

# Network Wales



Howardian Local Nature Reserve volunteers at work. See page 5 for story.

## Recession forces Welsh recycling groups to face double-edged sword

**Furniture recycling organisations in Wales are facing a double-edged sword of increased customer demand combined with decreasing stock.**

Businesses have found that while rising unemployment is forcing people to rely more on second hand goods, for the same reason, donations are falling because families cannot afford to buy new furniture.

Merthyr's Green Horizons is in its fifth year of recycling furniture and white goods that would normally have gone to landfill. They are then sold on to members of the public and to families on benefits at a 50% discount.

Director Gerwyn Williams told *Network Wales* that Merthyr was the smallest county borough in the country, with among the highest number of residents

in need, meaning a very quick turnover of stock.

'The need for our reused furniture has increased due to the recession, and the donation of those items - which is the core to our business - has decreased, for the very same reason,' he added.

'We sell everything we receive, but at the moment, we're struggling to find things for people. We can't keep three-piece suites or wardrobes and currently haven't even got a table and chairs.

'It affects us as a business because our sole aim is to make it sustainable. We are about 75% there, which is fantastic for a charity. But unfortunately, while we're not covering our costs, we'll always need a small level of funding.'

Funding currently provided for the Director's post by the Community Enterprise Development Fund will be

reduced by 25% next year. 'We'll then be in the lap of the gods as to whether we continue,' he said. 'But if necessary, I'll run it as a volunteer.'

Green Horizons was recently thrown a lifeline by Merthyr Valley Homes, which has asked the charity to take part in a pilot scheme to carry out house clearances and sell on salvageable goods.

'Austerity measures create a double edged sword for charities,' said Mr Williams. 'While cutbacks and job losses have driven many families to use charity shops and reuse centres such as ours, the very same austerity measures are threatening these organisations.'

'People cannot afford to buy new and donate the furniture they would have replaced. Hence the supply chain to charities is diminishing rapidly.'

*continued on page two >>*

**T**he Leading Wales Awards recognise and celebrate personal achievement in outstanding leadership and management, which helps to drive the growth of the Welsh economy. Nominations are now open until 9 March.

Championing and influencing leadership development, the programme rewards individuals at all levels whose efforts have resulted in positive outcomes for their project, business or community.

Entrants from companies of all sizes, voluntary and not-for-profit groups, public sector organisations, partnerships, team leaders and young leaders aged 16-25 are welcome.

The deadline for nominations for the 2012 awards is 9 March 2012.

The Awards lunch and ceremony is due to take place on Thursday 31 May 2012 at Hilton Cardiff.

Go to [www.leadingwalesawards.com](http://www.leadingwalesawards.com) to nominate.



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**Wales Council for Voluntary Action represents, supports and campaigns for voluntary organisations, volunteers and communities in Wales.**

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>> continued from page one

'We are needed now more than ever, especially with the tightening in benefit payments. The third sector is now as important as any other part of the economy - we deserve more help to flourish.'

Swansea's Res'a'rec is a recycling, reuse and training centre aiming to promote sustainable living through the provision of accredited training in recycled crafts, with a furniture reuse scheme and community re-paint initiative.

*'We are needed now more than ever, especially with the tightening in benefit payments. The third sector is now as important as any other part of the economy - we deserve more help to flourish.'*

The scheme, run by Cyrenians Employment and Training Ltd (CET), collects furniture and other household items from donors and passes them on to former homeless people who are moving into homes of their own.

Assistant Manager Simon Roberts said that while the organisation still had plenty of furniture in stock, it had noticed a large drop in calls from people asking for donations to be collected.

'We normally do six or seven collections a day, but we're now down to two or three,' he added. 'I would imagine that it's because people can't afford to buy new and they're not getting rid of their old. After Christmas, it is normally quieter - but this is unusually quiet.'

The Crochan recycling project run by Foothold Regeneration Limited in Llanelli has been redistributing furniture, electrical and other household items to people on low income since 1998.

Warehouse Manager Geoff Greenfield said the recession had affected the company in that less furniture than usual was coming in, while more was being purchased from Crochan.

