

Penrith & Eden Freegle: 'Test & Stretch' report

Introduction

Sustain Eden is a three-year programme of individual projects with the aim of helping residents of Penrith and Eden district tackle climate change and make greener choices. The programme is a partnership between ten local organisations and is financed by the Big Lottery Fund through Communities Living Sustainably.

Penrith and Eden Freegle (P&E Freegle) ran one of the strands of the wider programme, 'Grow Your Own', helping people to give away or receive excess produce, seeds, plants and gardening equipment through their website. The programme also offered advice on growing fruit and veg through walking tours and local events.

The 'Sustain Eden income generation' recommendations report produced in March 2015 by Energy Saving Trust recommended some consultancy support under the 'Test and Stretch' programme from Project Dirt. This support was to focus primarily on advice for Penrith & Eden Freegle around income generation from a free online service.

This document

This document outlines a summary of our findings, and recommendations for Penrith and Eden Freegle to take forward, around the following issues:

- Increasing site usage
- Income generation
- Fund raising

Increasing site usage will rely in part on marketing, and in part on improved technology / user experience. In this document, we explore a range of potential improvements, updates and initiatives that P&E Freegle can make to their networks and processes, to boost usage of the site and raise income for the network.

Our initial conversations with Freegle stakeholders indicated that it would be useful for this review to cover the wider Freegle business model. Whilst the focus of this piece of work is intended to be specific to the Penrith & Eden Freegle group, there are some lessons which should be applicable to any local Freegle group as well as the wider Freegle network. The Penrith & Eden group provides the opportunity to pilot some new approaches, or develop existing ones, if the team is willing and has the capacity to do so.

Background

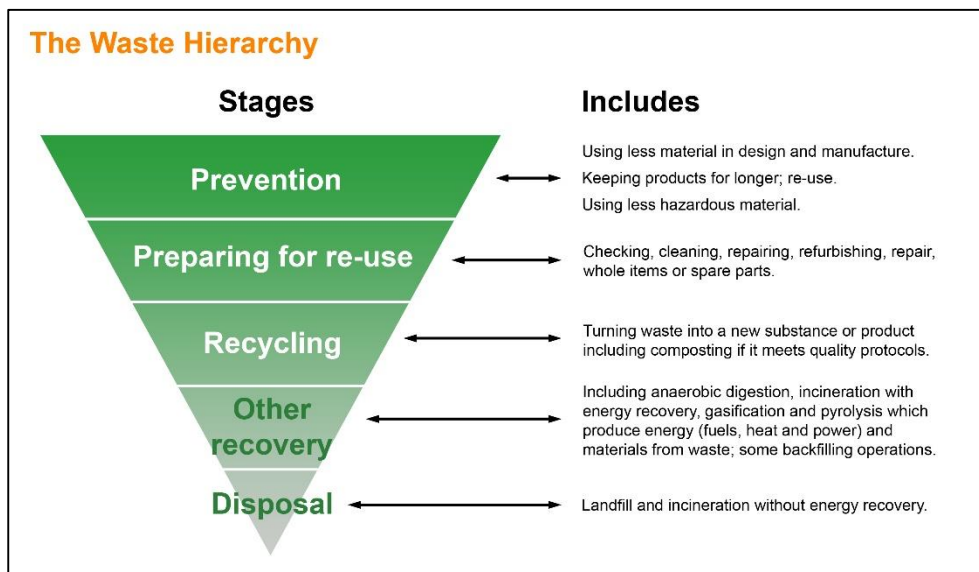
The waste sector

According to Defra¹, the UK waste sector generates an estimated £6.8 billion in gross value and supported 103,000 jobs in 2013.

However, it is incredibly important to consider the environmental impact of waste, and – particularly in a small island economy with limited space such as the UK – there is a strong policy emphasis on encouraging re-use of items.

The “waste hierarchy” ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment. It gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. When waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then recovery, and last of all disposal (e.g. landfill).

