

OXFORDSHIRE PLASTIC BAG-FREE PLACES

Case studies

During 2009 and 2010, the Oxfordshire Plastic Bag-Free scheme provided financial support for projects to encourage Oxfordshire towns or neighbourhoods to become plastic bag-free. A variety of different projects were approved, varying from text messaging reminders to a voucher scheme, which allowed for local people to decide what would work best for their area.

Six organisations received funding from Oxfordshire County Council (part of the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership), and all of them were able to use this money to set up innovative local projects that involved community and local businesses working together to cut down plastic bag use.

Feedback from the administering organisations was gathered during and at the end of the scheme, helping the council to evaluate the benefits of these projects, and providing useful information for others wanting to set up similar schemes. The information below has been provided by the administering organisations, and reflects their experiences and successes. This information should be useful for other organisations hoping to set up their own plastic bag-free schemes.

This report is published by Oxfordshire County Council, and further details can be obtained by contacting waste.management@oxfordshire.gov.uk or 08450 504550.

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The Woodstock Reusable Bag

Administering organisation: Sustainable Woodstock

Funding amount: £2,070

BACKGROUND

Sustainable Woodstock is an Oxfordshire Community Action Group, made up of local volunteers. An initial survey of residents early in 2009 showed good support for a local reusable bag, with provisional agreement from many retailers.

PROJECT AIMS

1. To raise the profile of waste minimisation and the hazards of plastic bags as a non-biodegradable product as well as a source of litter in the community.
2. To encourage retailers not to issue single use plastic bags.
3. To make Woodstock a Plastic Bag Free Town.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

We aimed to make Woodstock a 'plastic bag-free town' by sourcing an ethically produced reusable bag and marketing it at cost (£2.00 each) throughout the retail premises in Woodstock.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS:

Which traders, partners and other groups took part?

Virtually all the traders in Woodstock town centre participated, some with more enthusiasm than others, and some despite the small volume of bags that they actually dispensed (e.g. some antique dealers wanted to be part of the campaign). We received moral support from the primary and secondary schools, the churches and the Town Council.

The greatest volume of sales came from The Oxfordshire Museum, who have been tremendously supportive. Many of these sales went to tourists who we hope will carry the message beyond Woodstock's boundaries. One Japanese tourist at "The Real Wood Furniture Company" bought more than a dozen!

We sourced our bags from Oxford's Canby Bags and we can recommend them without qualification.

What reduction have you found in plastic bag use?

To some extent, we were preaching to the converted. Many people in the town already used reusable bags. We have not been successful in quantifying the reduction in use of plastic bags; few retailers keeping any record despite being asked in our initial questionnaires to do so. It may sound like an odd comment, but using single use plastic bags in Woodstock, whilst it still happens, is now almost at the point of stigmatisation!

How many members of the public have you reached with your initiative?

We purchased 1,000 bags in two designs; a jute bag and a cotton one. We launched the bags in November 2009 and, by August 2010, we are just about sold out of jute bags and considering re-ordering. We have perhaps 300 cotton bags in stock either in store or currently with retailers.

Have you been able to measure a change in attitude over the life of the scheme?

We have not achieved our aim of making Woodstock a plastic bag-free town. But, seeing residents walking along with a plastic bag of shopping now raises disapproving eyebrows! I think that to achieve our full intentions would require the supermarkets to be much more pro-active. The Co-op in Woodstock likes to claim that it promotes green ideas but has been the least active in selling our bags (I seldom see them on display at all) and they continue to dish out plastic bags all too readily. Monitoring has been difficult: retailers not wishing to give the issue a high priority in terms of monitoring and evaluation.

How much publicity did you achieve?

We achieved considerable publicity for Sustainable Woodstock. This was in part due to our eye-catching logo and the quality and sale price of the bags. There can be no-one in the town (and many beyond it) who do not know who we are and what we do. And we have raised the profile of waste minimisation and the hazard of single use plastic bags.

The project launched at the November Farmer’s Market, with a supportive article in West Oxfordshire District Council’s Creating Futures Winter 2009 magazine. Press releases were issued to the local press, but unfortunately there was no coverage, perhaps because Woodstock is situated at the boundaries of the larger local papers. More information was issued via the Woodstock and Bladon News, and comprehensive details were featured on Sustainable Woodstock’s website:
http://www.sustainablewoodstock.co.uk/plastic_bag_free_town.htm

Is the project sustainable? How can this work be carried on?

