



East Hunsbury Coat Exchange: Case Study



East Hunsbury
Parish Council

RSTUFF
Our stuff. Our responsibility.

Introduction

East Hunsbury is a suburban parish of Northampton with a population of around 10,000. It is located in the county of Northamptonshire in the East Midlands.

Since declaring a climate emergency in October 2021, East Hunsbury Parish Council has initiated several projects to engage residents in climate action. These initiatives include Green Day, the Tree Harvest, Climate Action Day and other community-driven efforts to encourage participation and awareness.



"We are incredibly proud of the success of the Coat Exchange initiative in East Hunsbury. The overwhelming support and participation from our residents have truly made a difference. This event not only provided much-needed winter coats to those in need but also fostered a strong sense of community spirit. The generosity and engagement of our residents has been heartwarming, and it's clear that together, we can achieve significant positive impacts. We look forward to continuing such initiatives that bring our community together and promote sustainability."

Clerk to East Hunsbury Parish Council

Rationale

1

90% of Plastic is fossil based (1)

Plastic enables much of modern day life due to its many useful qualities: lightweight, strong, waterproof, durable etc. Around 80% of plastic produced in Europe is fossil based and as a finite resources, and given the value of plastic, this requires us to consider its use conservatively.

3

Carbon dioxide created from clothing in the UK was 26.2 million tonnes in 2016 (4)

The amount of clothing bought in the UK is increasing. Promoting pre-loved clothing not only improves plastic resource efficiency but also contributes to the mitigation of Climate Change.

2

60% of fabrics are synthetic (2)

On average clothing lasts around 3.3 years before it is discarded or passed on. Ensuring synthetic fabrics are used again and again and again, before they are put in the recycling bin, helps drive resources efficiency in a circular economy (3)

4

£140 million of clothing is sent to UK landfill each year (5)

Any material that is sent to landfill, including plastic, is a missed opportunity to reuse or recycle a resource. Currently, humans are using nature 1.7 times faster than our planet's biocapacity can regenerate. Every effort must therefore be made to reduce this demand. (6)

Method

East Hunsbury & Rstuff, formerly known as Pledge2Recycle Plastics, collaborated to plan the parish's first Coat Exchange and RStuff created a toolkit, based on East Hunsbury's experience, to make it easy for other communities to hold their own Coat Exchange. Whilst this Coat Exchange was organised by East Hunsbury Parish Council, in practice it could be organised by any community group, school, faith group or large employer.

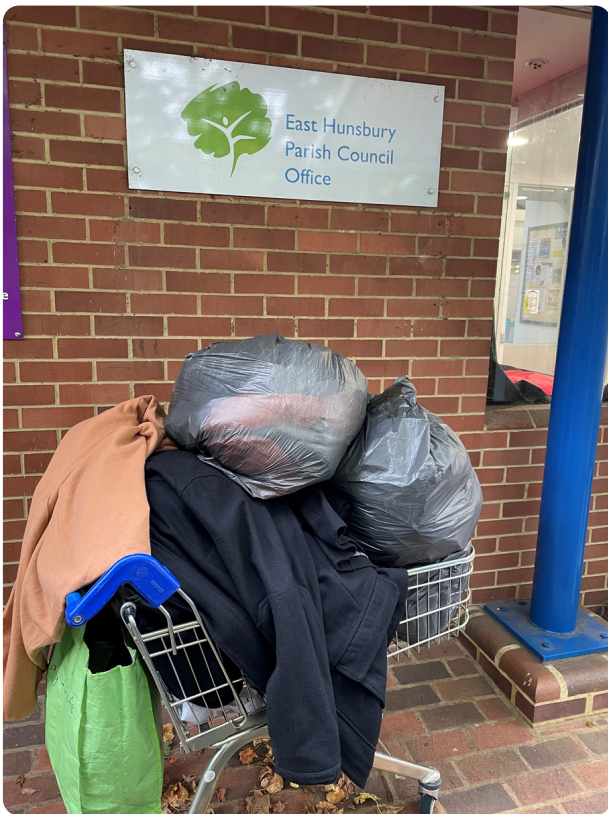


Photo: Jayne Wilson - coat donations

Requests were sent out for coat donations via a press release, posters, social media and the Parish Council's vast network of contacts within their community. The event was held over two weeks. Donations were collected one week prior to the Coat Exchange. This afforded staff and volunteers the time to count the number of coats donated, quality check the coats and sort those that would need to be sent for textile recycling.

The actual Coat Exchange was housed in the Parish Council's activity room which itself is located in the Library which has a high footfall within the community. The activity room was open for one week and residents could drop in any time during the day to choose a new coat.

Results

The Coat Exchange aimed to:

1. Ensure coats are used again and again before they are put in the recycle bin.
2. Reduce the cost of winter coats for residents.
3. Increase the knowledge that choosing pre-loved clothing benefits people and the environment.

This case study resulted in 225 donated coats being put back in circulation. 160 people did not have to pay for a brand new winter coat this year.

The Coat Exchange was housed in the Parish council's activity room which was open during office hours to ensure maximum flexibility for residents to drop in. Staff were also engaged in other projects and day to day running of the parish therefore it was not possible to measure the change in knowledge about the environmental benefits of pre-loved clothing. However, anecdotally, staff have reported many conversations regarding the environmental benefits.

Mainly adult coats were donated but there was also one rail of children's coats. Increasing the amount of people choosing pre-loved winter coats mean less virgin plastic is used for textiles, which conserves resources and helps protect habitats due to less extraction of resources.

225

Coats Donated

260

Visitors

160

Coats rehomed

25

Coats sent to
textile recycling

40

Coats sent to
Police & Hope
Centre

The carbon and water footprint of clothing varies depending on the company they are bought from and the material used. An estimate suggests the carbon and water saving from the Coat Exchange was 3,160kg and 1,021,000 litres respectively. That's the equivalent of driving 21,497 miles in an electric car and enough water for 405 months of showers.(7)Forty coats remained following Coat Exchange week. East Hunsbury Parish Council has strong relationships with many organisations working with it's community including Northamptonshire Police and the Hope Centre in Northampton.

The Police, by the nature of their work, frequently work with vulnerable adults and took 6 coats to distribute to adults in need. The Hope Centre, based in Northampton supports people in the county struggling with homelessness and issues relating to hardship, including addiction, mental health, wellbeing, and deliver projects aimed at early intervention. Thirty four coats were gifted to the Hope Centre to support the wellbeing of vulnerable people by keeping them warm.



Photo: Jayne Wilson - coat collection

"We have been working on identifying suitable recipients for the coats in the community. Last week we donated one of the coats to a local member of the community who had been made homeless and was sleeping rough. I have seen him since and he is still using the coat. He was very grateful to receive it and the donation allowed us to engage with him to assist him with support regarding his situation."

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Acknowledgements

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