Freegle’s focus on the re-use and efficient distribution of unwanted items is therefore of high political (and potentially economic) importance.



Freegle: national and local

Freegle is a UK-wide free-to-use platform that allows users to give away their second-hand items that would otherwise be thrown away.

¹ Resource management: a catalyst for growth and productivity (Defra, February 2015)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/401453/resource-management-catalyst-growth-productivity.pdf

The Freegle network has been running successfully for seven years, channelling 500+ tonnes per month of unwanted items to those who need them, and saving items from being recycled or going to waste.

Freegle itself is registered as an Industrial and Provident Society for Community Benefit. It is split into 409 local networks, with a total of 2,397,593 local members. Each local network is run by local volunteers which act more or less autonomously. Each local network uses either the Freegle Direct platform (<https://directv2.ilovefreegle.org/>), Yahoo groups, TrashNothing, the Freegle mobile app or the mobile app Snaply to advertise the items up for grabs in their local area, or to allow people to post a message about an item they are in need of. Some additionally use Facebook pages and/or their own websites.

All Freegle networks are run by volunteers and there are no paid staff members, although Freegle is currently seeking funding for a central member of staff to support the entire network. Nonetheless, amongst the volunteers there is significant expertise that the network can draw on; for example, Chris Cant's technical expertise (from P&E Freegle), Ed Hibbert's IT expertise, media expertise from Cat Fletcher (Head of Media at Freegle) and a graphic design team (two volunteers).

Although the national network requires significant numbers of local volunteers (with over 400 local groups), there are currently adequate numbers of volunteers. In areas where there are no local volunteers, caretakers from outside the local area are able to step in to help. Very few groups have shut to due to lack of volunteers.

*Recommendation 1: **Volunteer review.** How many volunteers are there? Who has expertise that can be useful to the entire network as well as undertaking a volunteer recruitment drive? (with a focus on finding volunteers with skills in specific key areas, such as fundraising).*

Penrith and Eden Freegle

The Penrith and Eden network, which includes over 5,000 members who have exchanged goods in the past three years, operates using the Freegle Direct platform, a mobile app and a Yahoo group (which typically sees 500-800 messages per month). P&E Freegle also runs its own website (www.penrithedenfreegle.org.uk), [Twitter feed](#) and a [Facebook group](#).

