



#TeamWilder Toolkit: Green Living

The way we live can have a significant impact on the environment and on the wildlife that we are all striving to protect. This resource contains lots of helpful information on how to live a more sustainable, eco-friendly, and wildlife friendly lifestyle.

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Changing your lifestyle has some challenges! We all form habits, and these create routines in busy lives. Working out how to make alterations without causing chaos and getting people in your household on board can be very tricky.

Top tips:

- Introduce changes **one at a time**, especially if they impact on your day-to-day routine.
- Remember that **every bit helps**, don't feel overwhelmed by wanting to do everything at once.
- Create **easy systems** to help changes: e.g., devote some space to sort things that are leaving the house, bins for recycling, fixing, giving away, composting etc.
- Add some new green living chores to your chore list (if you have one!) so that they become as important as everything else you do.
- There is rarely a perfect solution, and most people must weigh up options and work out what is best for the environment within their capabilities – **thinking about sustainability** and being **open to change** are key here, so armoured with both these tools you can rest assured that you are heading in the right direction.
- Being part of an **eco-minded community** locally can be really useful, it normalises behaviour change, you gain access to local knowledge about waste and ethical suppliers, you can find opportunities to get involved in shared purchasing or resources (food co-ops, car-pools, tool libraries, fixing workshops, housing co-ops).



Some basic thinking:

- **What is coming in** your household and **what is going out?** By thinking about the journey of all the stuff it helps you see where changes can be made. This is one of the underlying themes of a concept called 'permaculture' and we will be applying this throughout the toolkit.
- **Who are you funding with your purchases?** Pocket-power is important – who deserves your hard-earned money? Making changes to who you give your money to, can make an enormous difference to people's lives and businesses.
- Not everyone has the luxury of always being able to make the right choices or decide on who to give their money to, so **do what you can** within your means and support campaigns and policies to make sustainable living a choice that everyone can make.

1. Reducing waste

Reducing waste seems to be mostly about **'what goes out'** but it is also about **'what comes in'** as you can control excess waste by thinking about what you are buying in the first place.

Thinking about packaging: Avoid products and companies that have excess packaging, especially when the packaging is not compostable or recyclable. Most companies have a packaging department who are thinking about sustainability – email them and let them know that you are not purchasing their products anymore as this will generate change.

Check the dates: Look out for expiry dates on things that you purchase so you know that you will have time to use them. Set any children you look after with this task when shopping – they have keen eyes and are learning good skills for the future.

Invest in longevity (if you can): Buying products that are well-made, not easily going to break and are fixable is a good option for reducing waste. It makes sense financially and environmentally. Sometimes it is worth buying a better product second hand than a new product that is not going to last! (How many of us are still using our grandma's electric whisks!)

If it is going out, where is it going?

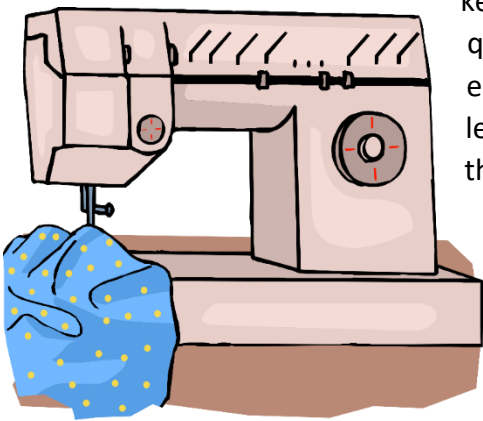
Can it be recycled? Go on your Local Authority website to see what can be recycled on your door-to-door collection, make sure you clean all your recycling before you put it in the bin so as not to contaminate everyone's recycling (a quick rinse at the end of your dishwasher is all it needs!). If you do some research then you can find ways to recycle all sorts of things: most supermarkets now collect clean crinkly and stretchy soft plastics, make a bin for things that need to go to special recycling places: electrics, bulbs, batteries etc.



Can you compost it? Having a way (or several ways) of making compost is such a good win for the planet and replenishing soil to support a healthy eco-system, that it is worth making this a priority if you can. Got no garden or yard? Could you chat to some neighbours or a local allotment holder about putting a compost bin on their land? See [#TeamWilder Toolkit: Wildlife Actions – Management](#) for further information.

Can you re-use it? Getting your milk in glass bottles, refilling your cosmetics and cleaning containers, and saving egg boxes for people with chickens are perfect examples of re-using. If something can be recycled, then make sure it gets recycled after you have re-used it, e.g. yogurt pots for seedlings. If it is something unrecyclable, then just get as much use out of it as you can before throwing it away. Make a box for kids crafting and use at home or donate to a play group. If it replaces buying a new product, then it is a positive result!

