**Salford CVS Annual Conference**

**30th October 2024**

**Salford Community Stadium**

Afternoon workshop: Put your money where your mouth is

Number of attendees: 54

Facilitator: **Michelle Warburton, Salford CVS**

Panel members: **Chris Dabbs - Unlimited Potential, Rob Harrison - Ethical Consumer**

Panel speaker notes: **Andy Mossop**

**Chris Dabbs**

We have consistently thought about – how can we maximise our impact as an organisation. How do we spend our own money? How can our money reach further?

Thematic areas Positive Impact

* Social
* Economic
* Environment

**Social, Economic, Environmental**

* Maximise the amount of local people we employ. What proportion of the employees live within 5 miles of the office?
* Maximise local spending to ethical suppliers.
* Will not knowingly support non sustainable processes, products and services. Find providers who are ethical and sustainable. Which banks should we work with? Which insurance should we go for? Which web designer?
* Unlimited Potential researched and sent out requests to these companies / banks / insurance companies. What are your values, how do you operate.
* Use companies who are a net benefit to the environment and our own organisation.

**Rob Harrison**

Gave some background around *Ethical Consumer Research Association Ltd (ECRA).*

Ethical Consumer was formed in Hulme, Manchester, UK, in 1989. Between 1989 and 2009 it was a worker co-operative, then in 2009 became a not-for-profit multi-stakeholder co-operative consisting of worker members and investor/subscriber members.

It is a British not-for-profit publisher, research, political, and campaign organisation which publishes information on the social, ethical and environmental behaviour of companies and governments and issues around trade justice and ethical consumption.

**Amazon boycott campaign**

How can we use our spending to support our local economy communities and the wider environment rather than Amazon.

Amazon is destroying the high street, and culturally and practically, is unwilling to pay tax. Therefore, they are having a hugely detrimental impact on the functioning of our wider society – aside from the environmental impact they have in their shipping and operational practices.

<https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/ethicalcampaigns/boycott-amazon>

Ethical Consumer has calculated that, in 2021, up to half a billion pounds (£500,000,000) could have been lost to the UK public purse from the corporation tax avoidance of Amazon alone. This amount could have paid for:

a £500 payment to the poorest one million UK households to help with rising fuel bills, or

raising the much criticised 'up to' 3% proposed pay rises for health service staff in 2022 by an additional 1%, or

a £10,000 investment in insulating the homes of 50,000 pensioners in the worst fuel poverty, which could also reduce UK CO2 emissions by around 100,000 tonnes

**Q&A**

**Question to Rob:** What is the payoff between first-hand and second-hand goods?

**Answer:** New electrical goods, particularly when manufactured in the EU, are now much better regulated in terms of production quality and energy efficiency. That said, older models (manufactured within the last 10 years) are not necessarily more energy consuming.

**Question to Rob:** Can you provide a list of alternatives to Amazon?

**Answer:** A comprehensive list of alternative suppliers can be found on the Ethical Consumer website.

**Question to Rob:** Do you have any comment on the price of repairing older electrical products?

**Answer:** Sometimes the cost of goods is so low that there’s no economic incentive to repair things. Ethically and environmentally though, repairing is usually the right thing to do if you can.

**Question to Chris**: How can you make your work more accessible to non-English speakers?

**Answer:** Technology is very helpful in increasing accessibility and promoting understanding of our work. We are also looking to learn from different economic models in use around the world. The diversity of the community in Salford can help us with this.

**Question to both:** What is the role for ethical purchasing in the public sector?

**Rob’s answer:** We would like local authorities to avoid purchasing from companies that we consider to be tax avoiders.

**Chris’ answer:** Local authorities need to try and keep more of their spend in the local economy and be supportive of community wealth building initiatives. Salford is in danger of becoming a tale of two cities – Media City and everyone else. We need to work with local young people to enable them to become service providers in the local economy, perhaps changing their focus from profit to provision.

**Question to Rob**: Do you have any updates on the ‘right to repair’ law?

**Answer:** Lots of positive things are happening in Europe now such as obliging suppliers to keep providing replacement parts for 10+ years of each product they develop. Although we are now outside of the EU, it is still likely to have an effect to what happens in the UK.

**Question to Chris:** How do you manage purchases from companies that you might consider to be non-ethical, and how do you distinguish between local and ethical?

**Answer:** The priority is always ethical, and ideally local! We employ a purchasing framework and use this as a guide to assess against all purchasing decisions which makes things easier and transparent.

**Question to Chris:** Are ethical suppliers always more expensive? If so, how do we square that with factors such as the cost-of-living crisis or the state of organisational finance in the VCSE sector?

**Answer:** They are not always more expensive, particularly if you consider the whole-lifecycle costs of items that you buy. Chris then gave the example of his smartphone, which is repairable and has a longer lifetime than other smartphones on the market and therefore provides a better overall deal both economically and environmentally.

**Question to Rob:** Is there still a stigma around the purchasing of second-hand goods?

**Answer:** The stigma is changing though it’s very hard to measure. Gen Z willingness to purchase/recycle second-hand clothing is evidence of change. The nature of the climate emergency means we might have no choice but to focus on second-hand products and purchasing.

**Practical Actions:**

* Commitment to not using Amazon
* Credit Unions – using them as an option
* Asking current providers for their policies – will they change to retain our custom?
* Combined sectoral voice around ethical / local sourcing? Can you divest your funds by looking at your clients / communities and who is being impacted.