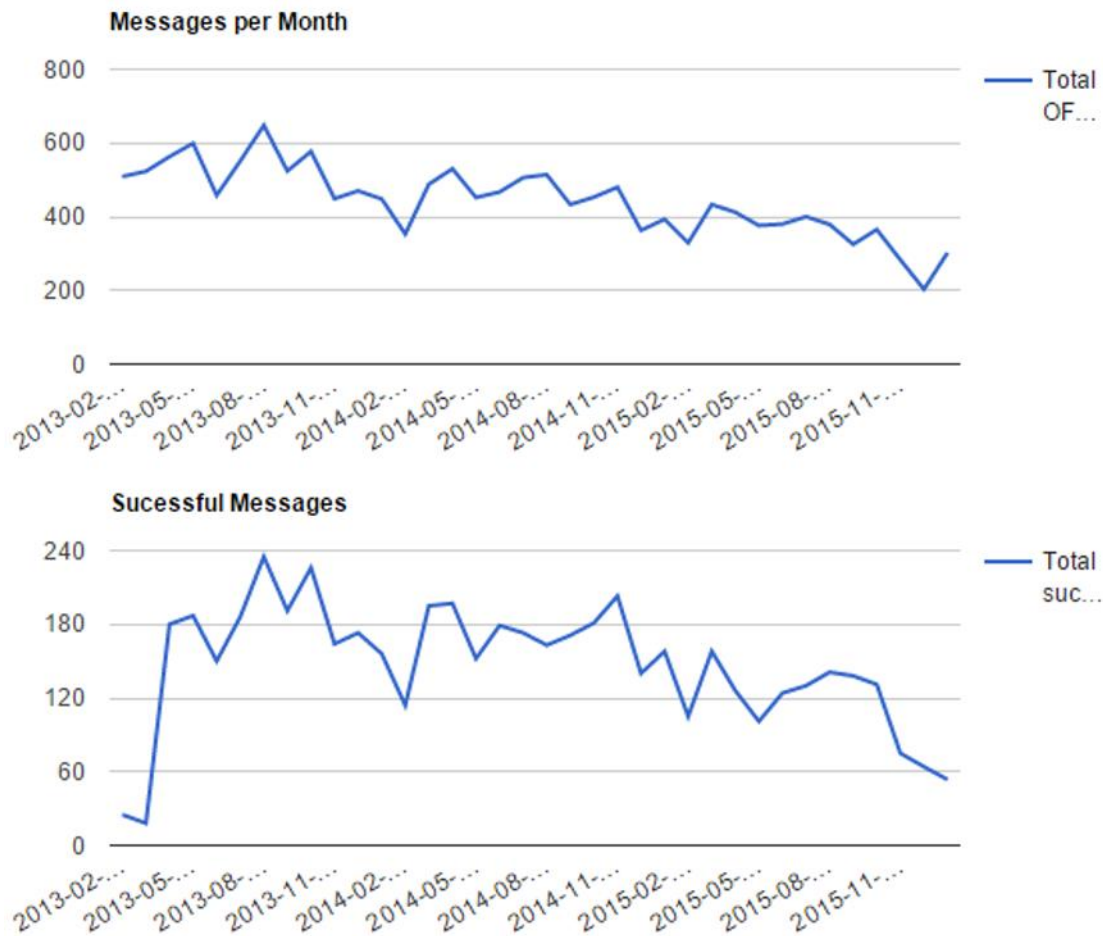
The 'Grow Your Own' project was a stream of the 'Sustain Eden' project run by Penrith and Eden Freegle to help local residents exchange produce seeds, plants and gardening equipment through the Freegle network, as well as offering advice at local events.

Around 678 users exchanged 449 items as part of the 'Grow Your Own' programme, with 396 attending events and 1,000 people stopped at Grow Your Own stalls.

Whilst the project has provided a real focus for activity and engagement with the local Freegle network in the short-term, a long-term decline in the number of active users (proxied by the

total number of messages, and number of successful messages per month²) is the key issue for Penrith and Eden Freegle (in common with many local groups).

“Over the last three years the general trend even for the best Freegle groups is downward in terms of messages per month. For some groups that are only on Yahoo and not using Freegle Direct the drop is catastrophic.” Local Freegle volunteer



Source: <http://direct.ilovefreegle.org/modtools/catstats.php?groupid=49&start=2013-02-01>

² See graphs on following page

Key Challenges looking forward

Summarising the paragraphs above, the key challenges for both Freegle as a national platform and the Penrith and Eden Freegle network are:

- to **improve the technology infrastructure** behind the Freegle ecosystem,
- to **address a decline** (or potential decline) in active users of the site, and
- to ensure that the Freegle organisation (at both national and local levels) is **sufficiently well resourced** to stay afloat and reach its potential.

Covering the first of these issues, the national website through which Freegle users exchange goods is due to be developed and improved thanks to funding recently secured from Microsoft, as the result of winning a national competition. This development will include new hosting for the site, an improved interface and an improved system for volunteers to moderate the network's content. Therefore, this review will not seek to cover technical requirements or recommendations in any depth.

However, there are still challenges to be met in improving social media and promotion of the site and improving the local Penrith and Eden Freegle network's own website. These will be covered in this document.

The rest of this document addresses the latter two challenges.

1. Increasing site usage

Over the last three years, the monthly number of messages (which indicate the use of the actual site) has been going down across all Freegle groups. Total number of members tends to be on an upward trend, because users join the site and don't tend to 'leave', but may not be actively using the site. The decline in active use of the site is sharper for those groups that are only on Yahoo and not using Freegle Direct.