Yes, it is sustainable but it now requires a greater push from the Co-op and others like them. They do tell their staff to discourage issuing plastic bags but they are under pressure, and exhortations tend not to last too long. Supermarkets must start charging for bags. And the County Council can help in providing the clout that is need to encourage more robust action by the big supermarkets.

SPEND BREAKDOWN (total of £2,070)

Materials/Services	Stock of bags £1,640 Further supply of bags £430
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So far, we have received a total of £1032.76 from retailers and others. There is more cash to come in over the next couple of months and then, I guess, it will slow down to a bit of a trickle. Initial expenditure on the bags was £1640, with more ordered. We should break even, but we would like to use the proceeds of our sales to buy more stock.

FURTHER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

A good initiative by Oxfordshire County Council, but as well as bottom up activism by people like Sustainable Woodstock we need top down action by OCC to engage with the big retailers. Here's a thought - the Transport team at OCC enters into so-called Quality Freight Partnerships with road hauliers and Quality Bus Partnerships with the likes of Stagecoach and Oxford Bus Co. Why not a Quality Retail Partnership with the Co-op (and others) and give maximum publicity to those who sign up and those who don't?



Selling the Sustainable Woodstock bag at the Woodstock Farmers Market



Bags of Life in Witney

Administering Organisation: The Oxfordshire Town Chambers Network Ltd

Funding amount: £10,000

BACKGROUND

The Oxfordshire Town Chambers Network Ltd (OTCN) was allocated the largest sum to undertake this part of the scheme because of the project management skills needed to ensure its success in the large market town of Witney. OTCN was able to use its extensive links with local traders and other residents to really drive the project forward, achieve maximum publicity and provide comprehensive evaluation.

PROJECT AIMS

1. To reduce the number of “disposable” plastic bags distributed by independent shops in Witney, (with the opportunity for larger retailers to participate);
2. To deliver a pilot scheme, working in partnership with local schools, that uses a “localised” reward voucher scheme to encourage a change in consumer behaviour;
3. To undertake an evaluation exercise that will support future similar initiatives.

The idea for the project came from a report we produced as part of our work on business-related environmental issues on ‘plastic-bag-free-town’ type projects in Oxfordshire. We wanted to do something which was different while drawing on the experience of, and lessons learned by, the projects already carried out.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The campaign aimed to encourage shoppers to take their own bag for life or re-use an old plastic bag rather than collect new ones when they go shopping. We endeavoured to:

1. Maximise engagement of local schools
2. Maximise engagement of Witney town centre traders ranging from small independent shops to large national-chain retailers
3. Raise awareness locally of the negative environmental impact plastic bag usage can have, and emphasise the benefits of re-use and of using bags for life

This is how it worked:

Two local secondary school students designed the campaign poster and the voucher that was used, and continued to be ambassadors for it in the media as the project progressed (the voucher design competition winner was presented with a kinetic-powered MP3 player as a prize to emphasise the innovation and environment theme of the campaign). Anyone offered a plastic bag when they bought something in a participating town centre store, who said ‘no thanks’, was given a voucher which they could pass on to a participating school in Witney or neighbouring villages. The 18 schools taking part were divided into three groups based on the number of pupils they have. The school in each category that collected the most vouchers won a prize to spend on an environmental project at the school.

The campaign was funded by Oxfordshire Waste Partnership and led by OTCN Ltd, the driving force behind the Oxfordshire Town Chambers Network. It launched on 1st October 2009 and shoppers had until 31st January 2010 to get their vouchers in. A list of shops and schools taking part was posted on the website of the campaign organisers http://www.otcn.co.uk/projects/plastic_bags.htm

The project successfully engaged local people (who played their part as shoppers), the business community (the shops plus a number of 'sponsor' supporters who gave staff time and/or facilities), local schools, and the local media (who gave the project a huge amount of very positive coverage and so made a significant contribution to the 'raising awareness' element, helping us to greatly exceed expectations in terms of coverage won).

18 schools collected vouchers; the winning 'small category' school hosted the celebration event; and one of the winners was invited as a final 'recycling' element of the project to take the collected vouchers and make them into a themed piece of artwork.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS:

Which traders, partners and other groups took part?