Can you fix or repurpose it? Create a box for old clothes that could be mended, dyed or re-vamped, keep an eye out for someone who makes rag rugs or patchwork quilts as these are the perfect solution for all the bits left at the end of your sewing endeavours. Could something be given a new lease of life with a coat of paint? Could it be repaired? Check out these helpful organisations who provide tips and run repair events: [Repair Cafe](#) and [The Restart Project](#). Too busy to repair and upcycle? Think about the money you can save by not buying so many new things and bring this into your ‘time and money’ calculations. It is also very cool to have things that look repaired ... the counter movement against throw-away fashion is well under way!



Can you give it away? Have a storage space for anything that is still usable and someone else might want. Use charity shops, your local freecycle or community swap pages. Remember, the more locally you can achieve this the better, don't add more transport costs than you need and reduce the carbon footprint of the journey of your items as they ‘go out’.

Top tip:

Set yourself and your household a trial month where you try to accomplish zero-waste! Make a note of what is stopping you achieving this or making it hard and prioritise adaptations that will make this better. Extend the length of the trial until it becomes a permanent accomplishment!

2. Reducing Plastics

Plastics are a huge issue for our planet. Valuable, ancient carbon storage is being used wastefully, the impact that plastics has on marine life is tragically well documented and the negative consequences of microplastics now prevalent throughout all our ecosystems is still not fully understood.



Cutting plastics out step by step:

A phased approach to plastic-use is important. Suddenly throwing away all your plastics and replacing them with more sustainable items is not the best course of action. Once you have some plastic then make use of it for as long as you can, as you buy new things then make better choices.

The first and simple step is to reduce completely unnecessary single use plastics. Make a habit of always leaving the house with a reusable cup or bottle, make sure you have an alternative to plastic carrier bags (phone, keys, wallet ... cup, bags). Go a step further and put some metal cutlery and a straw in your bag just in case! Any guys reading, not sure where to put all this? ... manbags are THE way forward so don't delay, get on board!

We have already talked about packaging. **Try out shops where you can get things in paper bags, or where you can bring your own containers to refill.** There is quite a lot of change associated with reducing plastic packaging so take this slowly, if you need to, and start reducing. Plastics are needed to improve shelf life, and shelf life is needed when things are travelling far or need to be stored for a while, so buying seasonal, simple, local food is the ultimate solution but ... not a quick and easy move for many people (and would take a big system change for everyone to be able to do this!) So ... just make some changes, look for innovative packaging and choose these products when you can, bring your own paper bags to your local supermarket and keep re-using them, pick something that makes a difference and stick to it, **be proud of the difference you are making** and do not get into the negative thinking 'if I can't eliminate all plastic packaging then why bother with any' every positive choice makes a difference.

When buying something new consider if you can you invest in a non-plastic alternative? Metal, wood, bamboo, natural fibres, stoneware ... look at what you are purchasing and what it is made of and decide whether it really needs to be plastic. If there is no alternative, then buy for longevity and look after this so you do not need to replace it. Plastic has its uses, it can be durable, hard-wearing and difficult to break – buying a plastic object that you know will last a lifetime is not necessarily a bad thing. The key is to avoid buying plastic that you know is not going to last.

A huge issue that is impacting marine wildlife is microplastics from washing machines. Globally, washing machines release around half a million tons of plastic microfibers into the ocean every year. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates this as the equivalent of releasing three billion polyester shirts into the ocean every year. Invest in natural fibre clothes where you can, wash clothes less (try airing things outside instead), look into getting a microplastic filter for your washing machine, when you buy a new washing machine look for models with filters. Campaign to support investment in green technology and make this affordable for everyone.

Plastic is everywhere and so going plastic-free is very hard. Try to not buy any plastic for a month, see where the problematic areas lie and look for solutions to weave into your everyday life.

3. Energy use

As we all know, the way energy is produced can have a profound effect on wildlife and our environment, contributing to habitat loss and climate change.

We can also think about energy use in terms of what is coming in and what is going out.



