



Community
Wood
Recycling

TRADING TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD

THE COMMUNITY WOOD RECYCLING NETWORK IN 2021



“As we start to look beyond the coronavirus crisis and refocus on the need to address the climate emergency we realise that what we do is more important than ever.”

This report draws its data from the latest in a succession of Community Wood Recycling members’ surveys conducted since 2009. Our aim has been to find out more about how well we fulfil our aims of saving resources and changing lives, how our model is working to create financially sustainable social enterprises and how we can serve our members and our customers better.

Our first report was written in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, which at the time was the greatest challenge our network had faced. That remained the case until March 2020. The national lockdown meant that retail spaces were forced to close, workshops were shut down, and most collections were suspended. The majority of staff across the network were furloughed, and the national office was kept going by a skeleton team.

As the pandemic has evolved, we have been fortunate that our services – collecting waste wood and selling timber for DIY – have been less restricted than other parts of the economy. Whilst the past 22 months have been challenging for all our members, the network has pulled through as a result of a huge amount of hard work from staff and volunteers. New opportunities such as the demand for wood during summer 2020 and the Kickstart Scheme have been embraced.

This report demonstrates the growth and development of what is the country’s leading network of environmental social enterprises. It highlights the important role we play in diverting wood from the waste stream whilst providing employment, training, and volunteering opportunities. At a time when stress and uncertainty have led to sobering increase in the number of people dealing with poor mental health, it shows how providing support to move on from these challenges has become an increasingly important aspect of our work.

Although we are once again facing a period of uncertainty, as we start to look beyond the coronavirus crisis and refocus on the need to address the climate emergency we realise that what we do is more important than ever. We are committed to being at the forefront of the movement to use social enterprise to build a circular economy.

We are hugely grateful to all the enterprises who have provided data for this report and to the clients whose support is key to the work we do.

RICHARD MEHMED
MANAGING DIRECTOR

HOW COMMUNITY WOOD RECYCLING WORKS

Our aims are to save resources and create life changing opportunities for people, especially those from marginalised or disadvantaged backgrounds.

We provide the most environmentally beneficial method of dealing with waste wood, focussing as much as possible on **REUSE**: getting waste wood back into use without chipping it.

MOVING TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECONOMY BY REUSING MATERIALS WITH COMMUNITY WOOD RECYCLING



£7,657,209 ▲ £2m (36%)
annual turnover

30 ▲ 2
enterprises

74 ▲ 5
vehicles

287 ▲ 71
staff

689
commercial
partners

Thanks to the fantastic support and encouragement from the public and our commercial clients, the network continues to grow, with 2 new enterprises and 2 million pounds in additional turnover since the last survey in 2018.

▲ Change relative to 2018

SAVING RESOURCES

23kt

wood collected*

*estimate for calendar year 2021



11kt

CO2 reduction

**equivalent to
the emissions of**

60

**wagons
of coal**



42%

wood reused



58%

wood recycled



0%

wood landfilled

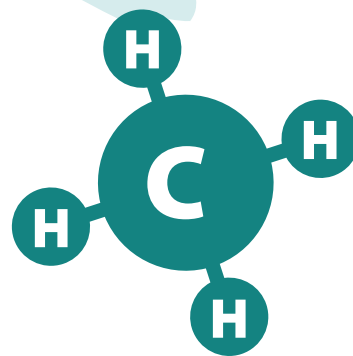
STOPPING THE ROT

Methane was a key topic of discussion at the COP26 summit, as cutting methane emissions could reduce global warming by 0.3°C by 2040.

It's estimated that a third of the UK's emissions of methane come from organic materials decomposing in landfill, and although wood recycling rates in the UK are ahead of many other places in the world, as much as 600,000 tonnes of wood could be going to landfill here every year, emitting about 20,000 tonnes of methane, with as much climate impact as 500,000 tonnes of CO2. Keeping wood out of landfill has always been part of our core mission, but this research underlines the fact that landfilling wood isn't just a waste of resources - it's actively harming the climate.

**"Cutting back on methane emissions
is one of the most effective things
we can do to reduce near-term
global warming and keep to 1.5°C"**

URSULA VON DER LEYEN
EU COMMISSION CHIEF



◀ A representation of a methane molecule - 4 hydrogen atoms bound to a carbon atom (CH₄).

Over several decades methane in the atmosphere breaks down into CO₂ and water, but while it lasts it causes intense warming.

