

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF REUSE

Monetary savings (customer: in purchases and disposal, state: less social costs through job creation and training)

Savings in energy, materials and chemicals embodied in the appliance

Buying re-used items like sofas and TVs rather than buying new items is saving UK households around £1 billion a year and helping to create jobs - but this is just a fraction of the potential shown by ground breaking new research from WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) which will be launched tomorrow. One million sofas which the current owner has finished with are re-used in the UK every year, saving households over £320 million - but this is just 17% of the total number of sofas discarded each year. The environmental benefits of re-using one tonne of sofas are the same as recycling one tonne of plastics.

Social, environmental and economic benefits of reuse and recycling The FRN "Win Win" report (2007) states that reuse can play an important role in meeting objectives around social and financial inclusion, sustainable communities, reducing carbon emissions and the use of natural resources. It has direct linkages to a number of current government policies and initiatives as discussed below. Social benefits Social benefits are the primary driver for many third sector organisations. The principal benefits are employment for disadvantaged workers and provision of low cost, or free, household goods to low income families. The FRN estimates that reuse charities have helped 750,000 low-income households, and they suggest that demand from such households is greater than the present capacity of third sector reuse organisations. The sector contributes to a number of objectives³ including: the creation of socially inclusive wealth; the regeneration of local neighbourhoods; the development of new ways to deliver public services; employment and training; and provision of basic items (bed, fridge, cooker) for the socially excluded.

Training opportunities Furniture reuse organisations provide a number of training opportunities, which can include retail, warehousing, furniture restoration, upholstery,

electrical skills, office and IT skills. Training is usually offered to individuals that have been long term unemployed, on probation or disabled, thereby enabling them to gain valuable work and social skills. Providing these opportunities can often attract support funding, although additional income will be needed to cover all overheads. Once training placements have been completed, approximately one third go onto paid employment. According to the FRN, the sector provides training for over 8,000 trainees. Volunteering opportunities Reuse organisations often rely on time and commitment from volunteers, which may be recruited through referral and welfare agencies (e.g. social care organisations). As well as providing volunteer opportunities for disadvantaged individuals, volunteers can come from other walks of life, for example, retired workers. Volunteers often benefit from improved self-esteem as well as a sense of contributing to a worthwhile cause. According to the FRN, the sector supports over 10,000 volunteers.

Community involvement Social enterprises often have strong ties to local communities, which may result in greater involvement of those communities. Linked to the provision of training and volunteer opportunities, reuse projects can play an important role in community cohesion, by giving residents the opportunity to become involved as volunteers or employees in a worthwhile community service.

Provision of goods to low income families. This guidance has mentioned that one of the main benefits of involving reuse organisations in bulky waste service provision is that items can be sold or given to low-income families and individuals. While the cost of many items has reduced considerably, bulky items can still be very costly. Low income families often rely on „sub-prime“ credit shops with high APRs and a mark-up on retail prices to purchase consumer goods, such as washing machines, televisions, and large household furnishings. This means that the cost of the item can more than double for those on a low income. By comparison, many better off families have a range of means of paying for these items -including upfront, with a credit card, or hire purchase⁵.