- **When purchasing new electrical items** think the purchase through in terms of energy use.
- **Could the item be mechanical?** Electrical items are often ‘time-saving’ but with the planetary clock ticking, this makes very little sense! Maybe it is ‘labour-saving’? You could think of the task as part of an exercise routine instead of a chore.
- **Are you choosing the most energy efficient product?** Get into understanding eco-ratings of electrics and energy saving features and factor this into your decision-making process.
- **Switching things off at the plug** instead of stand-by buttons is a good way of not wasting energy. Build this into your night-time routine – close curtains and check plugs, check the door is locked and check plugs, brush your teeth and check plugs! If you label the plugs with stickers (green if they should be off at night and red if they need to stay on – like the fridge!) then you can delegate this job to others easily.
- **Smart meters** can help you understand how much energy different appliances are using, and it can become quite addictive. Knowledge is power and this helps you change your practices.
- **Turn your thermostat down.** A Uswitch survey found that a **household can save up to £80 a year by turning the heating down just one degree.** This saves the planet around 300kg of CO2! Investing in a really lovely warm jumper that you enjoy wearing and some cosy slippers can make this alteration a nice lifestyle change.
- **Investigate schemes and ideas to help you insulate your house better.** Heavy curtains on drafty windows and draught excluders on ill-fitting doors can work well if you cannot replace them. If and when you do replace them then make sure you invest for the future when you do. Have a look at the energy-saving trust for ideas and savings you can make and considerations you need to factor in when getting rid of air flow in your home. [A helpful guide to draught-proofing - Energy Saving Trust](#)
- **Research energy suppliers to ensure you are getting the best deal and consider switching to green energy providers.** As yourself where is the energy coming from that is coming into your house? Can you contribute to creating your own energy through green interventions? Campaign to get all homes insulated for free and for green energy interventions to be accessible for all households.

4. Reducing water

If we all do our part in saving precious water supplies, we can make a huge difference for the environment. With temperatures rising rapidly water conservation is a priority for living an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

- **Conserving water saves energy.** Energy is needed to filter, heat and pump water to your home, so reducing your water use also reduces your carbon footprint.
- **Water is needed in our ecosystems.** Healthy ponds, rivers and wetland habitats are essential to biodiversity.
- **Conserving water can save you money.** If you have a small household or are making water conserving choices, then getting a water meter fitted can reduce your water bills.

Save water in the kitchen:

- Put a large bottle of tap water in the fridge to save waiting for the tap to run cold. Waiting for the tap to run cold can waste 10 litres of water a day!



- Only fill the kettle with the amount of water needed.
- Put lids on saucepans to reduce the amount of water lost during heating.
- Put your dishwasher and washing machine on with full loads and on an eco-setting wherever possible.
- Use a washing-up bowl in your sink to reduce the volume of water you use to wash up with.

Save water in the bathroom:

- Turn the tap off while brushing your teeth. A running tap can waste more than 6 litres of water a minute!
- If you are replacing your toilet, then choose one that is water-efficient (one with a dual flush). Follow the saying 'if it's yellow let it mellow, if it's brown flush it down!'
- Getting a cistern displacement device can save up to 5,000 litres of water every year and they are free from most water companies.
- Showering uses less water than a bath (unless you share it!) An average bath uses around 80 litres of water, but a shower typically uses between 6 and 45 litres. Set yourself a time limit in the shower if you are using it every day.
- If you change your taps or showers look into installing those with good eco-rating – this will save you money on your water and energy bills, as well as decreasing your carbon footprint.
- Fix a dripping tap. A dripping tap can waste 15 litres of water a day!

Save water in the garden:

- Sprinklers can use as much as 1,000 litres of water an hour! Grass is a very resilient plant and even if it goes brown it will quickly turn back green when it rains.
- Use a water butt (or two or three or four!) to catch rainwater. It is easy to put a diverter on your plastic downpipe from your house to collect rainwater from your roof. Look for other opportunities to collect water from sheds, greenhouses, and outdoor canopies.
- Collect your grey water from baths, showers and washing up (you don't have to worry about the chemicals if you are using eco-friendly soaps). Use grey water straight away as it doesn't store well.
- Consider you tap water as a precious resource and only use it when you need this high-quality clean water. Your car, windows, bins, outdoor areas can all be washed with rainwater or grey water. Perhaps you could consider changing your indoor floor mopping habits. Plants much prefer rainwater as it has a lower pH and rainwater is essential for topping up garden ponds.
- Use mulch and bark in your garden, it will help to reduce evaporation by up to 75%.
- Watch what survives in your garden with little extra watering and plant more of this. Share cuttings and seeds with friends and neighbours to spread these drought resistant plants.

More useful tips and in-depth information can be found on the [WaterWise website](#).

5. What goes down your drains

The best thing you can do to help Yorkshire's marine life is to carefully consider what you put down your drains and take steps to reduce the amount of fat, chemicals and microplastics that you allow to enter the water system.

Every time we do the laundry, thousands of tiny fibres (known as microfibrres) are washed off our clothes, down the drain and into the environment. These can be eaten by a variety of animals and



enter the marine food chain. **Using a microfibre catcher in your washing machine** can help to catch all those pesky microfibres before they head out to sea.