**Methane is a greenhouse gas
around 84 times as powerful as
carbon dioxide over a 20 year period**

**The COP26 pledge to is to cut
methane emissions by 30% of 2020
levels by 2030**

**Organic materials decomposing in
landfill account for around a third of
UK methane emissions**

REUSING WOOD

From the local to the international, community wood recyclers are working in partnership to benefit the environment

GLASGOW COP26 ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT

The world was on Glasgow Wood Recycling's doorstep in November when the COP26 summit was held just along the River Clyde from their woodstore. As well as making reclaimed wood planters for the conference centre, they carried out waste timber collections both before and after the event, helping to ensure that resources used in creating such an important moment for our planet's future could be reused in the community. They were even able to lend Oxfam some timber for an eye-catching display in the city centre.



Delegates and journalists were able to learn more about their work, as they were chosen to be part of the Destination Media Hub exhibition in the Host City Zone. The 'Made in Glasgow' showcase, curated in partnership with Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the city's innovative approach to sustainability – particularly through circular economy principles.



BROAD MEADOW OUTDOOR COMMUNITY SPACE



This spring the team at Oxford Wood Recycling pulled out all the stops for their biggest ever order, building the planters and benches that turned the city's historic Broad Street into Broad Meadow, a temporary pedestrian-friendly outdoor space with wildflowers, trees and small lawns to welcome back shoppers, visitors and workers to the city for the summer.



Over 100,000 local people enjoyed this car-free space, which won an Oxford Preservation Trust award. At the end of the project everything that couldn't remain on site was donated to local schools, an allotment group, a playground, and a wildlife organisation.

TRAINING WORKERS



332

volunteers trained

24

 kickstart placements

3

 new training modules created

Our new Job Skills training modules support trainees in moving on into paid work, from identifying their skills to interview technique. The modules are easy to understand, and make use of the trainee's experience working with Community Wood Recycling as a foundation for development.

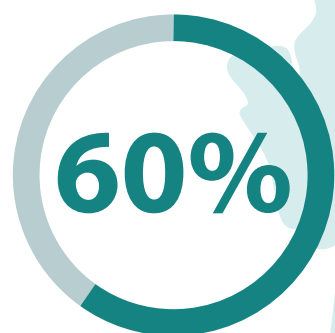


"The Kickstart scheme has been an excellent source of additional help for our enterprise at a time of great uncertainty, and it also means that young people are getting an excellent start on the job ladder. We have been lucky to get the four people who have started with us. We are planning to offer jobs to two of them once the support from the Kickstart scheme ends."

TRISTAN TUDOR
DIRECTOR, SOMERSET
WOOD RECYCLING

▲ A kickstarter with her new CSCS card. By encouraging women with an interest in the construction industry to get involved, we're helping to diminish gender imbalance in the sector.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE



of CWR
volunteers
face at least
one of the
following:

- #1 mental health condition
- #2 long-term unemployment
- #3 physical disability

ex-offender, substance abuse, homelessness,
learning disability, social isolation, asylum seeker

Providing adequate mental health support has been an ongoing challenge for this country, a situation which the pandemic has worsened.



This year we founded Process CIC, a subsidiary mental health support service for Community Wood Recycling staff and volunteers. Process offers low-cost counselling, advice and signposting, and a 'mental health first aid kit' with key information and useful links to ensure that everyone in the network has access to support if they need it.

CHANGING LIVES

STEVE'S JOURNEY

Steve came to Basildon-based New Life Wood in February 2019. As an addict in recovery from alcohol misuse, he had recognised that he needed to make a change and do something to help himself turn his life around. Volunteering at New Life Wood has given him a renewed sense of purpose and enabled him to realise that he is important and valued. As his confidence has grown, Steve has been able to use his experiences and the insight he has gained to mentor others who are on a similar path. This in turn has helped to encourage and support him in his own recovery.

