



# Waste

How to prevent **resources** going to **waste** in your area.



A guide for community and campaign groups



Scotland's champion  
for our environment.

This guide is designed to help you and your friends or community group to prevent waste in your local area. Waste prevention is about reducing our production and consumption of the world's resources.

## **Waste: what's the problem?**

Most of us are used to throwing things away. But where is 'away?' Thinking about this simple question can throw open a whole world of issues. **Scots throw away enough stuff to fill Murrayfield stadium every day.** However, most of the things we throw away could be a valuable resource for someone, somewhere.



*Most of what we throw away ends up in landfill sites like this one*

## Landfill and incineration

Once we've thrown something 'away', it creates a whole new problem. Our waste usually goes to landfill - a big hole in the ground. Apart from being a nasty thing to live near to, landfill sites produce methane, a greenhouse gas 20 times more potent and damaging to the climate than carbon dioxide. Incineration is another method of disposal. Although incinerators can get energy from waste, this is a polluting method of getting energy, producing toxic ash for those that live near by. Contracts between local authorities and incinerator operators can often discourage councils from investing in measures to increase recycling and reduce waste.

### The real cost of stuff

The things we buy require the Earth's limited resources, and often have implications for health too. These resources take energy to produce, are precious and finite and could be reused, but we often dispose of them as if they were infinite. The amount of harmful chemicals involved in producing the things we consume is harming our bodies and the environment.

### Taking more than our share

The reality is, wealthy lifestyles in Europe and other industrialised countries, are taking up more than our fair share of the Earth's resources, and polluting the environment. Reducing waste is not just a sensible thing to do; it's the only fair thing to do too.

## The cost of extracting resources

The Dongria Khond people in Orissa, India, have been fighting proposals for a bauxite (aluminium ore) mine on their sacred mountain. Other people living at the foot of the mountain already experience effects from a refinery for the same metal. They are suffering from health problems due to pollution from the refinery, which they blame for skin problems, livestock diseases and crop damage. The Orissa Government's pollution control board has ruled that chemical emissions from the refinery are 'alarming' and 'continuous'. The case illustrates the human and environmental cost of mining, and the lengths that companies are going to in order to acquire resources to make items we often throw away after using once.

[www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)



*The aluminium refinery in Orissa at night. Photo: Sanjit Das*

# Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

We can all reduce the amount we put in the bin.

## Reduce

Try to only buy things you really need. Make use of libraries, tool-hire shops, launderettes and try to share things, like cars, instead of buying them. To avoid excess packaging, try to buy fruit and vegetables loose instead of pre-packaged.

1 billion pounds worth of food we buy in Scotland ends up in the bin. You can look at the way you shop and cook, to make the most of the food you buy. There are links at the end of this booklet with plenty of advice to help you.

## Reuse

It's possible to buy a lot of what you need from second hand shops, charity shops, junkyards etc. You can also get things for free on internet sites such as Freecycle and Freegle. Try to donate your unwanted items to charity, or give them to a friend, rather than throwing them out. Try to buy products in returnable containers, rather than ones that will need to be thrown out.

## Recycle

Recycling means reusing materials by making them into something else. This means instead of ending up in landfill, precious resources are made use of. Try to recycle or compost as much waste as possible. If there are not enough recycling services in your area, contact your council. You can also buy products made from recycled materials.



# Waste prevention

## Why recycling is brilliant, but isn't the whole story

Recycling is far better than just burying or burning resources. For every tonne of glass that's recycled, 30 gallons of oil are saved. However, recycling uses a lot of energy for transport and processing so it isn't the whole solution.

## The fourth R - refusing what you don't need.

Refusing to consume what we don't need, and campaigning for changes that mean businesses don't produce excess packaging, can reduce the demand for raw materials.

## Why do we have a problem?

Retailers often use excessive amounts of plastic and cardboard to package their products. They often do this to make a product look more attractive so we buy it. A lot of this packaging ends up in the bin.

This is related to a deeper problem. Businesses rely on us buying stuff to keep growing – something they want to do to get more money for their shareholders. This causes problems, because we live in a finite planet, and cannot continue to consume resources at our current rate. We'd like to eventually see changes in the economy that mean businesses don't rely on us buying things we don't need.



# Working for change

## Campaigning on waste

Small, unexpected actions from normal people like us can lead others to question how they do things, and eventually bring about change.

### Change your own lifestyle and tell the story.

Changing our lifestyles can set an example for others, proving it can be done. What if people stopped throwing things away at all? One family in Gloucester threw away only one bag of rubbish all year in 2009. They say they're just careful with what they buy and how they buy it. For example, taking their own containers into the butchers, only buying things in packaging they know they can recycle and having a compost bin and/or a wormery to turn waste scraps of food into rich compost for the garden.