More than 90 Witney town centre shops and traders – including some of the bigger stores, Waitrose, Boots, Somerfield, tenants in The Woolgate Centre, and Debenhams in the Marriotts Walk development, plus a host of independent traders – signed up to be part of the scheme. Debenhams Sales Manager, Laura Jones, says: "Debenhams Witney is happy to be supporting the local community in this worthwhile scheme."

Cottsway Housing lent their support by having 100 jute bags specially made to help their tenants play a part in the project. "We are pleased to support the 'Bags of Life in Witney' campaign by offering free jute bags to our tenants", said Cottsway's chief executive, David Waters. "The take-up so far has been very good, meaning that we are helping save valuable resources. We are keen to play an active role in helping the community reduce its carbon footprint."

What reduction have you found in plastic bag use?

We did originally propose a pre-measuring project so that we could assess the number of plastic bags that would normally be handed out by Witney retailers. This element was not included in the final project brief and so we have only the voucher measures (see next section) to draw on. On a qualitative level, feedback from the stores was that it did make a difference to the numbers of plastic bags brought back for re-use and the numbers of bags for life being brought in.

Waitrose Section Manager, Elaine Lattimore, said: "The 'Bags of Life in Witney' campaign has definitely raised awareness of the need to reduce the number of plastic bags customers use. It's been a very good interactive project that has involved businesses, schools and the local community, and we've had a huge number of customers asking for the vouchers."

How many members of the public have you reached with your initiative?

On measurements, the schools collected in excess of 7,000 vouchers between them. Anecdotal evidence from the shops involved suggests that many more – possibly as

many again - were collected by customers but not sent on to the schools. If funding allowed we would very much like to see further analysis on how that converts in terms of waste avoided, and also to look at the longer term impact on consumer culture locally, but neither were part of this initial phase.

Have you been able to measure a change in attitude over the life of the scheme?

For reasons set out above, measurement has not proved easy for us. However, we do have qualitative evidence on impact from the very positive feedback we have had – this, as examples, from the three winning schools:

Dawn Athey, who co-ordinated involvement in the campaign at Wood Green School, says: “It is a testament to our students how keenly they took to supporting this community project. The project has helped them to understand the need to recycle and the ecological benefits of re-using carrier bags.”

Claire Lawrence-French, Forest School Leader at Tower Hill School, says: “The staff and children at Tower Hill School are all very excited to have won this award. We have just started running ‘Forest School’ sessions and are developing our wildlife area known as the Dell. There are lots of possibilities and we are looking forward to the exciting developments ahead.”

Joseph Rubba, Headteacher at St. Mary's Infant School, said: “All the children and their families made a big effort to be part of ‘Bags of Life in Witney’. I think being involved in this project demonstrates that young children have a significant part to play in promoting awareness of environmental issues. St. Mary's is at the heart of the Witney community and we are all proud to be part of this initiative which extends beyond the school.”

To ensure longevity and sustainability, the £500 prize for the three winning schools had to be dedicated to be used for an environmental project. The task of making best use of the funding was handed to school councils ensuring that this phase too is led by young people. OTCN agreed to keep in touch with the schools to see how the projects are going.

How much publicity did you achieve?

Publicity gained was very extensive – with more than 20 items in total. It would, we think, be fair to argue that the scheme punched above its weight in terms of publicity gathered.

This was partly because of the strong environmental theme which had good media currency at the time, partly because the scale of involvement (of schools and shops), partly because of the strong role taken by a number of young people (the original voucher and poster designers and the children at St Mary's who helped with the launch and hosted the celebration event) and the consequent opportunities for great PR photographs.

Is the project sustainable? How can this work be carried on?

We would very much like to run another project or projects if funding allowed. Indeed, while we were running this one, we had strong interest from a neighbouring town in taking the project there. As for the project itself, it is ongoing in the sense that the three winning schools committed to using their £500 award on an environmental project so

that there will still be work going on as a result of the project and engagement by new year groups beyond those originally involved,.