Develop localised marketing strategy

One key challenge for any Freegle network is that the site is unlikely to be used on a daily (or even regular) basis by most people, and will only be utilised by members when they have a need for that service, e.g. when they have a particular item they need or have to give away, or at key points such as moving house.

It is likely that users get involved initially when they have a specific item to give away, or require something specific. However, there is little done currently by P&E Freegle to re-engage them or build on this initial interest.

Therefore, marketing Freegle should focus both on capturing people at that critical point, on encouraging these one-time users to revisit frequently, and on keeping Freegle in the public eye, with the reminder for others to use it when they do need the service.

Public messages should include both 'carrot' and 'stick' messages - about the importance of re-use, and examples of where people have saved money & time through using the service. Repeating the key messages around Freegle's vision (using different examples to illustrate how it is coming to fruition) all contributes to raising visibility and increasing engagement.

It would be worth exploring and developing local partnerships to help spread the word about Freegle locally, amongst different user groups. This could also potentially lead to future income streams.

*Recommendation 2: **Review user base and segment users** in order to understand them better. Ask users what their main motivation is for using the service, and what would be the most successful methods to keep them coming back.*

*Recommendation 3: **Develop marketing strategy** including elements to respond to different user segments and react to context; both relevant community context (e.g. reaction to floods) and individual life 'events' (e.g. moving house).*

Gamification

In order to encourage users to come back to the site and to spread the word to others, gamification could be built into the site. Gamification is the application of game-design elements and game principles to a nongame context, such as a website. Essentially, you could build rewards into using the Freegle website. For example, users could be awarded gold stars, 'super-user' status or other 'prizes' for exchanging a certain number of items or for sharing Freegle via social media. This would encourage users to remain active and engaged Freegle users.

Overall, the strategy should be to promote and reward the good work of the most prolific users of Freegle locally. A strategy should be set to work out how to expose good work and recognise people through ranking and reward.

*Recommendation 4: **Develop gamification strategy** for the Freegle website, and ensure that there is a local element to that strategy. Pilot in Penrith & Eden.*

Case Study: Samsung Nation

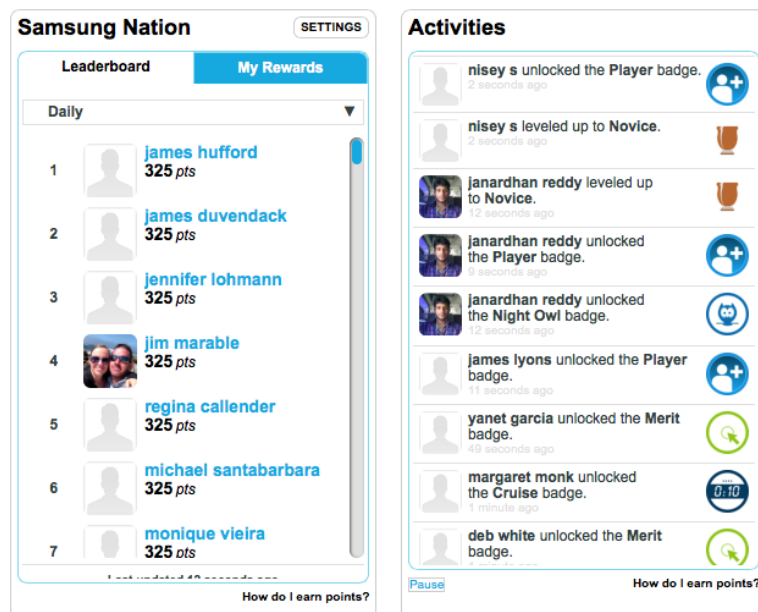
Samsung, the technology and electronics company has built gamification into its community site, Samsung Nation. Samsung creates user-generated content by rewarding users for getting engaged with the community, participating in Q&A discussions with other users, watching videos, reviewing products, and other activities. In exchange for their participation, users are awarded with badges and progress through levels of achievement.

