



# Your waste, your planet: a rethink

By Dave Green

The total amount of waste collected in a typical council district is 300kg per person per year – but this amount has not reduced significantly over the last 10 years. This represents an enormous amount of household rubbish – a vast number of lorry journeys transporting our rubbish, a tremendous effort to sort it and process it, and large areas of smelly landfill sites which produce a lot of greenhouse gases. The biggest practical step we can all take to help the planet is to reduce the amount of rubbish that each of us produces. Recycling is important but Reducing rubbish is even more important.

*Reducing starts by refusing* – refusing to buy what we do not need; refusing to buy goods wrapped in excessive plastic or cardboard. It means buying from local shops, taking your own bags and containers which can be reused and refilled. It means doing more to repair things rather than chuck. It means asking ourselves “Do I really need to buy this? Will it really be useful or am I likely to chuck it?”

I recently spoke to Isabel Losada at the Woodbridge Climate Action event. She is an author whose has written several acclaimed books including one called the ‘Joyful Environmentalist’. The first chapter highlights the change in attitude we all need to make. If you buy chicken from Duncans, why not take a cleaned aluminium tray? We take back paper bags to the veg stall for reuse. Small things, but the key is the change in mindset.

As well as *refusing*, try *repairing* (don’t forget our Repair Hub is on monthly on the second Saturday of the month) and reusing. Another example of this is reuse of plastic bottles by refilling with common household liquids. Bring empty bottles to the Repair and Climate Advice hub to get refills from the local Eco Refill shop. Poppy’s Pantry, EMMAUS and Cupboard Love also do refills. It is a bit more inconvenient for each of us, but it’s worth it because it will reduce your carbon footprint by about 0.3 tonnes of carbon per year.

If you recall, previous articles have explained that everyone’s aim should be to try and reduce their own carbon emissions from an average of around 8-10 tonnes of carbon emissions per year to 1 tonne to avoid the worst consequences of global warming. So far in these articles we have shown how it is possible to reduce our carbon footprints by 1.5 tonnes through food choices, by 2 tonnes through energy choices, by 2 tonnes through better travel choices, by 0.3 tonnes through our wardrobe and now 0.3 tonnes through waste: a total of 6.1 tonnes. We are getting there!

Perhaps 0.3 tonnes doesn't seem a big reduction in carbon emissions but it carries with it major benefits for the wider environment. If we all recycle better using the Council kerbside collection and recycling centres, less of Suffolk is taken up by smelly landfill sites. Aluminium and steel are recovered from cans; plastic bottles are reformed into plastic products so less microplastics into our seas and rivers; paper and card are recovered to form new cardboard; glass bottles make new glass; garden waste makes compost; wood is chipped to make chip board etc. Make sure you only put the right things in the blue and brown bins: go to <https://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk> to check if you are in doubt. A significant percentage of loads are contaminated and go to landfill as people put the wrong items in the bins.

So, *rethink* your waste and how to reduce it. Firstly, think about how you can *refuse*, *repair* and *reuse* and then *recycle* as much as you can.

