

Sustainable Rural Reuse Shops

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Front cover images: two examples of exceptional rurally located thrift stores. Top – St Vinnies, located in Cottage Grove, Oregon; bottom – ReStore outlet, based in Spearfish, South Dakota.

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Executive summary

Embarking upon this journey to the USA was about learning from six of the most impactful social enterprises in the field of reuse that benefit people at a local level across the USA.

I learnt about their philosophy, principles and physical infrastructure. They have processes and programmes that can be adjusted and adopted to benefit reuse organisations in communities across the UK.

The formation of an organisation's structure is crucial in ensuring the retail of reuse products in communities can be maximised.

This service, accepting donations and retailing to members of the community creates the infrastructure to support a series of community benefits, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The creation of jobs for people with barriers to employment and the supply of volunteer placements for people with significant barriers to engaging in community life.
- The development of partnerships, which enable their service to be sustainable and impactful, with stakeholders from the wider community and governments.
- The development and delivery of a broad range of social services, principally surrounding homelessness intervention.

Collectively or individually, these services provided by the organisations I visited can be learnt from and employed within rural reuse shops to enable them to maximise the impact they have for their communities, whilst enabling them to become financially sustainable, ensuring a lasting legacy. Often, they are the central heartbeat, an integral part of community life, due to the relief they provide on a practical level when making a house a home.

This report takes the information I have learnt and transposes it into programmes and process that collectively may assist when preparing to set up a reuse organisation or exploring how one can become financially sustainable.

Whilst not exhaustive, it is intended to cover all of the main elements required to achieve the outcome.

Introduction

This started out as a simple question that I wanted to address, not only for the benefit of the organisation I work for, but also for any organisation across the UK, particularly in a rural setting, that finds itself in the same or similar situation. The question was: how can we make our organisation financially sustainable year on year?

Having worked for the charity I am employed by for over twenty-five years, I have developed a long-standing appreciation of its inherent need to be financially sustainable, given that it is located in a rurally isolated area part of South West Scotland.

Wigtownshire is the furthest area west of the region of Dumfries & Galloway. Its main town, Stranraer, where our Reuse shop is located, has a population of 9,751 (2022 UK Census) and Wigtownshire has a population of 28,775 (2022 UK Census).

This is significant as Wigtownshire covers a surface area of 487 square miles, with historical under-developed road networks and reducing public transport creating a challenging environment, for both us, as a retailer, and our customers, to be able to access our services.

If you're reading this you may be familiar with the annual budget-setting process and exploring where to find the additional projected income for cost-of-living raises and inflation.

This process was in part recognising the need to mirror the cost-of-living increases, employing standards that will enable a rural reuse shop to increase its revenues year on year, much the same as other retailers need to.

I set out firstly to understand who I needed to observe, converse with and generally understand what they do. For this I asked for the help of Samantha Moir from Zero Waste Scotland, who suggested a series of organisations, all based, primarily, in the USA.

Why the USA? Why did I feel I would find the shortfall in income versus expenses there? Mainly, because of their appetite for entrepreneurialism combined with the similarities in lifestyles between the USA and the UK. However, whereas in the UK and across Europe we can often access financial support through trusts and government programmes, this was something I understood did not happen in the US.

I went through a selection process with the Churchill Fellowship, which took about seven months from application to interview outcome. I think, like most people, I was surprised I had been selected; however, I was exceptionally grateful.

I then set out a plan that I coordinated around the appetite and availability of the six organisations I planned to visit. Five of these were 'not for profit' with the sixth a commercial venture with social purpose and environmental credentials.

Along the route I visited numerous other thrift stores, with an enquiring mind and a series of questions.

Purpose of the visit

I knew I was going to visit some of the best organisations in the USA who individually had produced operational activity in the world of reuse. These are organisations who collect or receive material products by means of donations, that, once prepared, can be retailed to generate an income for their 'not-for-profit'.

The visits had to be more than just work-based chat about their and my own organisational history. For this reason, I set out a series of questions I sought answers to, so that once I had everyone's responses, I could start to understand the similarities across the organisations and what set them apart from their peers. This was in the hope, or anticipation, that these collective responses would generate sufficient information required to define financial sustainability.

I had to then understand how these organisations were operating, and how that may, in part or in whole, be replicated in a rural reuse social enterprise.

As I was in a very fortunate position of being able to visit these organisations, I could acquire as many operational ideas from them as possible so we may employ them back at my place of work, either immediately, or at some point in the future, and indeed share them in this report.

Methodology

When the correct processes and procedures are in operation, rural reuse social enterprises can be financially sustainable.

1. Research approach

My study adopts a qualitative comparative case-study approach, using visits to thrift stores in the USA to generate insights applicable to the sustainability of rural reuse shops in the UK. I selected the USA due to its mature not-for-profit economy, strong donation culture, and varied operational models, many of which operate successfully in low-density or semi-rural contexts, thus having similarities to the UK.

2. Site selection

The thrift stores, or as we know them in the UK, charity shops, that I selected were intended to represent a range of:

- geographic contexts (rural, small-town, and edge-of-urban)
- ownership models (charity-run, social enterprise, and for-profit with social values)
- scale of operation (single-store vs. regional network).

This sampling enables identification of transferable practices over statistical generalisation, as I believe there is more value in this approach.



In the USA clothing sells and attracts custom to retail homeware
Clothing on Sale in a St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store, Eugene, Oregon, USA

3. Data collection methods

a. Observational analysis

During my visits, structured observations documented:

- store layout and merchandising strategies
- pricing policies and stock turnover
- donation intake and sorting processes
- volunteer and staffing arrangements
- customer demographics and behaviour.

My notes and photographic documentation (where permitted) were used to capture operational details.

b. Informal interviews

Semi-structured conversations with:

- senior management
- store managers and staff
- volunteers
- customers (where appropriate).

These interviews explore perceptions of:

- financial sustainability
- community engagement
- barriers to operation in low-density areas
- strategies for attracting donors and repeat customers.

4. Comparative analysis

The findings from US thrift stores will be examined against the UK rural reuse context, focusing on:

- similarities and differences in policy, waste regulation, and charity law
- cultural attitudes to second-hand goods
- transport and accessibility challenges in rural areas.

This comparative lens allows identification of **adaptable practices** rather than direct replication.

5. Application to UK rural reuse shops

Insights from the US case studies will be translated into:

- a set of **sustainability principles** for rural reuse shops
- practical recommendations on **revenue diversification**, **community partnerships**, and **operational efficiency**

- a framework outlining conditions under which reuse shops can remain viable in rural UK settings limitations; the methodology recognises that:
 - US and UK reuse markets operate within different regulatory and cultural frameworks
 - findings rely on qualitative interpretation and may not be universally applicable.

However, these limitations are addressed through contextual analysis and cautious adaptation.

