would otherwise become waste is better for the environment than recycling them. Across Somerset there is a vibrant network of organisations that deliver great social outcomes (be it tackling isolation, reskilling those far from the labour market, supporting refugees) as well as environmental ones, and SWP wants to explore how it can best work with that network.</p>
<b>Links to Priorities</b>	

<p><b>and Impact on Annual Business Plan:</b></p>	<p>Section 2 of the Business Plan relates to promoting and increasing reuse.</p>
<p><b>Financial, Legal and HR Implications:</b></p>	<p><b>Financial savings:</b> Every item reused instead of recycled or disposed of involves a financial saving, particularly if the item is passed on before it reaches any of SWP’s services.</p> <p><b>Costs:</b> Three models were proposed by Resource Futures and further work would be needed to determine precise costs. Whilst the initial set up costs may be significant, we hope that models will be self-sustaining in the future, allowing for minimal ongoing costs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. HWRC on site diversion - £17,000 - £21,000</li> <li>2. CAG Network - £62,000</li> <li>3. Repair Bus - £184,000 (though there is a potential funding option for this model).</li> </ol> <p><b>Legal:</b> There are no legal implications associated with this campaign.</p> <p><b>HR:</b> To progress options 2 and 3 and to ensure successful diversion, it would be recommended to appoint a full-time Reuse Coordinator.</p>
<p><b>Equalities Implications:</b></p>	<p>No adverse impacts were identified.</p>
<p><b>Risk Assessment:</b></p>	<p>Levels of reuse are notoriously difficult to measure, particularly if the item is not being handled through SWP services. We can mitigate against this risk through using nationally recognised measures and by collecting data on activities and items targeted. Some of the groups we hope to work with already report tonnage data to us for reuse credits, and there is also data available from national groups such as Freegle.</p> <p>Maximising reuse and repair and keeping items out of the waste stream are key steps in moving towards net-zero and a more circular economy.</p>

## 1. Background

- 1.1.** SWP has identified increasing reuse as a key priority in the Business Plan. Reuse sits at the top of the waste hierarchy with waste prevention and so should be prioritised

ahead of recycling, recovery, and disposal. As part of SWP's focus on reducing waste and our work on Somerset's Climate Strategy, we aim to increase our focus on reuse and support Somerset residents and businesses to reuse goods and materials ahead of buying new, recycling or disposing of items.

Reuse is an integral part of the circular economy in which materials and resources are kept in circulation rather than the linear model of make-use-dispose.

- Reusing an item cuts down on the amount of waste sent to disposal/treatment thereby saving costs and the loss of mineral resources.
- Reuse uses fewer resources and creates less CO<sub>2</sub>, water and air pollution than making a new item or recycling.
- It saves residents money by providing a source of affordable, good quality items to buy which is particularly important for more deprived neighbourhoods.
- It offers the potential to create an income for Somerset Waste Partnership

Reuse can have wider social benefits as well including:

- Opportunities for employment, new businesses/start-ups and volunteering, including for disadvantaged communities
- Training opportunities and skills sharing
- Potential opportunity to work with young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- Supporting vulnerable residents
- Providing an income for charities
- Potential for improving social inclusion, such as in repair café skills sharing or reuse/maintenance projects working with specific groups such as Men's/Women's Shed
- Creating a social norm for using and buying second-hand items reduces the stigma for poorer households which may find it difficult to afford new goods.

**1.2.** SWP commissioned Resource Futures to look at models of reuse around the country and alongside research as to what is already happening in Somerset, produce a report which detailed some models of reuse that may work in Somerset, taking into account the specific geography and demographics of the Somerset area. We also highlighted that there was limited space at Recycling Sites to host reuse shops or similar, and that there are a large number of organisations within Somerset offering reuse and repair options, and our preference would be to support these, and provide opportunities to enhance these rather than compete with them for items. We also requested advice on how any future model would be able to be self-sustaining rather than require large amounts of ongoing funding.

Resource Futures is an employee-owned non-profit distributing environmental consultancy with a 30-year heritage in the waste and resources sector. A certified B Corp, with one of the highest scores among UK environmental consultancies, they take an ethical approach to business to make a positive difference in the world.

They work across a range of areas including evidence gathering, waste services optimisation, circular economy and behaviour change, taking projects through initial design, pilot and delivery, to review. ([Resource Futures Impact Report for 2020-21](#) outlines workstreams create positive change).