'It's been a bit hit and miss,' he added. 'It's picked up over the past week, but before that, donations had slowed down. It's a line of business you have no control over.'



Green Horizons

'On the other side of the coin, there's been a huge increase in the amount of furniture going out because people can't afford to buy new.'

Wales Community Recycling Network Cylch said that the problem of falling donations was nationwide, although smaller areas such as Merthyr were feeling the effects the most.

'We recognise that there has been a definite slowdown,' said Cylch Reuse Co-ordinator Richard Thomas. 'The demand for the service is increasing - which can only be a good thing - but the problem is that organisations with a smaller catchment area have fewer resources.'

The financial climate also meant that commercial organisations were moving in on the recyclers' territory and offering money for donated goods, particularly textiles.

'From adversity, there is opportunity,' he added. 'While donations are down, there is an increase in the value of the resources themselves.'

Mr Thomas said that Cylch was working towards a Wales-wide formalisation of the network to ensure that there wasn't a glut of resources in one area, while another struggled.

'At a strategic level, we're trying to put a structure in place that will allow all organisations to benefit, wherever they are.'

- Res'a'rec has recently set up a Facebook page to try to alert more people to the service and is hoping this will lead to an increase in donations.

It also produces a range of bowls made from reclaimed materials, with some unique designs including one made from reclaimed records, and is promoting them through WCVA's 3to3 online marketplace: <http://www.3to3.org.uk/living/household/1534>



## Welsh third sector given chance to be switched on to Switch Off campaign

**W**elsh third sector groups have the chance to lead the nation in WWF Cymru's Earth Hour Switch Off.

The annual Earth Hour will take place this year on 31 March. Businesses, communities and homes are encouraged to switch off their lights for one hour from 8.30pm in order to help the environment.

One group will be given the chance to be WWF UK's Champion Community for 2012, receiving £1000 from WWF's official partner, MORE TH>N. A grant of £300 will be given to the Welsh national winner, and this group's community will be able to lead the Welsh Switch Off, ahead of landmarks such as the Millennium Stadium, the Senedd and Caernarfon Castle.

Cardiff Blues rugby players took part in a community allotment project to encourage groups to take part. Dafydd Hewitt of Cardiff Blues said: 'In Wales we're known for our strong sense of

community – I'm sure that community groups in Wales will come up with great entries in this competition.'

Groups wishing to be considered are asked to describe, in no more than 300 words, why their community should lead the switch off – taking into consideration the sustainable things the community does, and how the group plans to bring people together for Earth Hour.

Anna Meikle, Head of WWF Cymru, said: 'We know the community groups in Wales are taking positive action for the environment and this year we want to celebrate that by finding a 'champion community' to lead the switch off.

'We want entries not just from 'green' groups, but any groups that are striving to be more environmentally friendly have a great idea for marking Earth Hour 2012.'



For full details, including details of how to enter, visit [www.wwf.org.uk/wales](http://www.wwf.org.uk/wales). The competition closes midnight 27 February 2012.

## Interim results of WCVA State of the sector survey

**I**n response to the recession, WCVA initiated a series of on-line surveys of third sector organisations in Wales in February 2009.

Further surveys have been conducted approximately every four months. This survey was conducted between 3 January and 31 January 2012. There have been between 434 to 750 responses (549 in this survey) to all surveys from a variety of organisations from all parts of the sector, all parts of Wales and representing both large and small organisations.

The surveys have provided evidence of the effect of the recession, subsequent recovery and the current public sector spending cuts on the third sector in Wales. Whilst the data is not able to provide a comprehensive

picture, the responses received are illustrative of the situations of many organisations in Wales.

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While the overall general outlook is less pessimistic and organisations under pressure are reducing the number of actual and threatened redundancies has increased, this may reflect the uncertainties around the annual cycle

of funding decisions and cuts that were predicted following the Welsh Government draft budget.

One organisation reported 33 staff redundancies. While organisations continue to report seeing unemployed people turning to volunteering to maintain or develop skills, there is evidence that many are losing their volunteers because they are unable to afford to continue volunteering.

WCVA will continue to monitor these trends, along with challenges, and opportunities that the Welsh third sector should be aware of over the coming year.

