

Terra Cycle Recycling

Terra Cycle are a company that recycle hard to recycle plastics. They offer zero waste boxes to recycle specific waste in, which are charged for. Alongside this working with the major producers of hard to recycle plastics they offer free recycling schemes for the public to participate in. Often these offer points which can be spent in their shop or donated to charity and converted to cash. Terra Cycle then recycle this waste into new products saving it from landfill.

Through Plastic Free Letchworth and supported by Transition Town Letchworth, Wilbury and Icknield Schools Parents Association (WISPA) and Bamboo Turtle I have set up a public collection point for the waste detailed in *appendix 1* in Bamboo Turtle. We collect 18 waste streams ranging from crisp packets to cleaning product packaging with more streams frequently added!

This started in July 2019 and to date we have recycled 116.5kg of waste and generated 233£ for charity.

That is 116.5kg of waste diverted from Purple general waste Bins in Letchworth. This total ignores the vast weight in Pens, Coffee Pods, and pet food that we have collected and dropped off at other local pre-existing collection points.

Funds raised largely benefit Icknield and Wilbury Schools with some schemes benefiting other charities.

Waste is collected in the combined bin at Bamboo Turtle. It is transferred to the WISPA 6*4ft shed at Wilbury school by a small group of volunteers, where it is sorted again by a small group of volunteers. Waste is then bulked up and shipped to Terra Cycle via courier. Over time as Terra Cycle has become more popular the minimum weights (above which points are earned) for each scheme have increased meaning we are having to store increasing amounts of waste. With the number of waste streams (ever increasing as more manufacturers sign up), we collect and the increased amounts of waste we need to collect before shipping we are struggling for space in the shed. Currently realistically only one person can work sorting at once. Previously we could work in 2's or 3's making it a sociable occasion.

In recent months Wilbury school have established Eco Warriors (1 child per year group) and among many other things they have started collecting some Terra Cycle waste streams through the school (Crisp packets, Oral Care, Bread Bags and Pringles Tubes). The success of this has been staggering and the amount of waste that has come in has amazed us. The children, staff and parents totally get it and the education about waste this has generated is amazing. We ran a disco at the school recently and the children were looking and asking where the crisp packet recycling bins were rather than just binning them! At the end of the night I only found 3 bags in the general waste bin! They totally get it and this is after only a couple of months. They are our future and to see this buy in has totally inspired me.

I hope you agree this is great progress. It's not perfect as to my knowledge none of this is circular recycling it's all down cycling. The plastics are not returned to their original material and re used to make say another crisp packet instead they are down cycled into benches play equipment or plastic sheeting. This said at least they are recycled and this recycling is payed for by the producers of the waste! This fact alone is amazing I hope you agree and will push them to find waste free or recyclable packaging! We are not going to change the masses or supermarkets overnight and force them to move to waste free solutions. Until this becomes the norm Terra Cycle helps plug the gap.

So how can NHDC help? Increase people's knowledge of the scheme so more waste is recycled. With this however comes the problem of processing and storing the waste which is already a problem. My ideal solution would be for members of the public to bring and sort their own waste. To date we have not found a location where this would be possible. The venue would need to be inside, dry and open regular hrs together with some sort of presence to keep it secure. Do the council have any such locations? Ideas: Upstairs in the Library, A Library store room, the un-used floor of the council offices, the old council offices next to the Library.








An idea I have had and would like to take forward would be to use a vacant shop unit in the town to sort and store the waste. This could be open regular set hours (dictated by volunteer availability) so people can bring their own waste and sort it themselves or help sort waste collected. The waste sorting boxes and bulked up waste would be left on display together with promotional material so people can see just how much waste is generated and the negative impact this is having on the world we live in. If we were to manage to secure the use of a shop unit from an owner (Heritage foundation or Garden Square) would it be possible for the council to wave the business rates on the premises? I believe it is these that are the biggest stumbling block to gaining such premises.

With the use of a shop unit secured its use could be developed beyond Terra Cycle. We could collect un-wanted packaging and pass it onto new users for a donation say. We could host a repair workshop again for donations for items repaired. These funds could fund future new endeavours in local waste reduction initiatives...

Ultimately, I would love to see the need for Terra Cycle recycling disappear and we move to a waste free world. Having walked my street this week on the post-Christmas recycling day I can see we are a long way off this. Since Christmas in only 2 weeks Terra Cycle alone has generated 10 sacks that need sorting!

I must thank Transition Town Letchworth for their support. Bamboo Turtle for hosting the collection point. Wilbury school for allowing the use of their shed 24hrs a day as a sorting plant and buying into the idea. Lastly but most importantly it's the volunteers who help. It's a small bunch but without them this could not happen.

Appendix 1: Waste collected through Terra Cycle.

Recycling Scheme	Accepted Items	Brands Accepted	Beneficiaries
EllaCycle (Baby Food Pouches)	Baby food pouches & lids Snack packets	All All	 
Aqua Optima Water Filters	Universal Evolve 30 & 60 Day Original 30 & 60 day	Aqua Optima	
Hygiene Home	Fragrance twin pack plastic sleeves	All	
	Flexible packaging: stain remover, dishwashing: tablet packaging/salt bags, home wipes, cleaning product re-fill	All	
	Dishwasher cleaner/freshener outer packaging	All	
Pringles Cans	Pringle Tubes Plastic lid & seal	Pringles	
Biscuit & Snack Wrapper	None savoury biscuit wrappers Cracker wrappers Cake wrappers	All	
Personal Care & Beauty	Flexible plastic wipes packaging Plastic roll on deodorants Hair colourant kits (no bottle & cardboard) Plastic pots & tubes Caps, pumps & trigger sprays Mask packaging & blue film	All	
Bread Bags	LDPE (4) Bread Bags	All	
Confectionary	Chocolate Bar Wrappers Chocolate & sweet pouches / bags Chocolate & sweet multi pack outer packaging	All	
Swisse Me	food pouches	Swisse Me	
Ring Carriers	Can Plastic Ring Carriers	All	
Kinder Chocolate	Flexible Plastic Packaging Chocolate Wrappers Aluminium Foil Wrappers Rigid Plastic Egg & Packaging	Kinder Chocolate	
L.O.L. Surprise	Outer & Inner Plastic Wrappers Display cases Figurines & their accessories	L.O.L. Surprise	
Nuts, Popcorn, Crisps and Pretzels Packets	Crisp packets Nut packets Pretzel packets Popcorn packets	All	
Air & Home Care	Flexible Wipe Packaging Plastic bottle caps / trigger heads / pumps Plastic airfreshener packaging Plastic air fresheners & cartridges	All	
Writing Instruments	Highlighters Correction fluid pot Pens Markers	All	
Pet Food	Wet pouch's Treat flexible plastic pouches Dry flexible plastic packaging	All	
Oral Care	Toothpaste tubes & cap Toothbrush Powered toothbrush heads & packaging Toothbrush outer packaging Toothpaste cartons	All	
Tassimo & Kenco	Tassimo flow wrap packaging Tassimo T-Disc's L'OR Capsules Kenco plastic lids Kenco Eco Refill packs	Tassimo Kenco	