



HOW DO I BUY THINGS IN A MORE PLANET-FRIENDLY WAY?

The average person in the UK releases the equivalent of about 10 tonnes of carbon each year, due to our transport, heating, food etc. About half - 5 tonnes or so - comes from things we buy directly. Here in Hertfordshire, you and I release a bit more carbon per person, on average, than people in say Essex or Bedfordshire. But each of us can easily take steps to reduce our carbon footprint, by combining lots of small actions that add up, but which don't have to impact our lifestyle significantly. One way to do this is to think about what we buy and how we buy it.

Buy Less, Buy Local:

Everything we buy takes a bit (or a lot) of energy to make or grow, to wrap, transport, collect or deliver, and that creates carbon emissions. So the first way that we can all try to reduce the impact of our purchases is to **buy a little bit less**. This isn't always easy, but there are ways we can alter our buying habits so that our purchases don't make such a large impact on the environment (See 'Tips' below).

When you have to buy something, find out if you can buy it **locally rather than going online**. Also prioritise **products that originate nearby** in Hertfordshire or that come from the **UK** so carbon released by their transportation should be less. (This can make a big difference: for some items, transportation accounts for more than 10% of their total carbon emissions.)

Where possible, shop at **local independent stores**: this way you don't just help cut carbon emissions from transportation, but more of the money you spend stays in the local community. This helps support local businesses, keeps your nearby shops open, keeps your high street busy, and helps keep friends and neighbours in jobs.

If every adult in Hertford spent £5 a week in local shops rather than at an online shop or large chain, then it would bring roughly an additional £5 million into local businesses each year and help our town to thrive.

With a busy, healthy high street, it becomes easier for everyone to find what they need there, so more is spent locally, and there's less need to travel a long way to shop, which again **reduces emissions**.

So what specific actions can I take? Follow the 3Rs - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Reduce: Just like buying a bit less, **Reduce** reminds us that we should think whether we can make an item of clothing, a piece of furniture, a garden tool or a phone last a bit longer before being replaced. Are all the purchases we make really necessary? Buying a little bit less each year also saves us money.

We can also take care to **Reduce** the amount of packaging on our shopping. Plastic packaging takes a lot of energy to make and so releases a lot of carbon emissions. As well as choosing items with less or recyclable packaging, a great tip is to visit refill

shops where you can take a bottle, jar or bag and refill with the stuff you want - detergents, laundry or dishwasher soap, oils, cereals etc. (See the resources sheet.)

Tips:

- For essentials, buy in bulk or use refill shops, as this can reduce plastic packaging
- Avoid over-packaged goods or choose ones that come in easily recycled materials like cardboard or paper.
- Avoid disposable items like plastic cups, razors or lighters.
- Choose durable items that are well made, longer lasting or have long warranties

Reuse: This reminds us we should try not to simply throw things away after we have made use of them. Can we reuse those jars and bottles, or would a neighbour or friend welcome them? Can we **share our children's clothes** with others after they have outgrown them? Neighbourhood groups on Facebook and other social media are brilliant for offering around pre-loved items. Why not visit Bengeo Little Library for shared books or set one up near you?

You could even set up your own **Reuse Group** with neighbours, perhaps through WhatsApp, or via a local notice board, to share things like ladders, grass mowers, drills etc which are expensive to buy but which don't get used very often. Sharing and reusing in this way is also a great way to get to know your neighbours, and build resilience into your neighbourhood.

When you do buy, think about **buying second-hand**. By reusing someone else's items, you make a huge difference in the carbon emissions you release. Many of us buy pre-used things on Ebay, but don't forget we have a wide range of **local second-hand** shops in Hertford and Ware (See Resources sheet.)

Tips:

- Repair broken things rather than throw them away
- Reuse old items in new ways - be inventive!
- Pass on or sell unwanted items. Don't just bin things.
- Use resealable containers rather than plastic bags or clingfilm
- Say no to carrier bags - reuse old ones or take a cloth shopping bag with you

Recycle: Almost all of us now **Recycle**. But this means more than putting cardboard in the blue bin. Almost everything we use can be recycled by someone, somewhere - from batteries and printer cartridges to old electrical items and crisp packets (some Co-op stores accept clear plastic wrapping for recycling!).

Another option to keep carbon emissions down is to buy a new item made from recycled materials. Check local shops on our resource list as some stock items made from recycled plastics etc including household items and clothes.

Tips

- Buy products made from recycled materials
- Check recycling options - many things can now be recycled rather than binned
- Choose recycled paper, or things made from natural materials where possible
- Ask shop managers for products that can be recycled, and for things with less packaging. Tell shops you want less packaging. Use buying power to influence!