The interim report can be read at <http://bit.ly/AAFs5C> and the final report for survey 9 will be available from 28 February 2012.



**WCVA Helpdesk**  
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# Welsh Government investigation into public funding for AWEMA

**T**he Welsh Government has published an investigation report prepared by Welsh Government Internal Audit on behalf of the Welsh Government, WEFO and the Big Lottery Fund, into public funding of AWEMA (All Wales Ethnic Minority Association).

The investigation was initiated following allegations in December 2011 about the management of AWEMA, and public funding from Welsh Government and Wales European Funding Office was put on hold. The Big Lottery Fund also froze funding.

In a written statement Welsh Government reported that the investigation had identified significant and fundamental failures in the control and governance framework within AWEMA:

- governance arrangements in relation to management and to the AWEMA Management Board of Trustees;
- financial controls and processes;
- an absence of key policies and procedures; and
- an organisational structure that does not adequately support the operations of AWEMA.

The report concluded that it could not provide any assurance that there were appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and make proper use of the Welsh Government, WEFO and Big Lottery funds entrusted to

AWEMA. Subsequently funding for AWEMA under the Advancing Equality Fund and under three ESF Convergence agreements was terminated with immediate effect.

The written statement also referred to allegations that individuals had committed potentially criminal activity, or potentially affecting AWEMA's charitable status, and said that these were matters that should be drawn to the attention of South Wales Police and the Charity Commission.

Finally, the statement announced a full and thorough independent review of the history of the funding of AWEMA by the Welsh Government to be carried out by the Wales Audit Office.

Any individuals concerned about ongoing support from EU projects can contact WEFO's dedicated helpline service on 03000 622 080, enquiries-wefo@wales.gsi.gov.uk or via twitter at [www.twitter.com/wefowales](http://www.twitter.com/wefowales).

Phil Jarrold, WCVA's Deputy Chief Executive, said:

'This is a very serious situation. Whilst WCVA has no regulatory role, we do offer help to charities and third sector organisations on all aspects of running their organisations, including project management and running European projects. The general standard of management and conduct in the third sector is very high, and we are very

disappointed to learn the extent of the problems in this case.

'It's important to recognise that much of AWEMA's funding was distributed to organisations delivering important services and we are particularly concerned about safeguarding this support for BME communities.

'We have been in touch with the Welsh Government and the Wales European Funding Office to offer any assistance we can to help protect the interests of people in training and employment programmes that were previously supported through AWEMA.

'We also need to make sure that the vital contribution the third sector makes in Wales is not damaged by this individual case.

'The sector does have an excellent record of managing and delivering projects, and has been recognised as a model of best practice in this regard across Europe during this round of European Structural Funds.

'Third sector-led projects account for just 6 per cent of the total funds available during the current round of European programmes. Whilst a small proportion of the overall funds, these projects are making a massive contribution. They are supporting over 76,000 people and changing the lives of some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Wales.'

## WCVA response to WEFO consultation on 2014-2020 European programmes

**W**CVVA, in consultation with the third sector European forum (3-SEF), has recently responded to WEFO's reflection exercise on the current round of European Structural Funds which will help inform the 2014-2020 programmes.

Based on WCVA's experience of delivering European projects and feedback from the sector, the response includes our view on what should be the investment priorities of the 2014-2020 programmes and what lessons have been learned from the current round of Structural Funds.

The response also strongly supports the European Commission's proposal to ring-fence 20 per cent of the European Social Fund (ESF) allocation to an anti-poverty and social inclusion priority.

WEFO will follow up on the reflection exercise with a public consultation later this year on the development of the Operational Programmes for the 2014-2020 programmes in Wales, where the third sector will have an opportunity to express views on the priorities for the funding.

WCVA will also hold a series of regional information events on the development of the post-2013

Structural Funds programmes in Wales on the following dates:

- 18 April – WCVA's offices in Morfa Hall, Rhyl
- 19 April – The Pavilion, Llandrindod Wells
- 25 April – The Ivy Bush Hotel, Carmarthen
- 26 April – St Margaret's Park, Aberbargoed

To read our response or for further information, please contact WCVA's third sector European team (3-SET) on 0800 2888 329 or email [3SET@wcva.org.uk](mailto:3SET@wcva.org.uk) or visit <http://bit.ly/A2ZNJT>.