Case study projects: summary reports

I referred to similar lifestyles between residents of the USA and the UK in the introduction. This is in my view significant, as retail is a key feature of this topic, and buying behaviour, or consumerism, is integral to sustainability of reuse and thrift shops alike.

As in the UK, consumers, in contradiction of the long-held belief that ‘these charity shops are for poor people’, are rather more an eclectic group from across society, who shop with different needs in mind.

They can purchase goods that save them money, while reducing effects on the environment, and benefitting, through the not-for-profit, their local community via employment and volunteering.

Typical customers have either:

- An appetite – often they are middle earners, and sometimes higher earners, with an eye towards purchasing quality products at lower prices, and who are happy to buy second-hand products; or
- A need – for lower income earners, there is often either an essential element or an understanding that by purchasing second hand the household income can go further towards other essential items.

Or, sometimes, customers have both an appetite and a need.

By prearrangement with each of the organisations, over the course of a six-week period in September and October 2025 I visited:

1. Finger Lakes ReUse, Ithaca, New York
2. ReUse Action, Buffalo, New York
3. Furniture Bank of Central Ohio, Columbus, Ohio
4. St Vincent de Paul charity, Eugene, Oregon
5. Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity, Rapid City, South Dakota
6. The Mustard Seed of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

Finger Lakes ReUse (FLR): named after a series of local lakes surrounding Ithaca and located in upstate New York, they have two thrift stores in Ithaca.

I would describe FLR as a progressive circular economy social enterprise, who are visionary, proactively seeking to improve their business efficiency through expanding their offerings in new stores, a new warehouse hub, and services including providing support to other smaller groups within their locality and beyond.

There is a demonstrable appetite for partnership work for mutual benefit, locally, regionally and nationally, that promotes economical sustainability for FLR and environmental sustainability for the Tomkins County community it serves.

It is a crowded market place for a relatively small community, with a large number of not-for-profit reuse shops, often each with large stores of over 17,000 and 30,000 square feet of retail space, offering volume and variety.

Goodwill and the Salvation Army are two such national not-for-profits in the city, who happen to have a presence in virtually every town across the USA. Both have only marginally smaller retail floor space.

The FLR leadership team exudes a natural and calm confidence, born out of appropriate skills and knowledge in their niche market.



Operations and Store Managers from Fingers Lake Reuse, Ithaca, New York, USA

ReUse Action: this enterprise, based in Buffalo, New York, has evolved and metamorphized from the not-for-profit Buffalo Action, which was originally founded by Michael Gainer in 2006. After a parting of ways in 2010 Michael set up ReUse Action in 2011, a for-profit commercial company with a clear social purpose.



Managers and members of the team at Reuse Action, Buffalo New York, USA

bathroom furniture, radiators, mouldings, arts and antiques, lighting, some furniture, foam insulation and barn wood. In addition, a variety of individual and unique items, for example commercial animal cages were available.

Occasional work is undertaken in their woodwork shop, to make items using reuse materials for customers, time permitting.

The store is a tantalising array of home hardware that every DIY enthusiast, with a hint of environmental conscience, would enjoy meandering round looking at all the little – and big – treasures they have displayed in cabinets, even the cabinets themselves.

Sales store. Second-hand items that have been donated or purchased are made available to customers in the store.

The items available for sale include lumber (timber), doors, fitted kitchens and electrical appliances,

Restoration contracting. The team works with other contractors to restore old buildings to the original standard whilst observing preservation standards.

Consultation. The team has a wealth of experience in deconstruction of property. Consultation is offered to home owners, businesses and government agencies to reduce the environmental impact and associated costs with deconstruction of buildings.

Deconstruction. The owner will agree a price with a contractor to subcontract on a demolition of a property. The deconstruction team will remove all of the lumber, fitted kitchen and other items agreed as part of the contract, which can then be sold in the shop.

This saves the contractor disposal costs and generates income for ReUse Action through the sale of products. It also provides environmental benefits to the deconstruction that otherwise would result in the materials going to landfill.

The Guild (@980). The premises that the shop operates from is a three-storey building. The Guild @980 is accommodated in two-thirds of the middle and the whole of the top floor.

The Guild is one open space divided up, using doors, which they have an abundance of, creating walls to rooms, roughly 3x5m². Each of the rooms are rented out to local entrepreneurs in pursuit of their business venture. This generates rental income for ReUse Action.

The Furniture Bank of Central Ohio: after being set up in a church basement in 1998, the service has evolved to become a leading not-for-profit in its operating areas. Their furniture bank, working with a large number of referral agencies, serves furniture packs to families in need.

These packs are composed of donated and constructed goods, tables, beds and chest of drawers, often made in their workshop from materials donated by commercial businesses and residents, which families come along and select from their warehouse using a points system.



President and CEO of the Furniture Bank of Central Ohio,
Columbus, Ohio, USA

There is a downsizing service provided, known as a house clearance in the UK, which collects homeware and furniture that can be retailed in store.

There are three stores that provide sales of reuse goods, located in Columbus, Lancaster and Newark Ohio.

In addition to the homeware goods that are donated by local residents as well as by local and national commercial businesses, the organisation buys new stock to sell at below market value, such as sofas and mattresses, stemming from a shortage of donations of sofas and US laws preventing the sale of second-hand mattresses.

St. Vincent de Paul charity (SVDP): this charitable organisation has fourteen thrift stores across Lane County, Oregon. Each store receives donations at their donation points, some of which are static and some of which are drive-through.

Due to the size of the organisation, they have an administration office that facilitates their services, accommodating their leadership, development, human resources, housing, homelessness, marketing and fundraising departments.

The online books and media department stores have over 100,000 items and retails over 200-300 items per day on average from the donations received.



With the store manager at St. Vincent de Paul Cottage Grove Thrift Store, Oregon, USA

The online jewellery department reviews all jewellery donations to organise its best route to market, avoiding disposal costs. Precious metals are sold individually or in bulk, costume jewellery sold online or instore, and packs of low value product are sold instore.

Glenwood transfer station is a county (council) waste transfer station that SVDP has a contract with to accept mattresses that are then moved to the Prairie Road facility for recycling.

Prairie Road facility has a production line for mattress recycling, shedding the cloth and foam, then the wood from the springs, before heating the cloth cover to remove it, finally compressing and baling the springs. Each strand of material is sold to merchants. Styrofoam (polystyrene) is also recycled at this centre by shredding and heating it up; it condenses into transportable-sized blocks for onward delivery to merchants.

Eugene Service station and Schlies Resource Center is a one-stop shop for people experiencing homelessness. In partnership with other organisations it provides practical support, such as medical support, laundry facilities and accommodation during extreme weather. The centre responds to individual needs and evolves around them, offering the provision of hot meals and areas to socialise and relax whilst avoiding the extreme seasonal weather. It also refers homeless people to the dusk till dawn shelter at 410 and 310 Garfield.