SAMSUNG NATION



Welcome to the exciting new community where you are rewarded by simply exploring Samsung.com and discovering everything it has to offer. You're now free to earn points, unlock and collect badges, boost your ranking, see who's leading, and watch Samsung Nation evolve over time.

Look to the right to check out real-time activity, then dive into the site to see what you can uncover.



The screenshot shows two main sections of the Samsung Nation interface:

- Leaderboard:** A list of users ranked by points. The top users are:

Rank	Name	Points
1	james hufford	325 pts
2	james duvendack	325 pts
3	jennifer lohmann	325 pts
4	jim marable	325 pts
5	regina callender	325 pts
6	michael santabarbara	325 pts
7	monique vieira	325 pts
- Activities:** A feed of recent user achievements, such as:
 - nisey s unlocked the Player badge.
 - nisey s leveled up to Novice.
 - janardhan reddy leveled up to Novice.
 - janardhan reddy unlocked the Player badge.
 - janardhan reddy unlocked the Night Owl badge.
 - james lyons unlocked the Player badge.
 - yanet garcia unlocked the Merit badge.
 - margaret monk unlocked the Cruise badge.
 - deb white unlocked the Merit badge.

Local group website

<http://www.penrithedenfreegle.org.uk>

This website is not the main sharing platform for Penrith and Eden Freegle but instead is intended to be a shopfront for the network and to tell the story of why people should recycle their stuff and persuade people to get involved.

Currently the website is fairly basic and functions well, but is overcrowded and contains a lot of outdated content.

On the following page, we have developed a high-level SWOT of the website, based on a rapid review from within our team.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Active & engaging content: Lots of images, and exciting activity linked – showing P&E Freegle is a lively and exciting project</p> <p>URL: Clear and distinct URL</p>	<p>Appearance: The site has been around a little while, and needs modernisation</p> <p>Signposting: Hard to find signposts to other useful services and only visible if you are looking for it</p> <p>No search function or filter function</p> <p>Outdated information: e.g. Recent items listed are from 2009 and events are from 2011</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Lots of potential content: Lots of stories to tell and content to use in order to convince new users, if presented in a more user-friendly (and up-to-date) format</p>	<p>Purpose of the site: Having another site may be confusing to users looking to quickly get rid of items</p>

*Recommendation 5: **Improve P&E Freegle’s shopfront site.** If funding could be generated to cover the costs for Chris Cant (P&E Freegle’s lead volunteer) to develop the site, this template could be rolled out to other Freegle Networks.*

Social media

Penrith & Eden Freegle uses Twitter (<https://twitter.com/penrithfreegle>), with 483 followers and Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/Penrith.Eden.Freegle>), with 1,122 likes. With over 25,000 posts on Twitter, the follower base looks to be relatively small.

Both feeds are useful for users wanting to keep an eye on items listed in their local area, but doesn’t really sell or promote the concept of giving away things. Freegle’s main Facebook page is much more engaging, and really sells the concept of using Freegle. It is important to develop and build a Freegle “voice” – both nationally and locally.

Another way to utilise social media to maximum effect would be to have a ‘suggested tweet’ / Facebook post (or Share’) system that encourages users to tweet/post a particular message once they have given something away or received an item, capitalising on the moment when users are really happy with the network and most likely to recommend to others. Once an item has been exchanged, a pop-up would appear (similar to the thank you message in the mobile app) that prompts users to post about exchanging items on Freegle.

(This could be extended to other popular image-based networks, such as Instagram, etc.)

*Recommendation 6: Encourage consistent and **regular sharing of Freegle’s (national) posts** by local Freegle groups on their own pages, to reinforce messaging and vision (leading to greater buy-in).*

*Recommendation 7: **Push suggested tweets / Facebook posts** as part of thank-you messages, once an item is exchanged.*

PPC

A key way of attracting new users could be to use Google's 'Pay per Click' (PPC) advertising in order to attract new users, particularly at the key point when they need an item or have an item to give away.