# Proposed changes to EU procurement rules

**I**n December 2011 the European Commission announced a revision of the public procurement Directives as part of a programme to modernise public tendering in the European Union.

Among the proposed changes are specific proposals for social, health and education services, and the direction from Europe is clear: that these services should be exempt from the full application of procurement law.

The proposed changes are wide ranging, with provisions for making it easier for smaller organisations to bid for public service contracts, and to allow for the inclusion of environmental considerations as bases for award decisions.

EU procurement law currently makes a distinction between two kinds of services: Part A and Part B.

Part A services, which include computer services, management consultancy services and financial services, are subject to rigorous requirements for the specification, selection and award stages.

Part B services, which include health and social services, education and

vocational services, and recreational, cultural and sporting services, are currently only subject to a limited subset of the rules, and to the general principles of the EU Treaty such as non-discrimination and transparency.

It was no longer felt justified to restrict the full application of procurement law from certain categories of service, so the proposed changes will mean that the current distinction between Part A and Part B services will be abolished.

However, it was recognised that social, health and education services have specific characteristics which make them inappropriate for the application of the regular procedures for awarding public service contracts. Such services operate within specific policy contexts and were deemed to have only a very limited appeal to providers in other EU Member States.

It is therefore proposed that social, health and education service contracts under 500,000 euros be exempted from all but the basic principles of transparency and equal treatment, to allow public bodies far more discretion with such services. (The

current threshold is 200,000 euros or £173,934.)

Public authorities will be free to organise these services in a way that does not entail the conclusion of public contracts, but allow for the “mere financing” of such services.

WCVA welcomes the proposals and believes that the introduction of a new specific regime for social, health and education services would create a useful distinction between these and other categories of service, and enable public bodies and service providers in Wales to develop innovative and responsive interventions to the design and delivery of these services.

The proposed changes to the procurement directives will go to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, with a view to launching the legislative procedure before the end of 2012. The adoption of the revised directives is expected in 2013.

For further information, please contact Gareth Coles on 02920 431 771 or [gcoles@wcva.org.uk](mailto:gcoles@wcva.org.uk)

## Cardiff nature reserve joins forces with major environmental initiative

**A** long standing local nature reserve, based in Cardiff, is the latest volunteer initiative to become part of the Environment Wales network of sustainable development projects.

The Howardian Local Nature Reserve (LNR) was created in 1973, working with Cardiff Parks Department. It has since expanded in size and grown the membership of the Friends of Howardian LNR. The group realised that they needed a long term trusted funder, who would share their aims and vision for the future.

William Nowell, Committee Member and Reserve Warden, explained: ‘Looking at Environment Wales’ list of bodies funded and the Wales-wide depth of support they provided, we saw an ideal partner.’

‘As the group discovers the sheer scale of biodiversity on the Reserve we hope to inspire others to look at that

neglected and unloved piece of land on their patch.’

The LNR is in good company – Environment Wales currently provides grants and support to over 320 projects that are both Wales-wide and diverse in their aims to meet the needs of the Welsh environment.

Environment Wales is a partnership initiative created in 1992 with the aim of contributing to sustainable development by supporting and encouraging voluntary action on the environment.

Nearly 20 years on, it maintains its original ethos with expertise from some of Wales’ leading environmental bodies and administrative support from WCVA.

A Wales-wide team of Development Officers provide voluntary groups with guidance and developmental support which, combined with access to a range of grant streams, allows

registered projects to gain the funding and assistance needed to deliver a range of sustainable development goals that enable them to undertake their valuable work within Wales.

Projects endorsed by the initiative range from countryside skills providers to cetacean monitoring schemes. The element that unites them is their strong commitment to protecting and enhancing the environment and their inclusive approach to working with teams of dedicated volunteers to make a difference in Wales.

To find out more about the LNR and their conservation efforts please visit: [www.howardianlnr.org.uk](http://www.howardianlnr.org.uk). To discover more about Environment Wales and the support we can offer your project please visit [www.environment-wales.org](http://www.environment-wales.org) or contact the team on 029 2043 1727.