Resource Futures was commissioned following the evaluation process of three submissions, and the evaluators noted Resource Future's proposal evidenced

- robust methodology including interviews as well as desktop research,
- demonstrable knowledge of reuse groups in the southwest,
- experience of setting up and supporting reuse projects,
- a workable project plan to achieve the project outcomes by the deadline and
- overall value for money.

Resource Futures conducted research on a number of established national and local reuse initiatives to investigate opportunities, gaps and limiting factors. This was combined with local contextual knowledge to select those most suited to interview. This included the view that most of our local recycling sites do not have sufficient space for an on-site reuse shop, or would pose congestion issues, so selection for in-depth research prioritised off-site options.

Results from the stakeholder engagement piece and desk research were used to build understanding of a suitable model for the SWP context. They conducted in depth interviews with five national examples and eight local organisations. Some key issues were highlighted by groups:

- A number of groups indicated that they experience resource shortages such as skills, transportation and/or space.
- Many organisations operate at maximum capacity and have little additional capacity beyond essential day to day activities.
- Whilst there is a wide range of community groups it is understood there is currently little networking between them with regard to reuse.
- There is a need to support community organisations in their existing work to help prevent further closures.
- Access to transport is a recurring theme, be it public access to vehicles to get items to/from the correct point for reuse, or for community groups to move items around to facilitate reuse and/or repair.

**1.3.** From this research, Resource Futures proposed three models at varying cost levels:

1. Lower cost - Providing a container at recycling sites to segregate reusable items, with an arrangement for a third-party reuse group to collect suitable items.
2. Medium cost - Developing a Community Action Group network which supports community projects to reduce, reuse, recycle, share, swap, mend and compost.
3. High cost - Developing a mobile Repair Bus which provides a visual focal point to promote reuse whilst increasing access to repair in remote or

disadvantaged communities.

## **2. The models and indicative costs**

### **2.1. On-site waste diversion**

This is the lowest cost option, and is a fairly simple, well-tested option. It involves placing a container at recycling sites with suitable space to segregate items for reuse. We could then partner with one or more third party groups to take away these items for reuse.

Key benefits for this option include:

- Increased diversion of suitable goods for reuse repair
- Reduced disposal costs relative to tonnage of diverted items
- Responsibility and liability for items can be passed to the third party once selected and removed from site
- Provides an ongoing source of items for the third-party groups
- A similar process can be used for items coming through the bulky waste collection service (and this was proposed by Suez as part of their social value method statement).

Some issues with this option are:

- Space at many sites is limited, and congestion is a problem, so an off-site option would be preferred
- Siting of containers needs to be prominent and convenient to ensure people donate rather than skip items
- Contractual arrangements will need to be made addressing ownership and liability
- Who will cover cost and ownership of containers – Biffa, SWP or third party?

Indicative costs

Set up, procurement of third party off-taker, contract review - ~£8,000

Communications activity ~ £3,000

Container purchase ~ £3,000

Container branding and fit out ~ £1,000

Management and staffing ~£6,000

If a third party was to take over management and staffing, ongoing costs would be minimal. Depending on the arrangements made, some of these costs could be covered by the third-party organisation, though this may limit interest from struggling groups.

### **2.2. Community Action Group (CAG) network**

This is a medium cost option and involves hiring a full-time reuse coordinator to

work with groups and develop the network. The aim is to develop a community group network with a designated coordinator that will help groups work more efficiently, collaborate better, strengthen community cohesion, facilitate skills share and maximise existing assets in the region. Resource Futures have successfully set up and managed CAGs in Oxfordshire and Devon.

Key benefits for this option include:

- Provides an opportunity to build internal group capacity and improved resilience.
- Enables skills sharing and skills training across the network.
- Helps to build awareness and connections across the network.
- Could act as a route to facilitate skills and asset share regionally.
- The regional coordinator would provide a focal resource for all groups to utilise and could take responsibility for reuse coordination across the region.
- Creates online presence for the benefit of all groups to advertise events etc.
- Provides insurance cover for all member groups freeing up time and money.
- Reduces waste tonnages for disposal over time with increased activities.
- Provide point of collection for group stats to show wider impact, and provides social value in volunteering opportunities, upskilling, knowledge share.