410 Garfield, a 'safe sleep site', provides 84 uniform tents inside a warehouse for anyone needing accommodation. There is a 3-month plus waiting time. It has a low-level screening process and is located in an industrial zone on the outskirts of town. The facility provides a safe space to live and sleep in a tent with a refrigerator, power and internet to use phones and laptops, and communal

areas to shower and wash clothing, watch tv and play basketball. Importantly, the people using the facility receive heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer to prevent deaths from the prevailing extreme weather.

310 Garfield provides space for transient members of the community to park up recreational vehicles (RVs) and reside. This is because kerbside parking is illegal in the USA. There are between 350,000 and 1 million people living in RVs across the USA as it is recognised as an affordable means of accommodation.

Cottage Grove thrift store is a rural thrift store serving the 10,690 members of the Cottage Grove community and surrounding area. It is a superb example of a rural thrift store – it is well organised, has great marketing and a balance of products reflecting community need.

Hope Community Corporation (HCC) is an independent not-for-profit that was set up by SCVP in 2024 responding to forest fires that caused housing shortages. HCC has an academy for school students to learn construction industry skills. They recruit from groups with barriers to employment, such as being in the penal system.

On a production line they construct highly energy efficient, low-cost mobile homes. The group has a series of orders from a variety of mainly not-for-profit groups who provide accommodation to service users.

Division and Seneca are two examples of thrift stores that SVDP have in Eugene. Division is the largest retail store and Seneca is a central processing centre specialising in clothing, stocking over a million items into stores each year.

Stellar apartments, located in Eugene, are an example of over 1,500 homes that SVDP have either built or acquired to provide affordable housing across Lane County.

St Vinnie's Used Car Lot accepts donations of cars, trucks, motorcycles, RVs, boats and some non-motorised recreational units. Most are in need of repair – the donors have often found the vehicle too expensive to repair, so donate to SVDP. They receive a recycling credit for their donation. The team repairs the vehicle and puts it on the lot to sell.

In the event it does not sell within a reasonable period of time and after reducing the price, a vehicle will be safely recycled.

Appliance recycling. The team sorts out kitchen appliances and household electronics that can be repaired by them from the items that they strip down to recycle.

After being repaired where required and cleaned, these items are distributed to the various stores for retail sales.

Where appliances are recycled, the team degases them, then sells the gas and individual metal components to merchants.

Saginaw manufactured park is a rural housing development in Saginaw, some 20 miles outside of Eugene. The land accommodates 41 RVs and static mobile homes. It responds to an identified need as there are federal laws that do not allow for mobile homes constructed prior to 1976 to be

inhabited due to safety, energy efficiency and durability standards. This site is a notable exception. The tenants benefit from sanitation infrastructure and low-cost electricity generated from the array of solar panels on site.

Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity: based in Rapid City, has a ReStore shop that accepts donations of furniture, electrical appliances and building materials, which they prepare for sale and sell to the general public from their store.

Construction services, Rapid City. The organisation purchases, or is gifted lots (land) and constructs properties on them. They accept applications from people who meet their qualifying criteria, who can then purchase the properties from them, using a mortgage from the organisation or other lenders.

ReStore Spearfish, identical to the Rapid City ReStore the Spearfish ReStore accepts donations of furniture, electrical appliances and building materials, which are prepared for sale and sold to the general public in their store.

The Mustard Seed of Central Florida (TMSoCF): the operations moved in to a 20,000 square feet purpose-built warehouse in Orlando in 1999.

The service developed using largely faith-based connections within the community.

The primary service is through referral organisations, who refer people affected by homelessness, natural disasters or personal hardship, or are veterans.

There is a set fee of \$200.00 for all packages of furniture, appliances or clothing. All are tailored to the recipient's needs. If the recipient requires delivery within the operating area there is a further



Director of Operations and the team at The Mustard Seed of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, USA



The Stores Manager and member of staff at Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity ReStore, Spearfish, South Dakota, USA

\$150.00 delivery charge. The fee can be covered by grants in exceptional circumstances.

A thrift store is located within the building, retailing largely clothing, along with smaller homeware items and bicycles.

Donors will book a collection with TMSoCF, and one of their

trucks will visit and their team will collect only items that they are satisfied they can reuse, charging a set fee of \$25.00 for all collections.

TMSoCF have numerous operational partnerships with multi-national companies who gift them furniture, bedding and clothing. This is significant given the flow of goods received via these streams.

The Volunteer Coordinator coordinates large volumes of volunteers from local schools and corporations with social responsibilities at the heart of their service, who visit to volunteer their time. The large number of volunteers attending over the year, combined with how well it is structured, provides significant social and economic benefit to the service delivery of the TMSoCF. This creates broader community connections across different groups, whilst supplying labour to reduce the cost of their service, keeping the primary service affordable.

Statistics table (figures for 2024/ 25)	Finger Lakes ReUse, Ithaca, New York	St Vincent de Paul, Eugene, Oregon	Furniture Bank of Central Ohio, Columbus, Ohio	ReUse Action, Buffalo, New York	Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity, Rapid City, South Dakota
Number of employees	84	700+	Company 31; 23 in shops	Company 17; 4 in shop	16
Number of volunteers (on average)	40		50/week	1	1
Number of stores	2	12	3	1	2
Number of people employed with additional support needs	8+		0	0	1
Income from sales and other services, Including grants	\$4.8 million	\$58,053,476	\$7,757,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,270,244
Sales income	\$2.7 million	\$22,432,247	\$2,110,000	\$500,000	£1,015,129
Tonnes diverted from landfill per year	1,300	9,071	3,800	Not known	Not known
Number of items reused and diverted from landfill	800,000		58,000	Not known	Not known
Number of beneficiaries received items?	52,000		3,666 clients, 39700 customers	Not known	33,110
Number of items provided for free	13,000		39,000	Not known	0
The value of the items provided for free	\$256,000				n/a
Population of operating area	105,740	382,396	2,225,377	1,125,637	215,883
Operating area size (miles ²)	492	4,722	4,797	52.5	15,521

Essential requirements to set up a reuse service

For anyone intending to set up a reuse service, it is important to have in place the essential requirements which will enable the service provision to operate.

To cover the basics, for any person or group intending to start up a reuse shop in a rural area the following areas are, as I see it, fundamental requirements and practices to enable a shop to operate.

Organisation status

Most groups registering with a charity regulator, depending in which of the four UK countries you intend to operate in, will likely register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) or SCIO in Scotland.

I am employed by a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, which was commonplace when set up in 1997. This was the standard practice until CIOs/SCIOs were introduced in 2005, to simplify the process whilst maintaining appropriate safeguards.

More information on setting up CIOs can be found here: [Set up a charity: Structures – GOV.UK](#)

Donations

Your audience must be aware of the items you are able and are unable to accept. Equally, potential donors need to be aware of how you operate, either a collection service or a drop-off at the shop/warehouse donation point. Confirmation of opening times is critical, as you may only get one opportunity with a prospective new donor to start a positive relationship on the right foot.