Favour natural fabrics such as **Cotton, Flax, Hemp, Jute and Linen** that don't release microfibres rather than man-made fabrics like Polyester, Nylon, Acrylic, Fleece, and Microfleece.

When cooking, don't pour fats, oils, and greases down your sink, as this can lead to a build-up of fatbergs. These cause blockages, pollution and can eventually enter our seas harming its incredible wildlife. Get yourself a **'dripping pot'** for all your oil waste and dispose of it in the bin. Use old bits of paper to clean out your oily pans before washing them in the sink.



6. Think global, act local

Staying with our theme of where are things coming from and where are they going it is great if part of the answer to this question is **'not far away'**! Sourcing and disposing of things locally reduces transport costs and the associated carbon emissions and pollution.

Not everything you need is grown or made within walking or cycling distance from where you live so there are different factors to consider here.

Hyper local solutions:

- Bringing in **more local and seasonal food into your fridge and cupboards** is a good place to start. With a bit of research, you can find local growers and farmers and discover if there is a simple way to source their produce (farm shop, market stalls, veg, fruit or meat boxes, dairy delivery).
- Factoring in the **local element to your food choices** is one consideration to balance with others. If you live in hills with lots of sheep, then you may want to utilise this local protein source rather than always importing pulses from around the world.
- **What else is manufactured locally by people who are thinking environmentally?** Discover these businesses or craftspeople so if you have a need (a present to buy for example) you can support the right people and promote their wares to others.
- When you are passing things on that you no longer need try and find a solution that is nearby. **Use local charity shops, jumble sales and local selling and swapping pages before you use national and international selling websites.**

Regional and national thinking:

- When you must move from hyperlocal then look for opportunities to purchase things as **locally as you can.**
- It is inevitable that people will need things with global carbon miles and when this is the case just factor in all the other considerations that we have discussed, **purchase for longevity,**



think about the packaging, purchase in bulk or collectively when you can to reduce the number of individual journeys.

Low carbon should mean low price:

Unfortunately, local food with small amounts of food miles are not often cheaper than supermarkets. Products with small carbon footprints are often the more expensive option. When something seems wrong like this it is a good sign that things need to change and starts people thinking about how to bring this change about.

Top tips:

- **Growing some food yourself**, helping out at a community allotment or farm, and learning about foraging are brilliant ways to source local food and will contribute to your well-being too.
- **Make a map** of what you can buy locally by walking, cycling and using public transport.
- **Try and avoid the temptation of convenience** ... easier said than done! Doorstep delivery for single items has a huge carbon footprint.
- **Read labels and check environmental credentials.** Just because something is made in Yorkshire doesn't mean that they source their materials locally or responsibly.

7. Food

We have already talked about food waste, composting, local and seasonal food and food packaging but here are a few more things to think through.

Animal free meals:

We can all agree that learning how to cook some delicious vegetarian and vegan meals is essential to a sustainable future. Using locally sourced protein in some of these meals is a brilliant next step. There are reasons why people may want to keep meat, fish and dairy on the menu, but it is essential that we alter the ratios for a sustainable future. Researchers have come up with a 'planetary health diet' that can feed 10 billion people (by 2050) and avoid environmental collapse – this requires people to eat just 300g of meat per week.

A bit more on food waste:

Both planning ahead and being flexible are important skills for reducing your food waste.

Knowing ahead what you are going to eat each day means less food waste as you will only buy what you know you will need. Planning meals that complement each other i.e., making a stock from meat bones or veg peelings and using this as the basis of your next meal can be very satisfying and waste saving. The best made plans can go awry though, so flexibility is key.



Food dates are not always accurate and knowing how long you can keep cooked items, whether you can freeze things, and ideas to use up leftovers, are good tools for the toolbox.

Check out this amazing website for facts and ideas: [Love Food Hate Waste's A-Z guide on using up ingredients.](#)

Preserving food:

If we are going to try and eat seasonally then it is important to preserve food when it is available.

As well as freezing you can think about drying or dehydrating, making jams, pickles, chutneys and fermenting to bring nutrients and flavour into the winter months. Some food that you grow can store well, certain apples and squashes can store for months and there are many beans you can grow for drying.

Coming Soon:

We will be adding sections to explore fashion, travel & transport, and vacations & days out in the coming months.

In the meantime, if you would like some information about how to reduce the impact of our travel on wildlife and the environment, please visit <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/change-how-you-travel>

This toolkit has been created with credit to The Wildlife Trusts.