SPEND BREAKDOWN (total of £10,000 and inclusive of VAT)

Materials/Services	Printing, including design: £2,371 Prizes: £1,500 Delivery: £5,894 – this included promotion of/engagement with businesses, local organisations and schools using a variety of methods including face-to-face, online and print; project management.
Monitoring & Evaluation	Report drafting - £235

FURTHER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

This was a project that captured the imagination of local people, schools, businesses and the local media. OTCN Ltd would very much welcome the opportunity to draw on the lessons learned and build on the success of the project by delivering it elsewhere as funding allows. As the first project of its kind, we learned a huge amount in the course of delivering it and made some adjustments along the way. This would very much strengthen our hand if we were asked to deliver elsewhere. Among the most significant lessons learned:

- That delivering such extensive buy-in from the retail businesses is a very time intensive part of the operation. It involves a number of visits to every one of the shops involved, both to explain the scheme, deliver (and when they run out, resupply) posters and vouchers and to maintain momentum. This is especially the case given the variety of managers you can have in stores and the turnover of staff.
- The involvement of schools depends hugely on the buy-in/commitment of individual teachers. We saw very significant differences in numbers between schools in terms of the number of vouchers collected – this appeared to be heavily influenced by the drive that one or more members of staff were able to give it. The school that collected the most vouchers was actually the town’s smallest which demonstrates what can be done if there is a whole school effort behind something.
- Asked to do it again, we would want to look at the time of year we operate in. From a retailers point of view, a key part of the campaign fell in the pre-Christmas and New Year sales periods. Although this is a time when (a) the shops are busier and (b) there is known to be extra waste, handing out vouchers then was an extra burden on hard-pressed staff which you might look to ease. It should also be noted that the campaign was interrupted by the heavy snow post-Christmas which impacted both on footfall at the shops but also on the focus of the media which had, until then, given very generous amounts of space.
- A feedback route for people is very valuable. OTCN made high profile space available for the campaign on its website. People did use that to ask us which schools they could send vouchers to and advise us if there were shops that had run out of vouchers or didn’t seem to be wholly behind the scheme. This allowed as (a) to renew supplies or (b) to revisit shops to engage again with staff there.

- We had originally proposed some kind of pre-measuring process to calculate the number of bags being handed out in shops prior to the campaign. For understandable budgetary reasons this did not prove possible. This did however mean that we only had the number of vouchers handed in and a slightly less certain calculation of numbers handed out by the shops to draw on for empirical evidence of the success of the scheme. This, on reflection, was something that could have given the project another valuable measureable.
- Likewise, publicity was not included in the budget. Having a photographer and a PR specialist in its team, OTCN pressed ahead with a high profile PR campaign from its own resources. Although again this is not wholly measurable, feedback from those involved and from local people who engaged with the project suggested that the very extensive coverage that the scheme won made a difference both to recruitment of schools and traders in the early stages, and to the level of involvement by customers as the project developed.

OTCN Ltd would like to thank all of the shops and their staff, the school teachers & staff, children and parents, Witney Extended Schools co-ordinator Rosa Curness, local businesses who supported the project, the local media, Oxfordshire Waste Partnership, and Cllr Ian Hudspeth and Eiles Robinson at County for the big part they all played in making this project a success.



The Bags of Life in Witney voucher



Cllr Ian Hudspeth (centre) presents the winning schools with their prizes

The Wallingford Bag

Administering organisation: Wallingford Plastic Bag Working Party

Funding amount: £2,000

BACKGROUND

Wallingford Plastic Bag Working Party already have a cloth bag scheme, and the extra funding enabled them to sell their bags at a more competitive price and to buy new stocks.

PROJECT AIMS

To reduce the number of plastic bags used in Wallingford with a view to eliminating them altogether in the future.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A co-ordinated community effort to produce a bag for the town as an alternative to plastic bags. A working party was formed and 2000 bags designed, purchased and made available for sale. Local traders were interviewed to get their support. An initial and follow-up survey was sent to all householders regarding plastic bag use. Local schoolchildren carried out a survey to find out if there was a change in attitude towards the use of plastic bags.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS:

Which traders, partners and other groups took part?

Wallingford Town Council, Wallingford Business Partnership, Sustainable Wallingford, St. John's Primary School, Wallingford School. Wallingford has a high percentage of independent shops and businesses. There is also a large Waitrose store, Boots the Chemist and Lloyds Pharmacy, as well as several charity shops and some shops which are part of small franchises.

What reduction have you found in plastic bag use?

See section below.

How many members of the public have you reached with your initiative?

Every household in Wallingford (around 2,000) was offered the opportunity to complete a questionnaire regarding plastic bag use, with 156 returned. Awareness of plastic bag use issues was high, but 66% thought most shops did not support the replacement of plastic bags.

