



Setting Up a Reuse Scheme For Packaging

Bubble wrap, air bags, padded envelopes and boxes are used to transport products between businesses and to final customers. A significant proportion of this packaging is single-use plastic. Businesses try as much as possible to reuse packaging but this is not always easy if they buy in bulk and sell in smaller quantities. The rise in online shopping has also led to increased packaging ending up in people's homes.

The Plastic Free Letchworth Team have found businesses that will take and reuse packaging. For example, the hospice shop will take bubble wrap and use this to wrap the crockery that they sell. Norton Way Gallery, a recognised Plastic Free Business in Letchworth, will also take bubblewrap and use this to protect paintings which are shipped to customers. Offers of Jiffy bags on Freegle get a swift positive response from multiple people.

Plastic Free Penzance have also recognised the potential to reuse packaging rather than send it to incineration or landfill and are trialling a Business Pack Swap Scheme (www.plasticfreepz.co.uk/news/business-pack-swap-scheme-launches-2/). This scheme utilises a vacant shop and is run by volunteers. Donations can be made between 5:30pm and 6:30pm on a Tuesday and collections can be made between 5:30pm and 6:30pm on a Thursday. The scheme is initially open to local businesses but it is hoped to extend it to the general public.

Proposal For Business Packaging Reuse Scheme in Letchworth

Local businesses would be asked to get involved and to initially identify what type and volume of packaging they purchase and what type and volume of clean potentially re-usable packaging they send to waste.

Activity 1:

- a) Businesses are 'manually' put in touch who can support each other by passing on surplus packaging so that it can re-used instead of being disposed of as waste.
- b) If it is found that there is significant waste reduction possible from this activity an online mechanism will be introduced to help businesses connect and pass on their unwanted packaging.

Activity 2:

Letchworth Library would run a trial scheme to receive agreed types of business packaging from the general public for reuse. The packaging would be sorted by type, and a selection made available for the public for a donation or price appropriate to its re-used state. The Library would also be given a list of businesses to contact who would be willing to collect any surplus of particular types of packaging. Businesses would be asked to make a donation to the library in return for packaging received.

The Library has been suggested as the hub for a community collection because:

- a) It is accessible and has a good range of opening hours, including early evening and the weekend.
- b) Offering this service could bring new users into the Library.
- c) Libraries are now seeking donations and if successful this scheme could bring in funds.
- d) The Library is a HCC service and this scheme would allow the council to demonstrate it is working with the community to address climate change.

Use of the Library is not essential for this scheme since alternative 'hubs' could be identified in and around the town centre.

This suggested scheme raises a range of practical considerations to be addressed. However if such a trial in Letchworth is successful the scheme could be adapted and replicated in other Hertfordshire towns.