The best way to do this is to run a campaign targeting search terms related to people who may be looking for ways to get rid of items such as 'bulky waste collection' that is geotagged to their location.

Google has a grants programme; ['Google Grants'](#) that provides free in-kind PPC advertising to selected non-profit organisations. Participating organisations are eligible to receive up to \$10,000 per month of in-kind advertising within the AdWords search engine marketing platform. This funding is fairly easy to get hold of and the budgets are generous. Nationally, Freegle has already applied for such a grant. However, as the grant is very generous, the entire budget may well not be spent, so either some targeted local ads for Penrith & Eden Freegle using this account, or an application for their own Google Grant, could be an option.

Locally-specific promoted ads could be targeted by cross-referencing the most common items advertised on P&E Freegle (e.g. beds; laptops) with the most common search terms for high-value items locally (available from Google's Keyword Planner).

*Recommendation 8: Apply for Google Grants funding and/or share national funding awarded to **test programme of locally-specific PPC ads** to attract new / returning users (or simply to raise brand awareness), particularly those who may be otherwise throwing items away.*

Champions

The biggest champions for the network are those that are most willing to get involved and support the network, principally, the site's volunteers and its most frequent users. Their passion for Freegle should be captured and used to the network's advantage. Speaking to similar networks, such as Streetbank, who have targeted specific local areas to drive membership and use of the site, word of mouth has been by far the most successful way to increase membership rates. One key way to assure this would be through developing a network of Champions who are willing to spread the word.

However, once identified, it will be important to identify what support they need, and provide them with (for example) help, guidance and skills development, so that they feel well supported in their champion role.

*Recommendation 9: **Identify / recruit local (Penrith & Eden) Freegle champions** who can help to promote the importance of re-use, the Freegle story, and let local people know about the network.*

*Recommendation 10: Create and implement a formalised **support package for Freegle champions**, to be piloted in P&E before sharing nationally.*

Press & Case studies

Using examples of heart-warming or unusual exchanges made through the site may be a key way of gaining press attention and keeping Freegle in the public eye for users. All messages should include a reinforcing message about why Freegle's mission is so important; why re-use is the best option for items you no longer need (i.e. the waste hierarchy) and how these items could help those who need them!

This could be done through encouraging volunteers to keep an eye out for particularly interesting examples by building it into their task lists, providing users with the opportunity to provide feedback and quotes after an item has been exchanged that can be made into content for the press or shop window site, creating a database for press and case studies and finally providing volunteers with the tools to create such stories (e.g. press release templates or blogging templates). These case studies can also be used for any future grant funding applications.

*Recommendation 11: **Create Press database, provide volunteers with press resources and create user surveys (which can award them gamification points for completing) which will generate content for press and media.***

*Recommendation 12: **Set targets and goals for press coverage and links from other websites in order to drive new and returning users to the site.***

2. Income Generation

In order to grow use of the site through the marketing plans laid out in the previous section, it may be necessary for Penrith and Eden Freegle to generate a little income to cover these costs. Long term, the best way for the Penrith and Eden Freegle network to become sustainable – and to keep delivering public engagement programmes such as 'Grow Your Own' – is by generating its own income.

Growing revenue for the organisation can allow Freegle both to invest in technical development and to trial new areas of activity which support the wider vision of Freegle, such as:

- boosting other local Freegle networks or open new networks that may meet the needs of residents that live on the outskirts of the Penrith and Eden network
- new initiatives to engage more people with Freegle locally, such as Pop-up shops for residents to bring in items to give away, with the aim of raising awareness of Freegle and the idea of re-using items (and potentially raising money for the network)
- extra income could allow Freegle to develop further programmes, such as a fixing and repairing service that fixes and repairs items that would otherwise be thrown away. This could avoid even more items going to recycling or landfill, provide more items to families in need and potentially raise further income for the network.