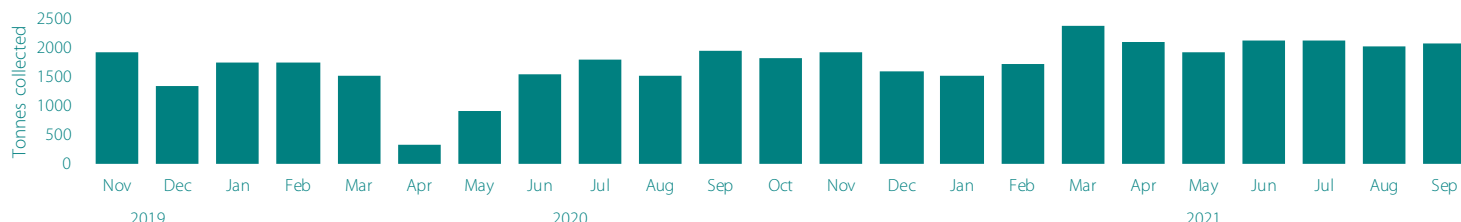


"New Life Wood quite literally helped save my life. I was fresh out of rehab for alcohol misuse and found myself with nothing to do and nothing much to look forward to. New Life Wood has given me a renewed purpose and a reason to live by helping me learn new skills and feel good about myself again. I love being creative, and have a new found passion for carpentry which I didn't even know I had. I now know that I'm valued, and I can help make a difference to others who have experienced a similar journey to mine"

STEVE
VOLUNTEER MENTOR, NEW LIFE WOOD



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MEETING THE CHALLENGES



WORKING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

With the lockdown restrictions in March 2020, most of our staff were furloughed and collections all but ceased. However, with new safety measures we were back to pre-March collection volumes by June, and a transition to socially-distanced retail allowed us to cater to the significant home improvement boom.

To limit infection risks we were unable to take on as many volunteers as previous years, but there was no significant downsizing and the network now employs 30 more staff than it did before the pandemic.

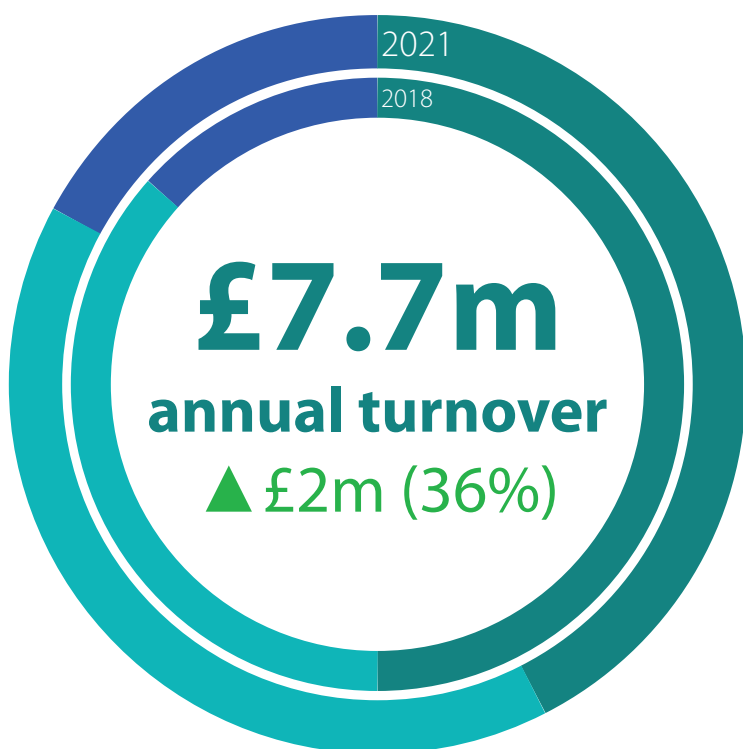
+30
new staff



since
March
2020

£48k ▲ £29k (153%)
**average annual surplus
per member enterprise**

This money is reinvested into our businesses, allowing them to grow and support more people.



INCOME BREAKDOWN

Income rose in all areas since the last survey in 2018, with the largest absolute growth being an additional £1 million worth of sales in timber and products.

43% £3.3m ▲ £481k (17%)
collections

40% £3.1m ▲ £1m (49%)
retail

17% £1.3m ▲ £574k (79%)
other income

OUR TOP COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS

Planters

Planters bring outdoor spaces to life and strengthen biodiversity by providing food for pollinators.



Picnic benches

Reclaimed timber benches are an attractive and practical way to add character to an outdoor area.



Habitats

Bird boxes, bat boxes, and bug hotels all help enrich the ecosystem and keep plants healthy.



Litter bins

Made from recycled pallets, these litter bins keep the place tidy while maintaining a natural look.



HOW YOU CAN HELP



There are many ways to help us in our ongoing efforts!

If you are in an industry generating wood waste, you can help promote our wood collection services in your organisation. If you have time available, you can volunteer with us, and if you're looking for wood for a DIY or building project, or for furniture, decorations or gifts, please consider buying sustainably from one of our enterprises, where you'll find an Aladdin's cave of reclaimed timber.

Find out more at:

www.communitywoodrecycling.org.uk

Or call our national office on:

01273 20 30 40