



Recycling is the reuse, remanufacturing, or reprocessing of a material or product with the aim of reducing waste. There is a huge amount of textiles which end up in landfill every year in the UK and recycling is one of the most easily understood and effective ways to address this.

In terms of textiles, recycling can cover many different areas. Firstly, there is the recycling of clothing as whole garments. This could be through charity shops or via the vintage clothes market or through the reuse of clothing items which have been reworked, printed over or re-cut, to be resold.

Secondly, there is the recycling of materials in a more industrial context. This could include the production of recycled yarn where textiles are unravelled and re-spun into new fibres. Or it could include the reuse of waste textiles as fillings for upholstery or as cleaning wipes for industrial purposes.

Along side this, is the sort of reuse that mainly occurs in a domestic setting. The 'make-do and mend' approach is either extending the useful life of an item or product,

for example by darning some old wool socks, or reusing a material or product and giving it another function, such as turning old curtains into a garment.

(adapted from a workshop text for 'Worn Again, Rethinking Recycled Textiles: Introduction and Context setting for textile recycling', Oct 2005)

## 1. Facts

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- In Britain, 500,000 tons of unwanted clothing ends up in landfill each year. (Eden Project Friends Autumn 2003 Anna Lewington p21)
- Over one million tonnes of textiles are discarded annually, mostly from domestic sources, of which 25% are recycled (Cupit 1996). This breaks down in the following way:
  - 70% Second hand clothes and shoes.
  - 8% fibre reclamation
  - 9% filling materials
  - 7% industrial wiping cloths, 6% waste (bags, zips etc)([http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/Wasteguide/mn\\_wastetypes\\_textiles.html](http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/Wasteguide/mn_wastetypes_textiles.html))
- It is estimated that up to 95% of the textiles that are landfilled each year could be recycled (Recycling Association 1995) ([http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/Wasteguide/mn\\_wastetypes\\_textiles.html](http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/Wasteguide/mn_wastetypes_textiles.html))

## Recycling

- Every year, an estimated 17½ billion plastic bags are given away by supermarkets. This is equivalent to over 290 bags for every person in the UK. 17½ billion seconds ago it was the year 1449. (<http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/topic.aspx?id=19>)
- Over 70% of the world's population use second hand clothes. There are about 3,000 textile banks nationwide, but clothes banks are only operating at about 25% capacity. The average lifetime of a garment is about three years. (<http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/InformationSheets/Textiles.htm>)
- By using PCR fleece, Patagonia has saved in excess of 86 million plastic bottles from landfill ([www.patagonia.com](http://www.patagonia.com) 10 Oct 03)

## 2. Key Organizations

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- **Waste online**- <http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/InformationSheets/Textiles.htm>  
A thorough overview of textiles recycling including facts and figures, and details of what happens to the clothes we recycle. Run by Waste Watch, an environmental charity dedicated to reduction, reuse and recycling of waste.
- **WRAP**- <http://www.wrap.org.uk/>  
WRAP (the Waste & Resources Action Programme) was established in 2001 in response to the UK Government's Waste Strategy 2000 to promote sustainable waste management.' No textiles recycling as yet.
- **Textile Recycling Association and Recyclatex**- <http://www.textile-recycling.org.uk/>  
A trade association to promote textiles recycling. 'The Recyclatex Bonded scheme has been set up to help local authorities, charities and other organisations that want to set up services to aid the recycling and re-use of clothes and shoes'.
- **Traid** - <http://www.traid.org.uk/>  
Traid is an example of textiles and clothing recycling in the UK, in this case textiles recycling for aid and international development. Traid's charity shops sell donated clothes, either as they are or redesigned and reconstructed to make new recycled garments.

## 3. Reading Materials

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Well Dressed: the present and future sustainability of clothing and textiles in the UK (2006)  
University of Cambridge Institute for Manufacturing  
<http://www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/sustainability>

## 4. Companies and Designers

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- **Alison Willoughby**- <http://www.alisonwilloughby.com>  
Skirts hand produced in this country using recycled fabrics.

## Recycling

- **B. Earley**- [www.beckyearley.com](http://www.beckyearley.com)  
Recycled shirts and textiles using low impact techniques.
- **Alison Englefield**- <http://www.artwaves.co.uk/>  
Jewellery made from found pieces from the seashore, antique sequins and fabrics all with recycled paper and sealed. Making one offs which are environmentally friendly and cost no more than a letter to send.
- **Barbara Lee**- <http://homepage.mac.com/wastedbybarbaralee/Personal3.html>  
Textile artist who makes skilfully manipulated objects from waste textiles.
- **Butress and Snatch**- <http://www.buttressandsnatch.co.uk>  
British made underwear with inspiration and fabrics from days gone by. Entirely handmade in Hackney with vintage materials.
- **Enamore**- <http://www.enamore.co.uk/>  
Clothing made from natural, organic and recycled fabrics including hemp, silk, cotton and bamboo fibres. Now selling online via The Natural Store, Brighton. [www.thenaturalstore.co.uk](http://www.thenaturalstore.co.uk)
- **Fabrications** - <http://www.fabrications1.co.uk/>  
An independent gallery, shop and studio dedicated to all aspects of contemporary textiles and design, with a particular interest in recycling and Eco design.
- **Junky Styling**- <http://www.clothingrecyclinglondon.com/>  
Restyling and 'twisting' old tailored garments to create new ones, Junky are a well established label with a shop in East London. They also provide a wardrobe surgery service where any tired or unloved garment can be taken into the back of the shop for a breath of new life.
- **Noki**- <http://www.novamatic.com/>  
Restyling and customising big brand clothing, available at Kokon To Zai. Also known for video art and installation work.
- **Onya Bags**- <http://www.onyabags.co.uk>  
Carrier bags which are made from strong parachute material but can fit into a key ring pouch so they are easy to take to the shops.
- **Red Mutha**- [www.redmutha.com](http://www.redmutha.com)  
Professional customising service – to order if customer has specific requests.
- **Refab**- <http://www.refab.co.uk/>  
Classic vintage/reclaimed textiles turned into limited edition handmade items including bags.
- **Sari**- [www.saricouture.com](http://www.saricouture.com)  
Clothing, handbags and lampshades made from vintage saris.
- **Seraglia**- <http://www.seraglia.com>  
New jewellery made from vintage components, with some new findings and stones to complete the pieces.

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- **Soliloquy Clothing**- <http://www.soliloquyclothing.com>  
Organic and fair-trade cotton made into T-shirts and hoodies - sweatshop free, charity endorsed and printed with environmentally friendly ink in the UK.
- **Suitcase** - <http://www.suitcase-london.com/>  
Bags made from recycled suits. Based in Battersea - for sale in Covent Garden Market.
- **Ting**- [www.tinglondon.com](http://www.tinglondon.com)  
Bags, wallets and home wares made from recycled leather and car seatbelts.
- **Traid** - <http://www.traid.org.uk/>  
An example of textiles and clothing recycling in the UK. Textiles recycling for aid and international development. Traid's charity shops sell donated clothes, either as they are or redesigned and reconstructed to make new recycled garments.
- **Worn Again**- <http://www.antiapathy.org/wornagain/>  
99% recycled shoes from Terra Plana, and Anti-Apathy. Made from recycled suits, tyres, car seat leather, towelling and linings and reclaimed buttons.