Preparing for retail sale

It is crucial that your team has a clear understanding of the safety measures you have in place so you do not sell items that may be dangerous to the purchaser/user of the item.

For this reason, subscription to an accreditation service is recommended, to assist the team in setting out a process to check all items before they are placed on the shop floor for sale. Whilst there will be others, here is one good example of an accreditation framework with the Reuse Network:

[REUSE_ARC_2022_Interactive.pdf](#)

Certain items require a visual inspection, for example mugs – no chips or cracks, whereas electrical appliances require a competent person to undertake a portable appliance test, including a function test, to ensure they are safe. This will generally mean that in order to become competent, a person will have to attend an accredited course to qualify and obtain a Portable Appliance Testing certificate.

All items need to be cleaned, if not already done so, and priced.

Pricing is very subjective and I have found wide margins in personnel's interpretation for pricing. A clear structure is required for everyone to follow. This issue maybe best addressed by daily and weekly routine review by supervisors and managers. Otherwise, wide margins can lead to customer confusion over pricing and dissatisfaction, potentially leading to a reduction in custom.

Selling of goods

After ensuring all items are safe to retail, cleaned and prepared for sale, they must be placed on sale within a shop environment. Preferably a shop that is accessible for the general public, with opening hours, from 9am to 5pm if that is possible, open for a minimum of five days. However, seven days over a sustained period demonstrates a financially sustainable return.

Presentation (of products)

Much like the high street stores, by understanding how many of each items sell and for what value you can determine and adjust the layout of your shop floor.

You may consider using high volume donations with low value loss leaders for short periods of time, such as books or ladies' tops. Holding short-term sales of these products attracts customers into the shop. You could hold these sales at the rear of the shop, as it attracts customers to walk through the shop, viewing all other products.

Grouped together, clean, organised and priced consistently, accompanied by signage to guide customers to the items – these are all essential minimum requirements.

Online sales

Larger retail chains are able to use their own website or have it connected to an intermediary to generate sales. To date I have not found a small reuse shop that has demonstrated any level of sustainable success with this process.

Other niche services such as eBay or Vinted have proven to be sustainable, particularly if retailing higher value items. This may form an important strand of income to support financial sustainability.

Marketing

It is equally important to know when not to market as when to market, so you can manage the flow of stock donated. For example, if you advertise for donations after Christmas, you may double the volume at a time when you may already have been receiving a larger volume, in part due to unwanted Christmas presents and in part as people have a little time to clear out for the coming of the new year.

For this reason, it is beneficial to set out a campaign diary for the whole of the calendar year, linking in with the seasons, events and possible national campaigns. You may also add specific dates for raising awareness that you accept certain items which you receive very few of in the way of donations.

Relationships with stakeholders

It is my view – and it is shared widely – that your relationship with your supporters will make or break your service. If you get it wrong it can quickly be the causal factor of the demise of your service. Whereas if you get this right, largely down to effective marketing of your brand, showing what you are offering your community and that it is beneficial, the community will often be sharing your achievements for long periods with anyone they consider needs your service.

Regulation

In summary, your organisation will be required to be cognisant with a varied menu of regulations:

- Registering with the relevant environmental protection agency. The services you provide and the volume will determine what you are required to register with them.
- Registering with HM Revenue & Customs, to ensure your income tax bill is paid if required, tax relief claimed and, if utilised, Gift Aid.
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 is a piece of legislation that will affect all items of furniture with fabric attached to it. Therefore, all staff, volunteers or employees will need to be familiar with this, otherwise you may accept items that are not fit for reuse and will need to be disposed of by you, incurring a cost associated with the disposal.
- Charity law means that you will require a governing document. It should contain the name of the organisation, your purpose and operating rules.
- Financial management means you will have to record your income and expenditure. Given the nature of this type of service, larger sums are generated in income, meaning you must prepare annual accounts and a trustees' annual report, following the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for charity accounting.
- If registering as a charity you will require a minimum of three trustees.

It is best to take advice from specialists in each of these fields, who will guide you through these issues.

Getting this right from the start creates the best possible platform for best practice, while maximising your return and enhancing your prospects of being sustainable in the long term.

Contracts and service level agreements

For the access to products, it is best to be located adjacent to a recycling centre. A good example of this is Hunters Lane, Rugby. It is not common in the USA as, unlike in the UK, where it is free at point of access, there are charges applied to use municipal recycling facilities. So, local residents are more likely to drive across town to drop off donations in the USA, whereas this is less appealing in the UK without incentive.

Standard operating procedures (SOPs)

Across each of the organisations visited I found that standard operating procedures had been employed. The organisations most effective at employing SOPs within their service delivery produced the greatest gross return.

SOPs cover a range of areas within the organisation, including:

- marketing
- health and safety
- stock management
- financial controls
- legal compliance
- volunteer management.

These procedures help ensure a safe, legal, and efficient operation, whilst maximising its effectiveness, in line with the charity's mission.

Key areas for standard operating procedures include:

Marketing

This process engages stakeholders to buy in to the service and the products on offer.

- Routine connection with your donors, enabling them to digest and appreciate what the charity does for the community.
- Daily contact with customers, so they understand the products that they may acquire from you.
- Regular sharing of information on the charity's outcomes, tonnages of waste diverted, volunteer activities and direct community benefits.

Health and safety

- Risk assessments: conduct regular risk assessments and display the results for staff and volunteers.
- Fire safety: ensure fire extinguishers are accessible and in date, exits are clear, smoke alarms are checked weekly, and fire drills are recorded.
- Equipment safety: all electrical items used in the shop (kettles, steamers, etc) must be in good working order, used in a safe location, and have an up-to-date portable appliance test (PAT) sticker.
- Manual handling: provide training to avoid injuries to staff from moving heavy goods, bending, and twisting, particularly in the back room.
- First aiders are required.
- Hygiene: maintain clean kitchen and toilet areas, with adequate supplies of soap and towels.

Stock management and sales

- Sorting donations: inspect and sort all donated goods by type and condition, checking for stains, rips, or damage.

- Product safety: only items deemed safe for sale can be sold. Specific items, such as upholstered furniture without a fire label or used pillows/mattresses, are generally not accepted.
- Pricing and display: clean, prepare, and price stock for maximum sales appeal.
- Gift Aid: implement clear procedures for processing Gift Aid on all eligible donations from UK taxpayers to maximise income for the charity.
- Returns policy: clearly display the shop's refund and exchange policy for customers.
- Unsaleable goods: have a procedure for disposing of goods not suitable for selling or recycling, following relevant legal procedures.