Some issues with this option are:

- A full-time reuse coordinator will be required (this role, however, could be key to maximising reuse through all options as existing SWP capacity is limited)
- Groups will need to be consulted at an early stage to ensure they are on board and supportive
- CAG network will need ongoing support – this could be through SWP or contracted out

Indicative costs:

Recruitment of a coordinator - ~£2,000

Annual salary of coordinator - ~£30,000

Annual network management (if not internal) - ~£15,000

Annual expenses budget - ~£10,000

Insurance policy costs - ~£3,000

Annual group funding pots (optional) ~£2,000

This option will require ongoing costs, such as the salary of the coordinator and ongoing management costs. There may be some options to obtain an income and offset costs through partnership funding, membership fees, contributions, and funding bids.

### **2.3. The Repair Bus**

This option has a high capital set up cost, and ongoing costs in the future. It

involves purchasing and fitting out a vehicle to become a mobile repair facility. It can travel around the county offering repair facilities to residents, be used as a communications and education tool and support events and community groups. The concept is based on the successful mobile 'Library of Things' operating in Devon.

Key benefits for this option include:

- Could help address transportation issues faced by residents and community groups across the region.
- Provides increased access to repair and reuse and could facilitate skills sharing, asset sharing and skills training across the network.
- Highly visible option to build awareness and connections across the network.
- Provides social value in volunteering opportunities, upskilling, knowledge share.
- Provides an adaptable model either continually touring SWP regions spending a week in each district on a rotation basis or working on an event booking basis.
- Could provide a mobile repair shop, library of things, event advertising, training workshops (simple repair tips, WEEE deconstruction, upholstery, upcycling), etc.
- Activities could be free, donation based or charged for, with flexible pricing based on a case-by-case basis to increase accessibility.

Some issues with this option are:

- A full-time reuse coordinator will be required (this role, however, could be key to maximising reuse through all options as existing SWP capacity is limited)
- Capital costs are high (though there is a potential funding opportunity – see Section 3.)
- The vehicle should ideally be carbon efficient and fitted out using reclaimed/recycled materials where possible, but an electric vehicle is likely to be cost-prohibitive.
- There will be ongoing maintenance and operational costs
- A mobile facility will be limited to repairs on smaller mobile items
- A sufficient level of volunteers will be required to enable repair of a wide range of items.

Indicative costs:

Recruitment of a coordinator - ~£2,000

Annual salary of coordinator - ~£30,000

Procurement costs - ~£3,000

Bus purchase (cost varies on spec or new or second hand) - ~ £5,000 - £100,000

Kit out plus livery wrapping - ~ £3,000-£10,000

Motor fleet insurance - ~£2,000

Running costs - ~£7,000

This option will require ongoing costs, such as the salary of the coordinator and ongoing running costs of the vehicle. There may be some options to obtain an income and offset costs through partnership funding, expanding the range of services, charged activities, and funding bids

### **3. Potential funding opportunities**

Coincident with Resource Futures conducting the research for SWP, a funding opportunity opened through Ecosurety to offer grants for projects relating to increasing reuse or recycling of household waste electrical and electronic items (WEEE). Resource Futures planned to submit a bid to the fund and were looking for a LA partner to join them. As the project was very similar to one of the proposals for SWP, they asked if we would be interested in partnering them. We have agreed to do so.

If the bid is successful, this will give us the opportunity to pilot the repair bus concept for a year at minimal cost or risk to the partners. Converting and fitting a vehicle to become a mobile repair facility is very costly, and the project will cover the cost of doing this. Whilst the initial focus for the funding period will be WEEE, at the end of the year, the bus will be handed to SWP to continue to use as required with potential to expand to a wider range of items. The project also plans to research how to make the bus self-sustaining after the first year.

The Repair Bus concept as highlighted in the bid is as follows.

- Bus will be second-hand and fitted out using reclaimed/recycled materials where possible.
- The Repair Bus provides a mobile venue and tools for repair workshops.
- Vehicle livery ensures high profile to normalise repair and promote council services.
- The initiative includes salaried Driver/Reuse Coordinator
- The Repair Bus initiative includes insurance for its events
- The Repair Bus initiative could provide mobile repair shop, event advertising, training workshops (simple repair tips, Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment deconstruction, upholstery and upcycling).
- Can be used to provide social value in volunteering, upskilling and knowledge sharing.
- The initiative provides an adaptable model, continually touring and spending a week in each partner district on a rotation basis, as well as working on event booking basis.
- Activities could be free, donation based or charged for, with flexible pricing based on case-by-case basis to increase flexibility.
- Could provide bookable, charged activities: potential target audiences include, but are not limited to private groups, parties, resident associations, parish councils, schools, scouts/guides, youth groups, community groups, council departments.