## Explore an internship in the voluntary sector

**H**annah Keen, 22, from Cardiff is one of over 100 students or new graduates in Wales that have already taken part in a new internship programme that is giving young people a chance to apply their academic skills in a work environment while getting a taste of working life in the voluntary sector.

Currently studying media and PR at Swansea University, Hannah applied for a three-month PR internship with the Alzheimer's Society last year which she credits with giving her CV a vital boost before job-hunting begins when she graduates later this year.

The opportunity came through the Explore internship programme, which is managed by WCVA and providing placements for students and graduates at charities across Wales.

'When I heard about the internship programme I was initially a bit apprehensive. I knew it would be valuable experience but I wasn't sure whether I would be able to transfer the skills I had learnt at University into real working environment', said Hannah.

'I also wasn't sure what to expect in terms of working in the voluntary sector, but any concerns I had were quickly forgotten because the team was so supportive and PR is really core to the work of national charities like Alzheimer's.

'I want to work in the PR industry when I graduate and this opportunity has made me so much more employable. It also allowed me to develop my skills, demonstrate a level of dedication to succeed and gave me a platform to make new friends and working relationships.

'I can't speak highly enough of my experience. I was made to feel as

much a part of the team as many of the employees that had been there for years.

'One of the real advantages to this type of internship is that you do a specific piece of work or project rather than just picking up general work experience, and you have responsibility for that piece of work.

'One of my projects was to organise five events during Dementia Awareness Week last year and manage the media coverage for them. This really pushed me to work on my own initiative and to consider how my work at University could be applied in real-life.

'By taking charge of the events, not only did I take a lot of pride in them after they'd taken place, but it also allowed me to build up a base of contacts for future work.

'Initially my internship was only going to last three months, but I ended up staying on for six months because it was such a great experience.

'I would strongly recommend an internship to anyone who is currently studying. I want to work in the PR industry when I graduate and it's a tough industry to break into, but this opportunity has helped me a lot.

'I've already had a job-offer for when I complete my studies through the contacts I made during my internship. There's no doubt it's made a big difference to my prospects.'

During the next three years, a further 600 internship opportunities like Hannah's will be created at charities across Wales through WCVA's Explore programme.

Julie Skelton is co-ordinating the programme at WCVA and says the key to its success is the sheer variety of opportunities.



Hannah Keen (right) with Helen Lloyd from Alzheimer's Society.

'Since we started last year, we've created internships in areas from corporate fundraising and feasibility studies to graphic design and photography.

'Charities are involved in a range of areas from delivering key public services to lobbying and campaigning so there are some really rewarding and interesting opportunities to suit people pursuing all sorts of careers.'

For information about current internship opportunities, visit [facebook.com/exploremetro](http://facebook.com/exploremetro), [recruit3.org.uk](http://recruit3.org.uk). To discuss the programme, contact Julie Skelton on 029 2043 6594 or [jskelton@wcva.org.uk](mailto:jskelton@wcva.org.uk). Interns are reimbursed for expenses, Explore internships are flexibly part-time and typically last for between one and three months.

## Make a big impact with [recruit3.org.uk](http://recruit3.org.uk)

**P**eople working in Wales' third sector can now find the best jobs, staff and internship and trustee opportunities at the click of a mouse button. Employers and employees among the 30,000 charities and voluntary and community organisations across the country are able to search a bilingual website listing the wide range of positions available in the sector.

A joint venture between WCVA and Big Issue Cymru, [www.recruit3.org.uk](http://www.recruit3.org.uk) is as an alternative recruitment advertising package catering just for the third sector. All adverts will also appear for a week in Big Issue Cymru, published on Mondays, and WCVA's *Network Jobs* magazine, published on Wednesdays.

Big Issue Cymru has been running since 1994. It includes up to eight pages of charity and third sector jobs every week. *Network Jobs*, the sister publication of *Network Wales*, is a jobs magazine that is circulated to WCVA members and decision makers in the Welsh third sector.

All vacancies, including trustee and internships vacancies will be posted on [recruit3](http://recruit3.org.uk). For more information about finding opportunities and advertising, visit [recruit3.org.uk](http://recruit3.org.uk).