Financial controls

- Till procedures: ensure secure management access to tills, keep log-in details confidential, and have displays visible to customers.
- Cash handling: implement rigorous cash handling procedures, including counting and recording cash in a secure place, preferably by two people.
- Banking: bank money promptly and in line with organisational policy, ideally daily or weekly.

Volunteer and staff management

- Recruitment: establish a robust recruitment process for staff and volunteers, including references and appropriate background checks (such as DBS checks in the UK), especially for those in supervisory roles or with responsibility for young people.
- Training: provide comprehensive induction and role-specific training covering all SOPs, the charity's mission, customer service, and security.
- Safeguarding: implement a clear safeguarding policy and procedure for handling any concerns or allegations of misconduct.
- HR policies: have documented HR policies covering disciplinary and grievance procedures, equal opportunities, leave entitlement, and health and safety.
- Meetings with volunteers and staff are vital to having free-flowing positive lines of communication.

Legal and compliance

- Charity Commission: comply with all Charity Commission requirements, including operating for the public benefit and managing resources responsibly.
- Consumer law: ensure the shop complies with consumer law and sells goods of satisfactory quality.
- Data protection (GDPR): manage all personal data (staff, volunteers, and donors) in compliance with data protection regulations.

- Business rates and tax: understand VAT exemptions on the sale of donated goods and apply for mandatory business rates relief with the local council.
- Insurance: ensure appropriate insurance coverage is in place, including employer's liability insurance and cover for cash held on the premises.

Findings and learnings

I learnt much from engaging with these groups from my visits across the USA. Some areas were new to me and some were about positive reinforcement. Where I work has good practice, which is beneficial to our organisation and ultimately to the wider community.

I will take back to my organisation the following learning points:

1. Every organisation needs a leadership team that may mirror the needs of that particular organisation. Generally, this would include a senior manager along with other managerial positions, potentially increasing in number as your service grows. This supports thinking around growth and reviewing policy and procedures, whilst enabling team members to focus on supporting staff daily to deliver the service.
2. Every piece of income helps. For example, testing and separating metals means we do not pay for their disposal along with other waste, instead we increase the income when selling them separately in their constituent parts.
3. When separating metals, from golds, silver and platinum to copper, brass, steel and iron, use a magnet at the point of donation, together with specified receptacles. Store precious metals in secure storage for testing.
4. Diversify, whilst not moving too far away from your main aim. Being flexible means entrepreneurs can expand the horizons of the organisation, to support its sustainability – importantly, whilst continuing to fulfil the aims and objectives of the organisation. For example, branching into deconstruction, building furniture from waste and house building.
5. Building houses is important to the growth of the community and the local economy. The impact that housebuilding has had on the communities across the USA, along with other modes of housing that these groups provide, such as motor homes, enables people to be accommodated and makes full use of entrepreneurialism to benefit people in need.

Having access to the skills, time and finance to do this is no mean feat. However, we are going to start a conversation. Like many other projects we have set up, we hope will gain traction, to enable a first build, or renovation, to take place. If we can start the process, we hope that we can continue to embrace it and support its evolution within our community, so it can supply housing for families and individuals most in need.

6. The percentage of clothing and small homeware versus larger furniture and electrical appliances in US thrift stores was far greater than I ever expected. For this reason, combined with our very large volume of clothing we have redesigned our shop floor at the Community Reuse Shop to introduce more gondola space and a department for clothing. This is to maximise throughput and income from clothing and small homeware.

7. There is no need to collect donations we are not reusing. Alternatively, apply a charge for collection and disposal, using a card reader app, to enable donors/customers to pay for the disposal at the point of collection.
8. Recruit a marketing manager to focus on two areas: sharing the impact of our work with the community to raise and sustain our profile within the community. This supports the notion that members of the community opt to donate to their local shop given its social, environmental and economic benefit. It also raises awareness of our products and the services that we provide to the community along with the value it offers, so encourages them to visit. This leads to the second part, the increase in footfall, which increases sales and sales income, thus improving sustainability.
9. Find means to create more dialogue with our local authority, so we can be their first port of call to collect items that they have used in their offices or properties, which we can collect and reuse locally to benefit people in our local community. I am thinking of office furniture and electronics, but this can be reasonably extended to a wider variety of items.
10. Use a time-related discount scheme. This is entrenched in an overwhelming majority of thrift stores across the USA. For example:
 - **Week 1** all items with a red price tag are sold at 100%, yellow price tag reduced to 75% of their ticket price, green price tags reduced to 50% of their ticket price and blue items reduced to 25% of their ticket price.
 - **Week 2** all items with a blue price tag are sold at 100%, red price tag reduced to 75% of their ticket price, yellow price tags reduced to 50% of their ticket price and green items reduced to 25% of their ticket price.
 - **Week 3** all items with a green price tag are sold at 100%, blue price tag reduced to 75% of their ticket price, red price tags reduced to 50% of their ticket price and yellow items reduced to 25% of their ticket price.
 - **Week 4** all items with a yellow price tag are sold at 100%, green price tag reduced to 75% of their ticket price, blue price tags reduced to 50% of their ticket price and red items reduced to 25% of their ticket price.

At the start of the week after items have been reduced to 25% these items are removed from sale to make way for new donations and the cycle starts again. As you will have items you do not wish to include in this process, maybe due to being higher value, white label priced items remain at their full price, selling in the shop or online.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Red	100%	75%	50%	25%
Blue	25%	100%	75%	50%
Green	50%	25%	100%	75%
Yellow	75%	50%	25%	100%
White	100%	100%	100%	100%

The percentages can be changed on a weekly or monthly basis, depending on factors such as time of the year.

11. Using the shop to advertise why you operate, such as your mission, along with product types, helps donors to understand what you do and why you do it and customers to understand what you retail. The importance of this is significant; if achieved in an eye-catching professional manner, consumers can read and digest the message you are sharing, which can then considerably raise income.
12. Showroom organisation is the basis of success. Ensure the showroom is departmentalised and well organised with appropriate marketing telling our story of success.
13. Ensure staff are always at a dedicated collection point to receive donations.
14. Using gaylords / stillages is important. These are large plastic or metal containers that can be moved with forklift trucks or pallet trucks to maximise both storage and the movement of donations, recycled and disposed items. This increases the volume of goods you can have in your warehouse safely stored on the floor and on shelves.
15. The most effective process for time efficiency and handling of donated goods in the USA appeared to be to use gaylords / stillages, conveyor belts, pallet trucks and forklift trucks. This will of course be subject to space and size of premises.
16. Employ sorters for each department: books, clothing, furniture, electrical appliances. Whether these are employees or volunteers using their specialist knowledge and enthusiasm it is important – and priceless.
17. Use space for seasonal materials and occasional materials that need to be accumulated before selling in batches, such as Christmas decorations.
18. Try selling quirky clothing online for students and Gen Z. In the USA Gen Z loves to purchase the items that we would typically class as low value stock, as it is slightly damaged, or maybe from the 1970s or 1980s eras.
19. Make an entrance door within our roller shutter for donations to be dropped off.
20. A senior member of the team and a member of the team who works on the shop floor should do daily floor walks, to ensure the shop is organised in the way they expect. They should do the same with the warehouse, so it is organised and tidy.
21. Enable managers to focus on their team, rather than their administration, so the relationship is there for when things are not going right, and when they are.
22. Use TVs and projectors in the showroom to share messages with customers and donors, telling the story of the organisation and how it impacts the community over a long period of time.
23. Use a big digital display outside so donors can see what we accept. You can vary the message you need to share with your donors or customers as required and it is on 24/7. You can highlight specific donations required or sale discounts on certain stock items.

