



Reuse through third-sector partnership in Pembrokeshire

Bulky waste, such as furniture and electrical equipment, presents a particular set of challenges. These items can be difficult to move and can have a lot of embedded value. As a result, this requires a different approach to other waste, typically undertaken by a specialist reuse organisation.

Pembrokeshire FRAME is a social enterprise that has been combining environmental benefit with adding social value for over 20 years. This has been through providing employment for people with health issues, as well as low-cost furniture and white goods to people on a low income.

The organisation collects unwanted household items, as a charity and also under contract for Pembrokeshire County Council, and refurbishes them if necessary before selling them.

FRAME has three reuse depots, a civic amenity site in Haverfordwest where items that would usually go to landfill are broken up for recycling, and access to 67 acres of sustainable woodland in Scolton where it practices woodland management and commercial felling.

Working in partnership

FRAME is contracted by Pembrokeshire County Council to collect bulky household items throughout the county on the council's behalf.

The current six-year contract, which started in April 2015, is worth approximately £158,000 per year but will increase soon to cover inflation and an increase in the minimum wage.

Customers are now charged £40 for the collection of up to 10 items, which has recently increased from £22.50. The remainder of the collection cost, around £15.30, is subsidised by the council.

FRAME meets the council every month and provides them with a weekly report containing tonnages collected, percentages diverted from landfill and recycling destinations.

FRAME also has a service level agreement with PCC Community Team for Learning Difficulties through which it provides opportunities for individuals with learning difficulties or mental health issues to work and train in the reuse stores. It also has an informal unpaid contract with PCC Community Mental Health Team to take clients.

Reducing the cost of waste

FRAME deals mainly in household items. Many of the goods received are collected by charity vans from people donating reusable goods or from house clearances, as the organisation has links to local estate agents.

The bulky waste collection service collected around 505 tonnes in 2014/15, 97 per cent of which was recycled or reused. Over 11,000 mattresses collected by FRAME for the local authority were recycled in the same year.

Approximately 33 tonnes of reusable items were also collected from civic amenity sites in the area. Reusable items are displayed in the showroom for sale, though when items are





not suitable for reuse, as much as possible is recycled.

Electrical items such as cookers, fridges and freezers are degassed and recycled. Chipboard from furniture that can't be refurbished is flat packed and sent for chipping after which it's used to produce fuel.

Adding value

FRAME has several ongoing projects designed to increase the reuse of discarded furniture. Furniture collected in a poor state is sent to one of the many workshops on the premises where furniture is refurbished.

An on-site re-upholsterer restores armchairs and dining room chairs in need of repair. The foam is replaced and the chairs covered in brand new fabric, which the charity obtains at a discount. The reupholstered furniture is then sold in the shop.

'Shabby chic' furniture is created where items are in need of some TLC. Such pieces are first sanded down and then painted with environmentally-friendly, chalk-based paint, which is also obtained at a discount, and finished off with wax.

These are so popular that the organisation now accepts commissions to repaint the furniture of local residents and give them a new lease of life.

FRAME also receives commissions to make furniture from scratch from recycled wood.

In 2014/15 FRAME raised £302,624.63 solely from the sale of secondhand furniture.

Providing social benefit

Furniture refurbishment training is just one way in which FRAME helps vulnerable people. Volunteers are also involved in woodland management, collecting and delivering furniture and serving the public on the showroom floor.

A total of 206 people received work opportunities in 2014/15, and 77 certified training courses were completed in the same year to develop a wide range of different skills. At present, 53 per cent of staff at FRAME are disabled or are considered to have a disadvantage in the work place.

FRAME also benefits society through the provision of affordable furniture. Pensioners and people in crisis or on benefits get a discount on showroom items. Those referred from one of the statutory agencies receive whatever they need free of charge. This could be a whole house full of furniture.

In 2014/15, as well as diverting 1,736 tonnes of bulky waste from landfill, FRAME provided support to more than 17 households in crisis and gave discounts to 607 households totalling nearly £8,000.