*A well made compost heap steams in the winter air*

One bag of rubbish a year: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8483404.stm>

Making these changes and telling stories to your friends, local paper or radio can really start people thinking that they could change too.

## Challenging the status quo

Another important part of campaigning is interrupting the normal way of doing things, and calling for change.

For example, when a normal business lady dresses up as a tomato outside her local supermarket because she's fed up with all of the packaging, she's deciding to stop conforming and to question the way things are. This allows other people to do the same.



*Friends of the Earth Scotland did a demonstration outside their local supermarket calling for less packaging on fruit and vegetables.*

This sort of creative campaigning can highlight the excessive packaging supermarkets use, and shows them their customers aren't happy about it. Campaigning has led to certain supermarkets reducing packaging. Because shops are very sensitive to their customers' concerns, showing them that a lot of people in the area want less packaging can work. For example, a letter writing campaign to a local shop could send a clear message about excess packaging.



## Other campaigning ideas

People got together in London to feed 5000 people from food that would have otherwise been thrown out <http://www.feeding5k.org/> Perhaps you could do something similar on a smaller scale in your town to highlight how much food we waste, and propose an alternative.

Take part in 'Buy Nothing Day' every year in November.  
[www.buynothingday.co.uk/](http://www.buynothingday.co.uk/)

**We can offer support and advice on campaigning. Just contact the national office on 0131 243 2700.**

## Waste prevention and reuse projects

You and your friends or community group could support or set up a project that prevents waste in your area.

### Helping households reduce waste

What stops people from reducing their waste? Often it can be because they haven't even thought about it, or are not aware of alternatives. You could offer workshops or one-to-one advice that helps people reduce their waste and save money.

Changeworks offer support and training to community groups on reducing household and kitchen waste. [www.changeworks.org.uk](http://www.changeworks.org.uk)

### Putting good food to good use

Fareshare projects collect excess food from the food and drink industry and distribute it to organisations working with disadvantaged people in the community. There are already projects in Dundee, Aberdeen and Edinburgh. Perhaps you could help get one going in your area?  
[www.fareshare.org.uk](http://www.fareshare.org.uk)

### Repair and reconditioning projects

There are some fantastic projects that repair and recondition furniture, bicycles and other items. One project in Edinburgh started a regular 'Tinker Tailor' session where people could learn how to repair items, that would otherwise be thrown away. Carry out some research into similar projects in your area. If there's a gap, why not look into setting up your own project with likeminded groups?

## Swap your stuff events

Events enabling people to swap clothes, books, DVDs, pictures and other household items are often a roaring success. They're sociable, fun and enable people to give away things they don't use to a grateful new owner. You could also do this as a stall on your high street to enable more people to get involved.



*A 'swap your stuff' stall on a high street, allowing people to donate books, cds and dvds, and take something away with them in return*

## Campaigning on Incineration and Landfill

This guide is aimed at reducing the demand for incineration and landfill sites. However, your community might already be facing proposals for an incinerator near by. At Friends of the Earth Scotland, we realise that incinerators and landfill sites can often land up on the doorsteps of those who might lack time and money to put into campaigning – this is an example of environmental injustice.

If you want help with campaigning on an issue like this, it's worth contacting Green Alternatives to Incineration in Scotland for support with a campaign. [www.gainscotland.org.uk](http://www.gainscotland.org.uk)

## Helpful links

Get help reducing your waste at Changeworks: [www.changeworks.org.uk/projects/our-waste-prevention-projects/490/](http://www.changeworks.org.uk/projects/our-waste-prevention-projects/490/)

Alternative methods of organising our economy: [www.neweconomics.org/](http://www.neweconomics.org/)

Join your local Friends of the Earth group, get help setting one up, or find resources to help you campaign: [www.foe-scotland.org.uk/localgroups](http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/localgroups) or call 0131 243 2700.

## About Friends of the Earth Scotland

We are an independent organisation working for a healthy environment for everyone. We are part of the biggest environmental grassroots network in the world – there are Friends of the Earth groups in 76 different countries. Local groups across Scotland campaign for a fairer, greener local area, and join in our national campaigns, which are about tackling the root causes of problems like climate change. You can join us as a community group, sign up to receive emails or become a member by visiting [www.foe-scotland.org.uk](http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk). We'd be very happy to work with you make our shared future a bright one.



*Campaigners demonstrate about excessive packaging outside a local supermarket*

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**A Scottish charity SC003442**  
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**0131 243 2700**

**Join us. [www.foe-scotland.org.uk/join](http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/join)**