24. Have a community noticeboard located in the shop, to encourage potential customers to visit to view the noticeboard to find tradespeople and community events. These can transfer from visitors to customers, or share what they have seen in the shop whilst visiting.
25. One of the biggest challenges is finding suitable premises to use as a shop. Often this can lead to compromise, having less floor retail space than is required to sell your products. Having a minimum of 10,000 square feet of shop floor space may seem to some as idealistic, yet in reality it is crucial to your sustainability, so you can accommodate the flow and volume of goods donated and significantly larger items, such as three-piece suites. Having this volume of space enables your organisation to retail sufficient goods to be able to employ staff to manage and operate the service. A combination of this space and these employees will give your organisation a great opportunity to become sustainable in a rural setting.
26. Set up a group called The Fixers Collective (thank you to the Fixers Collective) to fix things in our workshop, for the shop, customers and further down the line, other people.
27. I was extended an invitation to take members of our team to Eugene for a busman's holiday. to visit Saint Vincent DePaul to undertake a week's work with them in their respective workplaces, store, warehouse, offices, workshops, so we can learn from them. It is my view this is the most valuable learning process – matching the correct personnel and host.
28. Create an annual fund-raising event for local charities, to connect community philanthropists with a group of local groups or charities, to enable funds to be raised from these groups presenting their offerings. It also advertises services and fosters interest from members of the community.
29. The purchase of a forklift truck can improve our efficiency of movement of goods, along with training for staff and warehouse racking to enhance storage measures.
30. I visited numerous other thrift stores from Goodwill, Salvation Army and other localised stores, all of which generated significant income from an overwhelming volume of clothing sales. The message I think we need to get across to consumers is that 'new' is not always necessary if we can provide a high-quality alternative.
31. Each organisation I visited has a business plan and a development plan for the future, to enable it to operate efficiently whilst evolving and broadening the enterprise horizons. This is essential for the management team to work from, so everyone is on the same page, and can be cascaded to all staff with the same vision.
32. Marketing: connect customers to the social value of work we do with our employability programme the Pink Frog and other projects, so they are encouraged to give a donation at the till when purchasing.
33. Marketing: encourage customers to buy in bulk, for example with discounts for buying four books or items of clothing and further discount when buying eight and so on. Dividing your showroom into zones to enable marketing specific to different types of community benefit allows your customers to digest each element as they are browsing, for instance:

Showroom: colour coded above the shelving

1) environmental zone – circular economy statistics

2) community zone – community activities, examples and numbers

3) economy zone – how many jobs and other projects have spun from CRS.

34. Find someone from the local community with an art background to help you look at prospective pieces of art work, maybe four times a year, to see if they are of any value.

Have an art wall with pictures hung that are worth more than general pictures.

35. Successful organisations routinely review processes or procedures, from how art is sold, to utilisation of warehouse floor space and the flow of goods through the warehouse. This is intended to maximise the return from each aspect of their business, in turn maximising their income from service.

36. Faith and religion have an underlying presence in nearly all of the organisations I visited, with only Buffalo Action not having some kind of faith-related driver, either through senior managers' own faith to organisational religious values.

The organisation I work for has no faith-based affiliation; however, harnessing these values clearly can help connect with donors, customers and other stakeholders. This needs more investigation to establish how a faith-based process can be advantageous to your organisation and the wider community affiliation.

37. Deconstruction for items like hinges, door handles, sofa feet, castors and sets of wheels can be done by school groups or as part of specific roles for volunteers, so you can retail these items, rather than disposing of them as part of a piece of furniture that you cannot sell.

38. Donation policy: draft a statement for donors, so they understand you are a charity that collects items that you can reuse and are not to be confused with a waste management company that collects purely household waste.

For example, we may consider not accepting wall units or single tables as they do not sell. If we have to collect them and dispose of them at a cost to us, this is detrimental to our charity. You are donating to a charity so it receives the value of the item, but this is not the case with items that cannot be reused.

39. Use the support and skills of the trustees to benefit the operation of the organisation and monitor good practice.

Discussion

Throughout my visit to the USA, I found a consistent pattern of structured, professionally organised service delivery.

I had the immense privilege of meeting each of the organisations' principal officers, including Presidents, Chief Executive Officers, Chief Operations Officers and Emeritus Director.

On each occasion I had the great fortune to meet people who had an overarching understanding of their service, from the history, the service operational activity and its impact on the service users and wider community.

For this reason, I found I was able to solicit unfettered information about how their service worked, and worked so effectively. Significantly, each organisation was comfortable talking about their constraints, mistakes or perceived weaknesses. I believe this is because of their ability to learn from them, not make the same mistakes again and use their knowledge to positive effect when forward planning.

- Each of the teams had a management team, which had collective responsibility for the operational activity of the service, for example, the thrift store, along with other programmes and services they delivered, including house-building, managing homelessness shelters or tenants.
- They organised donations to be accepted, so that they could prepare them for reuse and retail.
- They arranged marketing activities that enabled their audience to understand the value in using their service and the direct benefits to the community, thereby maximising their donations and number of customers.
- They maintained their service, through good facilities management and use of human resources.
- Embedded social values resonated across all the groups, with a primary focus to benefit people in their locality. This included social, environmental and economic benefits at a local level.
- Each had a clear understanding of their work and how it fitted into local, regional and national government policies on climate change, social policy and economic development at grassroots level.
- Often the thrift store financially supported another part of social mission, for example to reduce homelessness.

All of these principles and practices support the enterprising and sustainable nature of service. These principles are useful to understand, as these very same principles can be employed to sustain a rural reuse social enterprise, applying scale.

Enabling more transatlantic relationships to flourish will ensure more learning experiences to take place across organisations in the UK and the USA. In 2026 we are starting meetings with our colleagues in Ithaca, using Microsoft Teams, so that in the first instance our respective management teams can jointly learn from one another's ventures and how they are delivered.

Joint discussions between management teams lay the foundation for more tailored learning experiences; by sharing our understanding of how to achieve our best results collectively we can expand our horizons and enhance our opportunities to be sustainable through service adjustments.

In the USA I found that due to their entrepreneurialism they had a will to try new ideas. If you don't try something, you will not benefit from its rewards. Don't be put off by failure, try again, maybe in a different way or with another project entirely, as at some point you might succeed.