53 local businesses were interviewed at the start of the scheme, and they all voiced their support for The Wallingford Bag. The retailers were surveyed again once the scheme was running. Although 77% used new plastic bags, 92% asked customers if they wanted a bag before giving them out. 48% offered an alternative reusable bag. 40% had seen a significant drop in demand for plastic bags. There was overwhelming

support for The Wallingford Bag.

Local Year 9 schoolchildren undertook a further survey of residents, as part of their GCSE Citizenship exam, to investigate changes in attitudes to plastic bag use. Key findings were:

- 80% already take their own bags shopping
- 88% would use reusable bags if shops offered them
- 90% don't know what the 3 R's are (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)
- The highest preference for the price of a 'bag for life' was 20-40p
- 87% said shops usually ask before handing out a plastic bag
- 80% said their attitude towards plastic bag use had changed

Have you been able to measure a change in attitude over the life of the scheme?

See previous section.

How much publicity did you achieve?

Substantial - launch, press releases, stalls at main events, schools, showing of the film 'Message in the Waves' at town centre cinema, Town Information Centre, photographic competition/exhibition. The scheme was featured in The Oxfordshire Town Chambers Network's 'How to....' Guides - Plastic Bag-Free Towns.

Is the project sustainable? How can this work be carried on?

Sustainability will be achieved through the ongoing sale of bags. Maintenance of pressure on retailers and shoppers will need to be carried forward. The bag is still for sale at the following venues: Town Information Centre, Town Council Offices, schools, the local Producers Market and 18 independent shops.

SPEND BREAKDOWN (total of £2,000)

Materials/Services	£1,000 (subsidy for existing bags) £1,000 (purchase of new bags)
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FURTHER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Requests have been received for guidance from other communities.

The issue on continuing pressure on retailers and consumers needs to be addressed – we would be happy to work with the County Council on this matter.

The issue of litter caused by food takeaway plastic/polystyrene and similar containers is a major concern and needs a co-ordinated approach by either District or County Council.



The Wallingford Bag on sale with a local retailer



The Love Bicester Bag

Administering organisation: Bicester Vision Partnership, working with Bicester & District Chamber of Commerce

Funding amount: £6,000

BACKGROUND

Bicester is a large town which has grown substantially over recent years, and which is home to many new residents who travel to Oxford to work, as well as a core of local people. The town is known for its outlet shopping village, which has put pressure on local shops and businesses. Bicester Vision, as a well-established business group, was an ideal partner to engage with local shops as well as groups such as the Youth Council to help promote the town using a high quality campaign to launch the Love Bicester shopping bag.

PROJECT AIMS

To encourage residents and visitors to Bicester to say no to plastic bags and make Bicester a plastic bag free town.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

To produce a reusable bag that is attractive and desirable to Bicester residents and visitors.

To encourage people to think about their use of plastic bags.

To make people feel more positive about Bicester.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS:

Which traders, partners and other groups took part?

We have had terrific support from local retailers, and the Love Bicester bag is now sold in a variety of local shops including the Tourist Information Centre at Bicester Village, Wyevale Garden Centre at Bicester Avenue, and four town centre shops. All of whom find them very good sellers.

In addition we launched the bags at the monthly Farmer's Market and received a great deal of publicity in local newspapers, TV and radio.

We have worked with Bicester Youth Council on a number of occasions and they have sold the bags at the Town Carnival, the Christmas Lights Switch-On and will be doing so again at the Freecycle event to be held during December.

What reduction have you found in plastic bag use?

We have not been able to gather statistical information due to lack of resources but we know that the bags are well used and I see them in the hands of a cross section of the community whenever in town.

How many members of the public have you reached with your initiative?

Because of the variety of places that people can buy the bags we know that the message is reaching a great many residents and visitors.

We included information about the bags in our Christmas marketing last year with a leaflet that was delivered to most of the homes in the town encouraging them to take a bag with them when they did their Christmas shopping.

In addition, the Garth Gazette – town council magazine which is delivered to every home – has featured the bags in two of its quarterly publications.

The bags have been featured on a number of local websites.

We are confident that the majority of Bicester’s 30,000 population has received information about the bags in one form or another.

Have you been able to measure a change in attitude over the life of the scheme?

Our belief is that not only has the scheme encouraged people to use reusable bags but also they find the design attractive and it has made them feel more positive about the town.

