

Exchange in Roath – A Giant Swap Shop



Pictures 1-4: Exchange in Roath in Action

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Introduction

Exchange in Roath was essentially a giant community designed and led swap shop event. The swap (or exchange) took place on the 18th October 2014 and between 800 – 1000 people turned up with nearly 1.3 tonnes of ‘stuff’ being reused/re-homed in 4 hours.

The main aim of the event was to encourage residents to swap unwanted but still usable objects such as: clothes, books, toys, bikes, electronics, gardening equipment and small furnishings. By reusing these unwanted items residents partake in an action that prevents waste from being landfilled. Reusing/preventing waste features more positively (than landfilling) in the waste disposal hierarchy, as such, events like this encourage individuals and communities to make positive environmental choices.

In addition to the primary aim of reuse, residents had the opportunity to engage in up-cycling workshops, screen printing and pedal powered disco/art. These stalls aimed to show residents how to creatively repair unwanted objects and/or turn them into new items. Furthermore, we commissioned a local artist to turn litter into a sculpture to highlight local environmental quality (LEQ) issues. Lastly, relevant partners such as the Council’s Recycling Department, Love Food Hate Waste and others were invited to promote sustainable waste behaviour.

The event was a partnership project with local residents working alongside Cynefin, Green City Events, YMCA, Cardiff Council and Made in Roath with funding supplied by the Big Lottery.



Pictures 5 & 6: Flyer/Poster Design and one of the winning T-shirt Designs

Background

The idea for Exchange in Roath (EiR) emerged from a series of consultation exercises and workshops linked to the Cynefin Programme.

Cynefin Cardiff is a Welsh Government urban, sustainable place, change programme managed by Severn Wye with a focus on parts of Adamsdown, Cathays & Plasnewydd/Roath. It involves connecting various agencies, businesses, residents and community groups in order deliver effective and long-lasting, local sustainability projects. In addition, the role aims to influence Welsh Government and Local Authority policy by informing them of the barriers to community development.

Following the consultations, Cynefin along with Green City Events and Made in Roath discussed the ideas, established how the event could be delivered and constructed a Big Lottery funding application. A few months later we were informed that the application was successful and set about developing the plans.

It was decided from the beginning that event would happen at the same time as the Made in Roath Arts Festival. This annual festival is very popular and it was felt that both events running in tandem would maximise the amount of people attending.

Early on we identified Cardiff Council (Waste Management) and the YMCA as important project partners. We met and agreed which elements of the project the partners could support. The Council provided logistical assistance, loaned us a set of large scales, donated a small amount (but good quality) left over items from a student re-use project that they had delivered the previous month and gave out recycling bags and information on the day of the event. The YMCA loaned us clothes rails, helped set up, topped us up with certain items that we didn't have much of (toys/bikes/electronics), provided PAT testing and took all the left over items to sell in their shop.



Pictures 7 & 8: Shipping container for storage

A further key component of planning for this event was holding an 'ideas workshop' at least a month prior. This gave residents an opportunity to share ideas, inform the planning and get involved in various elements of the delivery. We also invited residents to take part in a t-shirt design competition under the theme of 'Reuse – Recycle – Relove' with the best 3 being used on the day to print on old t-shirts. Two weeks after the workshop we started promoting the event. We did this

online via social media and offline through being interviewed on local radio, by delivering flyers and putting up posters. This helped generate a lot of interest and meant that advertisement hit a broad section of society. Green City promoted the event on their website and led the social media campaign. They also produced a press release which led to features and articles in various local publications.

It was decided that the event would be split into two parts: 'giving' and 'taking'. Between Monday and Friday 5-7pm residents were invited to drop off their 'stuff' at a shipping container situated next to the Gate Arts Centre. On the Friday evening the items were transferred from the container into the Gate. Friday night and Saturday morning was used to display the items into their relevant categories.

Residents were invited to take items on Saturday 18th October between 11:30 and 15:30. Those who had donated items were given 10 stamps on a token that could be exchanged for 10 items on the day. Everyone who turned up was given 5 tokens (including those who had donated) because it was decided that some people might not have anything to donate but should not be excluded from the activity.

The Results

The event was hugely popular with around 50 people queuing around the block in anticipation of opening. In total we estimate that between 800 – 1000 people attended over the 4 hours and we had to turn a lot of people away towards the end.



Pictures 9 & 10: Residents queue and get entertained with pedal powered disco

None of this would have been possible if it wasn't for the support and help of around 25 dedicated volunteers. Residents gave up their time to help deliver flyers, put up posters, they helped in the 'drop off' container, transferring the items to the Gate, setting up, running the event and clearing up afterwards.

The people of Roath donated nearly 1.5 tonnes of stuff in a week with additional 400kg top up from the YMCA. After a chaotic 4 hours of exchanging the left over items were taken back to the shipping container for weighing. Only 650kg of stuff was not taken on the day however the YMCA took it all to be sold in their charity shop. So, in total around 1.9 tonnes was reused with 1.25 tonnes being exchanged on the day. See table below for a breakdown.

Table 1 – Breakdown of Weights

Day	Amount Donated (Kgs)
Monday	224
Tuesday	131
Wednesday	243
Thursday	500
Friday	373
Sub Total	1,471
Saturday (YMCA top up)	435
Total Received	1,906
Exchanged	1,258
Donated to YMCA	648
Total Re-used	1,906

The Process

The process chart below highlights the main steps in the journey that took us from an idea to the delivery of Exchange in Roath.



A grant of £3900 was awarded by the Big Lottery Fund for this event. This event could be delivered with less money but would likely be smaller in scale and have less supporting activities associated with the swap.

Evaluation

The consensus, from the main project organisers, is that the event was hugely successful and exceeded expectations. Residents and other participants had only positive things to say about their experiences. In addition, it was refreshing to see a cross section of society taking part in the exchange.

“[I] had such a grand day, [it] was great to see the community coming together and sharing the love.[I] had lots of fun doing the bike powered art and screen printing. Thanks a lot!!” Facebook quote from local resident

However, there are a couple of small things that we would change for next year (if the event happens again next year). Firstly, we would hire mobile air-conditioning units because the room was very warm, it was full of people and there aren't any windows. This made the experience uncomfortable for some. Perhaps the upcycling events could take place in a different part of the Gate. Secondly, we would not waste our time promoting the idea to food growers/allotment holders as we didn't have a single donation of surplus food (however, a separate event could take place linked to food). Lastly, we would trial some sort of charity donation system to help support the work of the YMCA.

Partners

The success of this event is testament to good, effective partnership working involving community groups, residents, social enterprises, the public and third sectors.

Key partners and roles:

- **Green City Events:** - Event organisation, graphic design, communications, deliver of event
- **Made in Roath:** - Grant recipient and communications
- **YMCA:** - Logistical support, volunteers stock top-up and took all stock away at the end of the event
- **Cardiff Council:** - Logistical support, scales, communications, shipping container licence and small storage containers
- **Gibbon Hire:** - Shipping container
- **The Gate Arts Centre:** - The room for the event, communications and general support
- **Residents of south east Cardiff:** - Ideas, flyering, communications, event delivery and artistic installations
- **The Pedal Emporium:** - Pedal powered disco and art
- **PrintHaus:** - T-shirt printing
- **Zolibeau:** - Upcycling activities
- **Recycled with Love:** - Upcycling activities