Conclusions

1. Marketing

Each organisation I visited had strong, bold leaders.

Their philosophy was clear and they were able to demonstrate how they contribute towards meeting their key goals.

On its own this is simply admirable. With further consideration I was able to understand the importance of each group's philosophy. Their staff team was able to buy into it and therefore was able to share the vision of the charity with the key stakeholders effectively.

I initially believed the hype that 'Americans are good at marketing' – which they are.

However, they realise that this ingrained cultural support, their faith, often in a religion, to help others in need, works integrally with great marketing. Their stakeholders, donors, funders, customers and other beneficiaries receive regular, routine, clear and simple marketing messages, using different media, to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the impact of the service, so becoming more and more invested.

I donated \$200 to a group in South Dakota at their annual fundraiser. That was part of their nearly \$100,000 raised on the night at the Rapid City, Hilton Hotel.

All money was raised through auctions, silent auctions, online auctions, raffles and donations. Everyone was encouraged to bid.

This was because everyone at the event had been made aware of the value to the community that their contribution will make through beneficiary stories and videos on the night.

Other than the support they provided me with when conducting my research, I had no direct investment in this group, but the manner in which they created an environment conducive to philanthropy encouraged me to see the benefits to supporting their service.

On another occasion I was an onlooker at an annual bed race, a fundraiser. This connected groups representing corporate business to come along and have fun at the bed race.

This was a well-constructed, well-attended Saturday morning summer event in downtown Columbus, generating significant stakeholder investment.



A bed race to promote awareness of the Furniture Bank of Central Ohio, Columbus, Ohio, USA

2. Leadership

A common denominator among the groups was their leadership. Important as it clearly is to have a leading figure, the support team surrounding that lead person is equally important.

Each team was able to demonstrate very strong leadership, individually and as a team. Good leadership entails:

- Connecting with the community and sharing with them what you do.
- Creating, sustaining and managing a confident staff team.
- Creating a sustainable infrastructure.
- Producing partnerships with stakeholders, such as governments and funders.
- Managing the financial performance of the organisation.

3. Fundraisers

I was not expecting fundraising to be on my list. I found each of these organisations were able to generate significant funds from private benefactors and state and government funding.

They were also able to undertake fundraising activities that assisted them to reinforce their connection with the community. Two good examples included:

- **The Furniture Bank of Central Ohio**, who invited me along to their annual Bed Race in downtown Columbus, raising funds whilst engaging the community. A simple, effective win.
- **Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity**, who held their annual fundraising dinner at the Hilton Hotel, Rapid City, whilst I was with them. They generated nearly \$100,000 at the community, event sharing with community members what they achieve with their investment.

Recommendations

Policy level

Investment. If an organisation is set up with a suitable floor space to make it sustainable there should not be a need for ongoing revenue funding. This is a saving to the government and other funders.

It is my view that funding is required in three main areas for this type of project:

1. **Capital:** where support may be needed to access premises or infrastructure to start the service off.
2. **Revenue start-up funding:** initial support may be needed for key posts or operational costs such as insurance, and lighting, heating and power in the early stages whilst income is being generated by the social enterprise.
3. **Research and development funding:** each of the organisations I visited were dynamic in view of accessing funding. They were equally open-minded and expansive about research and development, expanding in to different areas that benefited the community.

This research comes at a time when investment is reducing in Scotland on advertising via the Scottish Government funded brand accreditation 'Revolve' programme to raise the profile of reuse. However, it remains my view that supporting national campaigns to raise awareness of such reuse groups supports these groups while saving money for local authorities at the same time, through reducing landfill waste disposal costs.

A good investment it would seem – saving public money whilst creating employment and volunteering opportunities.

Operational level

The need for core ingredients is transparently clear. The following are essential minimum requirements for sustaining a rural social enterprise, or at least for starting up.

- **A building** of a suitable size. This will no doubt be a minimum of 10,000 sq. ft. In the UK, adjacent to the local authority landfill site is ideal, but not always possible.
- **Staff:** employees and volunteers. Everyone is always quick to point out the importance of volunteers and that is absolutely correct. I would like to emphasise the importance of employees to work alongside volunteers. This is due to the need for accountability and having the correct number of employees in the appropriate areas of the business as the organisation develops, with the appropriate skillset.
- **Physical infrastructure** including vehicles, pallet trolleys, shelving for the warehouse, gondolas for the shop, along with portable appliance testing (PAT) equipment to be able to test electrical appliances.

- **Training and personal development.** To enable the organisation to gain and sustain momentum, staff need to have a clear idea about how they fit into it and the expectations of them, along with an understanding of how much they are valued.
- **Community Engagement:** the link between the service provided and the community's understanding of that service is important to enjoying their support. With community support the service has great potential to be, or become, sustainable. Without it, the task is maybe impossible.
- **Providing information:** it is beneficial to share and maintain a free flow of information at a variety of different levels, to the general public (donors and customers), local third sector groups and local government. These are all equally important to have as close allies.
- **Organisation:** having all the staff team on the same wavelength to ensure the showroom and warehouse is organised effectively is crucial to maximising income. Having seen lots of great examples of good warehouse organisation and super showroom presentation I recognise these are formed from the development of Standard Operating Procedures, to which all, or most, of the staff team can relate and invest in in a common way, synchronising the approach to space management.

The same principle applies using a logistics programme to organise the transportation of goods in an orderly manner, to ensure safe transit and the confidence of customers.

- **Marketing service:** the importance of marketing is sometimes easily overlooked, prioritising elsewhere. Equally, community engagement is a form of marketing.

It is important to get the message out about **what** the group does, **how** it does it and **why**. Ensuring this is delivered in a variety of formats, from 'Insta' on social media, to flyers dropped through letterboxes, because you are marketing to Gen Z through to the over sixties and everyone, who is interested, in between, so excellence can be demonstrated.

This needs to be achieved and sustained, so that an annual marketing plan, that is reviewed regularly, can raise income. That can start with a blank piece of paper with the 12 months of the year listed. Start to fill in the gaps of what you do or propose to do. This will leave space and time to prepare for other marketing events.

- **Financial management:** having effective procedures at each level to ensure accountability is vital for transparency, from who is responsible for cashing up, through to banking, recording your income correctly and reporting on the financial health of the organisation. These are all tasks that need to be completed with 100% accuracy. Accordingly, ensure there are appropriately qualified members of staff to enable it to be completed.
- **Safeguarding:** assuming responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of your team is paramount. Having appropriate policies and procedures in place to enable the team to feel safe, and protect them if something goes wrong, is a minimum requirement.

- **Health and safety:** as with every business, a health and safety policy and risk assessments relating to your higher risk areas are fundamentally important to daily operation of your shop. The policy should detail a statement of intent, team responsibilities, training, PPE, and emergency procedures.