How much publicity did you achieve?

We achieved maximum publicity on the launch day, with regular bulletins on Radio Oxford throughout the day and a feature on the evening local television news.

We were front page of the local free paper and have had a number of follow up features in local newspapers and periodicals.

Is the project sustainable? How can this work be carried on?

It is not our intention to produce more bags, but the money that we received from the sale of the bags is being used to promote them and encourage people to say no to plastic bags.

SPEND BREAKDOWN (total of £6,000)

Materials/Services	Production of bags: £4,876.25 Design of bags: £282.00
Publicity	£699.75
Follow-up advertising	£42.00

FURTHER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

We have found this scheme to be extremely effective in raising the issues around waste and recycling.

Bicester is set to be the home of one of the new eco developments and has aspirations for the whole of the town to have some sort of eco status. It is, therefore, really important that we are able to introduce projects that encourage people to think about their waste.

We are very proud of the bags and we know that they have been extremely well received and are something people are proud to use.

We are also glad that the project has enabled us to work with the Farmer's Market to encourage people to use these local traders. It has given us a closer link to the Youth Council who have been happy to sell the bags at town events. We are now working closely with a Community Action Group called Grassroots Bicester who are keen to help promote the use of reusable bags.

We feel that the grant has had a significant impact and are extremely grateful for the opportunity to make this project come to life.

We still have a couple of hundred bags to sell, but we now have a number of stockists in the town so are keen to keep them trickling out to them.



The Love Bicester bag at the Bicester Farmers Market

Thame Shopping Bag Text Reminder

Administering organisation: 21st Century Thame

Funding amount: £3,500

BACKGROUND

21st Century Thame were keen to become a plastic bag-free town, following the example of Modbury in Devon. Research was undertaken on alternatives to plastic, and the group were able to obtain grant funding to provide independent retailers in the town with jute and cotton reusable bags.

With plenty of reusable bags in circulation, the challenge was then to get people to remember them when shopping. The project proposed a text alert service to remind people to bring their bags on the weekly shop.

PROJECT AIMS

A text messaging initiative to encourage the use of existing reusable bags, as well as promoting local businesses, via text messaging reminders.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A text alert scheme, to remind shoppers to take their existing bags shopping. An AM or PM file was created for each day of the week, and the reminder text was sent at 9am or 2pm on the day requested. A flyer with a push out card, the correct size to go into a purse or wallet, was printed and distributed to all 15,000 households in Thame and nearby villages, with another 5,000 cards distributed via retail outlets. Revenue could be generated to cover the cost of texts by retailers having an advert at the bottom of each text.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS:

Which traders, partners and other groups took part?

This project followed an initiative in 2007 where traders were provided with information on sustainable packaging, and encouraged to adopt the 'Try Thame First' reusable bag.

Waitrose supported the campaign by displaying the banner with details of the text reminder scheme. They also gave out bags for life with a flyer explaining the scheme during the promotional week, and offered a £50 shopping voucher as a prize if people signed up to the scheme. The Co-Op supported this scheme with a table by the door dedicated to information on the scheme and free cloth bags.

What reduction have you found in plastic bag use?

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of shoppers now use their own bags.

How many members of the public have you reached with your initiative?

15,000 households were sent details of the text messaging scheme, and 300 took up the offer.

Have you been able to measure a change in attitude over the life of the scheme?

No formal evaluation of attitude change.

How much publicity did you achieve?

Two articles on the Thame News website:

<http://www.thamenews.net/results.asp?search=text+reminder>

A piece in the Thame Gazette, and a mention by the Oxfordshire Town Chambers Network on Radio Oxford. Adverts in the Bucks Herald and the i-Thame phone app.

Is the project sustainable? How can this work be carried on?

The project incurs a cost every time a text is sent so revenue would have to be generated to cover on-going costs. Independent retailers have not generally embraced this method of communication.

SPEND BREAKDOWN (total of £3,500)

Text reminder service	£2,006.75
Leaflets	£371.00
Leaflet distribution	£600.00
Banner	£49.99
Reminder advertising pre-Christmas	£472.26

FURTHER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

We hoped to bring the new Sainsbury's shop on board, but its opening was delayed before the text contract ran out.

We did not have sufficient subscribers to market the texting scheme as an advertising medium for retailers.