- Could be ideal for local groups looking to set up community repair café that do not have access to suitable venue or tools.

Indicative costs have been provided for an outline model of The Repair Bus initiative which are shown below.

- Vehicle (purchase, design, customisation, branding, fit out): £81,244
- Recruitment and cost of staff member and ongoing costs (HR, event costs, logistics): £50,965
- Communications, outreach, videos and case study production: £17,482.

Total bid for: £149,690.

SWP have agreed that up to £20,000 will be available if required as a contingency fund. Should this be needed, there may be an opportunity to use the SW:EEP fund or existing budgets.

SWP have not committed financially to anything further than the year of the project. Should we wish to continue with the bus in the future, there will be ongoing costs: fleet insurance; running costs, MOT, servicing, excess, fuel; annual salary for Driver/Reuse Coordinator.

During the year of the project, we will be looking at how to ensure the project is self-sustaining in the future and developing a business case to take to the SWB as part of the standard Business Plan and budget setting process at the end of 2022.

Later funding options to be explored once project launched could include:

- Third party operator: leased out full or part-time to like-minded organisations serving Somerset. Provides continued income stream and sustainable management/coordination.
- Partnership opportunities: Sponsorship with key local and/or UK organisation(s) and businesses. Could be couched in terms of brand placement, increase in their corporate social responsibility and/or awareness of a compatible service offering.
- **Diversified council funding: shared funding across a range of council departments** who could utilise the mobile space to signpost wider council support opportunities.

#### 4. Costs

Indicative costs to each partner if SWP were to fully fund each proposal are shown below. The funding for model three has been bid for, and if this is not successful, we will not progress model 3 in the next financial year. We are therefore seeking approval and budget to progress models 1 and 2.

Indicative costs per partner (subject to further research)						
	Total	SCC	MDC	SDC	SWT	SSDC

Single Client Costs formula	100%	45.76%	10.98%	11.66%	16.33%	15.27%
<b>Model 1: Reuse containers at HWRCs</b>	£21,000.00	£21,000.00				
<b>Model 2: CAG Network</b>	£62,000.00	£28,371.20	£6,807.60	£7,229.20	£10,124.60	£9,467.40
<b>Model 3: Repair Bus</b>	£184,000.00	£84,198.40	£20,203.20	£21,454.40	£30,047.20	£28,096.80

Model 1 is best funded by Somerset County Council as this relates to diverting items at Recycling Sites. Model 2 would be shared across all partners. These costs are largely indicative of set up costs – there will be ongoing costs for each model.

For model 1, ongoing costs are likely to be minimal after the initial set up and purchase of containers. There is potential for the third party to purchase the container reducing capital costs, or for Biffa/SWP to purchase the containers and then lease them to third parties, resulting in an income. If the third-party takes ownership and management, the ongoing costs will be minimal.

For option 2, the ongoing costs will be around £45,000 if managed by SWP. If an external contractor was used to manage the network, an additional £15,000 is estimated in costs.

For option 3, the ongoing costs will be smaller once the bus is purchased and developed and are expected to be in the region of £45,000 for staffing, insurance and running costs.

The table above assumes there are no alternative funding options. In reality, we would like to have discussions with Biffa about potential funding opportunities for Model 1 and with Suez about opportunities from the SW:EEP fund for model 2.

In future years there may be savings available but at this stage these are difficult to determine. We would also seek external funding opportunities as these arise. Having these projects in process will enable us to move quickly on external funding options when they are available at short notice and for limited timescales.

## **5. Next Steps.**

The funding bid has been submitted and we will be notified as to whether it has been successful at the end of the year. If successful, the project will take place in 2022. If it is not successful, option 3 will not proceed, unless identified as a preferred model by partners.

SWP are positive about each option and would like to progress all three. We are looking for a steer from SWB as to the preferred approach, and this will be incorporated into the budget setting process and the business plan. The costs are indicative only and we will do further work and discuss with our contractors about the future possibilities.

We are therefore seeking a steer from the SWB regarding how to progress:

- Model 3 as long as the external bid is successful.
- Models 1 and/or 2 – with agreement to fund as part of the budget process (looking for other funding options as appropriate to reduce costs)
- Models 1 and/or 2 – but only if external funding can be found

- Neither option – continue research into other models (recognising the congestion and space issues that limit on-site solutions).