Incidental findings

House building: whilst all the groups equipped houses to make them homes, two of the groups built houses.

In the UK we have inadequate provision for the production of housing to meet our ever-growing demand. The two groups constructed houses, one for social housing and the other for retail sales, specifically for low earners, enabling them to get a foot on property ladder.

Mattress recycling: two of the groups had developed the equipment to enable them to efficiently separate all of the constituent parts of a mattress, so it could be recycled. One of the groups was able to make this 'just about' sustainable, having a contract with the government to accept them at recycling centres. They sell fabric to upholstery recycling firms and similarly sell the metal frames to metal merchants.

Annual fundraising events: two groups held these events, primarily focused on bringing together wealthy local business owners and philanthropists into a room, sharing with them the achievements of the group, whilst feeding them and offering opportunities for them to spend their money, such as auctions, silent auctions and raffles.

Extra floor space: one group is subletting to other groups on a mass scale. Having a building approximately 50% larger than required, the group use donated doors, which they had in abundance, to create room dividers, so they can rent out small rooms of about 200ft². One such room housed an elderly man who lives in an apartment, who has no garden space for a shed or garage, so uses his space for DIY.

Paint recycling: three of the groups accepted paint, which was checked and placed directly on sale. All sold low volume to customers.

Metals recycling: three of the groups recycled metals, principally from mattress and bed base metals, along with plumbing parts. However, one recycled a variety of metals including precious metals.

Building and DIY materials reused: one group specialised accepting donations of and contracting to strip houses of their materials, which were then retailed in their shop. The combination of both appeared to work well for this group as they had sufficient volume of products available for sale.

Vehicle reuse – a car lot: one group accepted vehicles as donations. They prepared a vehicle for sale and attempted to sell it. Where a vehicle did not sell over a period of time it was recycled and income was generated from scrap metal. It was a popular and sustainable enterprise.

Goodwill and the Salvation Army: these are two of the largest chains of thrift stores (charity shops) that operate across the USA. Both primarily retail clothing with up to a quarter of retail space

available for homeware and furniture. Both retail at 10,000ft² and appearance-wise have an identical layout to TK Maxx in the UK, with high-volume clothing rails and a more spacious display of homeware and furniture.

Finally, be bold, be confident, find likeminded people. Be organised at every level, have a quantifiable, measurable, realistic plan. Don't be afraid to make mistakes – we all do, after all.

I'm happy to talk through what I have learnt, in the hope it can help other groups and communities.



Clothes sorting at Saint Vincent DePaul, Eugene, Oregon, USA

Next steps

I have a list of agencies and government departments that I will be sharing my findings with, and follow up with, in the anticipation that it will stimulate some thoughts and consideration for public policy regarding supporting this type of rural service, primarily with early support to set up and operate the service.

- Environmental Protection Agency, Defra, UK Government
- Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Scottish Government
- Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government
- The Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the Northern Ireland Executive.

In addition, I will be sharing this report with a series of networks across the UK in the anticipation that these groups will disseminate to the groups they support.

- The Reuse Network
- Circular Communities Scotland
- WRAP
- Northern Ireland Resources Network
- Social Enterprise UK
- Social Enterprise Scotland
- Social Firms Wales
- Social Enterprise NI.

I will be offering to hold a series of workshops for these organisations at their conferences to share my experiences, detailing through discussion what I found of value to support rural sustainable reuse.



Reuse MegaCentre, Finger Lakes Reuse, Ithaca, New York, USA

Further information

Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity <https://www.blackhillshabitat.org/>

Finger Lakes ReUse <https://ithacareuse.org/>

Furniture Bank of Central Ohio <https://furniturebankcoh.org/>

Merry-Go-Round <https://www.merrygoroundglasgow.co.uk/>

Reuse Action <https://www.reuseaction.com/>

St. Vincent de Paul <https://www.svdv.us/>

The Furniture Project (Stranraer) Limited <https://reuseshop.org.uk/>

The Mustard Seed of Central Florida <https://mustardseedfla.org/>

Zero Waste Scotland <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/topics/reuse>

Useful resources

Churchill Fellowship <https://www.churchillfellowship.org/>

Contracts and service level agreements. For access to products from the recycling centre, it is important to be adjacent to a recycling centre. An example from Hunters Lane, Rugby, United Kingdom [Age UK Coventry & Warwickshire | Age UK Coventry & Warwickshire - Re-Use Shop, Rugby](#)

Flickr, which I used to store the photographs of my six visits. These are open to the general public to view [Paul Smith's albums | Flickr](#)

Reuse Network, Approved Reuse Centre, auditing and case studies
[REUSE_ARC_2022_Interactive.pdf](#)

Set up a Charity, UK Government guidance [Set up a charity: Structures – GOV.UK](#)

Visiting notes I made on each of the six organisations I visited. The notes explored how they operated as a robust, efficient business. Contact the author for further information on how to access them.

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1. **The Furniture Project (Stranraer) Limited**, Stranraer, Scotland, UK. <https://reuseshop.org.uk/>
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Without my unreserved confidence in our team this trip would have not been possible.
2. **Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS)**, Stirling, Scotland, UK.
<https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/topics/reuse> and **Merry-Go-Round**, Glasgow. Scotland, UK and <https://www.merrygoroundglasgow.co.uk/>
Samantha Moir, Prevention and Reuse Manager at ZWS and a founder of Merry-Go-Round nearly-new children's shop and a Churchill Fellow.
3. **Finger Lakes ReUse**, Ithaca, New York, USA. <https://ithacareuse.org/>
Diane Cohen, Chief Executive at Finger Lakes ReUse.
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4. **ReUse Action**, Buffalo, New York, USA. <https://www.reuseaction.com/>
Kevin Hayes, Operations Manager at ReUse Action.
Peter Riphahn, Store Manager at ReUse Action.
5. **Furniture Bank of Central Ohio**, based in Columbus, Ohio.
<https://furniturebankcoh.org/>
Phil Washburn, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Furniture Bank of Central Ohio.
6. **St. Vincent de Paul**, Eugene Chapter, Eugene, Oregon, USA. <https://www.svdop.us/>
Bethany Cartledge, Executive Director of St. Vincent de Paul, Eugene Chapter.
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<https://www.blackhillshabitat.org/>
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8. **The Mustard Seed of Central Florida**, Orlando, Florida, USA. <https://mustardseedfla.org/>
Alexandra Jones, Director of Operations and Client Engagement of The Mustard Seed of Central Florida.
9. **The Churchill Fellowship**, London, England, UK. [The Churchill Fellowship](#)

The selection and support **team** at the Churchill Fellowship.

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Importantly, Rural Reuse Shops might never otherwise have the opportunity to benefit from some of the information shared by the executives I have had the privilege to meet and listen to, and observe the excellent work they undertake and services they provide to members of their community in a time of need.