The 21st Century Thame Steering Group was very positive about the effects the campaign has had, citing anecdotal evidence whereby there is a noticeable increase in the number of shoppers using their own bags. It has been noticed that shoppers in Sainsbury's are more often seen using the supermarket plastic bags, which may be due to the fact that Sainsbury's was not in the town when the campaign was originally run.

One thing we'd improve were we to run this again would be to invest in stronger jute bags. Those that have lasted the longest and are still in use were the ones from Thame Service Station, which were reinforced with linings.



The Thame Shopping Bag text reminder scheme supported by Waitrose



Waitrose staff encourage shoppers to sign up to the text reminder service

The West Oxford Community Bag

Administering organisation: Low Carbon West Oxford

Funding amount: £1,000

BACKGROUND

Low Carbon West Oxford is one of Oxfordshire's Community Action Groups, and over the years has built up a strong working relationship with their community in Oxford City. They have undertaken other sustainable projects, and have won awards for their environmental work. They were keen to develop innovative ideas to further cut down on plastic bag use.

PROJECT AIMS

This project aims to reduce plastic bag use in the local community. We surveyed local shoppers and found that most people already take their own bags shopping with them, but that sometimes they do forget to do so, or may buy more than they can carry.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

We have supplied the local shops with reusable cotton bags to lend to local people rather than offering them a plastic bag. The bags can be returned to participating shops, and we have retained part of the grant for laundering bags when necessary.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS:

Which traders, partners and other groups took part?

The core local shops – Eggs Eggcetera, Supersava, Woodlands Pharmacy and Warlands Bike Shop – are taking part. We plan to extend geographically in several directions so as to include the Westgate Stores, the Oxford Wine Company and Medley Manor PYO Farm. We also plan to provide bags to all local businesses for their office workers to use when purchasing locally.

What reduction have you found in plastic bag use?

We have asked the local shops to monitor quantities of bags loaned and to provide details of plastic bag consumption before and after the scheme, but as the scheme has only recently been launched these figures are not yet available.

How many members of the public have you reached with your initiative?

We are currently promoting the scheme. Shops are displaying window stickers advertising the scheme. We have advertised it at the recent community Bring and Take event, have emailed the membership of Low Carbon West Oxford, and will be promoting it in the next Community Association newsletter which goes out to every household in West Oxford.

Have you been able to measure a change in attitude over the life of the scheme?

Many people have said that this is a good idea. The degree of proactive promotion of the scheme within local shops does vary, and it does involve a change of practice at the checkout, but this will hopefully increase over time with increased public awareness and ongoing encouragement of the scheme by Low Carbon West Oxford.

We are monitoring and evaluating the scheme on an ongoing basis, by talking to shopkeepers, their staff, and local people. We will continue to encourage people to offer and ask for the community bag. We will account for spend on scheme maintenance (bag laundering).

How much publicity did you achieve?

We are concentrating on local publicity, as detailed above. We plan to publicise the scheme more widely in the near future.

Is the project sustainable? How can this work be carried on?

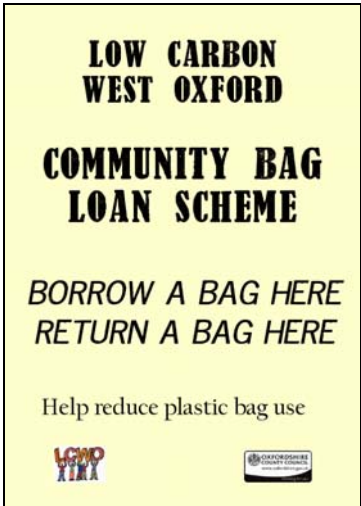
The project is sustainable as the bags are clearly loan bags, and the vast majority should remain in circulation for continued use. A small amount of ongoing maintenance is required. The work can be carried on by continuing to work with local shops and businesses to ensure the scheme is proactively promoted at the checkout and in the office, and involving a team of Low Carbon West Oxford volunteers in laundering the bags when necessary.

SPEND BREAKDOWN (total of £1,000)

Materials/Services	£748.36 for the bags £12.55 for window stickers
Ongoing	£239.09 for laundering, and expanding the scheme to local businesses.

FURTHER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The project should bring people together, as it encourages shops and local businesses to feel even more part of the community. A loan scheme operates on the principle of trust and mutual benefit, which adds to community spirit.



The Low Carbon West Oxford Community Bag in use in a local shop