Raising money through users

Freegle has more than 5,000 members locally, and 2.4 million across the UK, who have seen the use of the site and clearly think it's a good idea. Although Freegle has made a clear decision that it wants the platform to remain free to use (excluding the idea of membership fees) there may be other ways of tapping into users as a source of income. For example, asking the members to pay additional fees for:

- services such as collection/delivery of bulky items
- a fee for users advertising more than 5 items, or
- users listing items above a certain size.

There are other ideas which can be introduced to soften the message of charging for services, such as sharing the income with local charities. One parallel model to explore is “Bags of Goodies”, a doorstep waste collection service that returns profit to households in the form of local currency to donate to charities or spend with local retailers³.

Additionally, there should be a bigger push to ask users to donate funds to the site once an exchange is made, for example prompting users to donate money as and when an exchange is made (as currently happens on the Freegle mobile app).

*Recommendation 13: **Feasibility study for selectively charging fees.** Survey members or pilot trial scheme to establish if any of these public-facing fee-based income-generation approaches would be feasible.*

Community Shares

Penrith and Eden Freegle could raise finance through community shares – giving their users control of the network and giving the network additional finance without significantly changing the platform. Community Shares refers to the sale of shares in enterprises serving a community purpose. This type of investment has been used to finance shops, pubs, community buildings, renewable energy initiatives, local food schemes, along with a host of other community based ventures.

*Recommendation 14: **Community Shares Issue.** Consider raising capital and distributing ownership of Freegle through community shares.*

³ This, and other ideas for waste reduction projects which may be useful inspiration for future Freegle programmes can be found in the summary of finalist ideas for [Nesta's 'Waste Reduction Challenge'](#).

Case study: 'Own the Media' Community Shares



Positive News is an online news publication dedicated to reporting positive stories. They aim to take a solution-focused perspective on the challenges facing society.

In 2015 Positive News ran a crowdfunding campaign: 'OwnThe Media' to become the world's first crowdfunded global media cooperative. They successfully raised £263,422 and the paper is now co-owned by 1,526 readers, journalists and supporters.

http://positivenews.org.uk/2015/economics_innovation/17662/we-want-you-to-own-positive-news/

Selling 're-use' services to businesses

Businesses are a key potential, but under-explored, source of income for many not-for-profit organisations. The Penrith and Eden Freegle network could connect with local businesses to act as corporate sponsors. For example, Penrith and Eden Freegle could facilitate donations of office furniture and other resources on behalf of the company, for a fee. This would help the companies meet their corporate responsibility needs by giving furniture or equipment to those in need, whilst avoiding items going into landfill and generating income to the Freegle network.

A key local business to note here is Centre Parcs, who may well have a significant turn-over of furniture and equipment that they could give away to local residents in need.

We would recommend talking to business-facing organisations and networks about opportunities that may exist in this respect, such as the [Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership](#), [Cumbria Chamber of Commerce](#), the [Penrith BID](#) (who run regular business connection events as well as a [Greening Penrith](#) programme of activity), and the [Economic Development office](#) in Eden District Council.

It may in future be worth exploring creating a differently branded version, or larger-scale tailored version, of Freegle for businesses which could be chargeable. If some strong business relationships could be developed locally, then a 'Freegle for Businesses' could be piloted in Penrith & Eden. Enviromate is an example of a web-based platform which facilitates re-use of excess materials in the construction sector; it has an element of its model where materials are distributed to local community projects (<http://enviromate.co.uk/projects/>).

Partnering with waste management companies

It may be worth exploring a partnership with local waste management companies. For example, Cumbria Waste Management has a "[zero to landfill](#)" programme, whereby they offer the following benefits to their business clients:

- On-going cost savings
- Meeting legal requirements of Waste Regulations
- Positive PR
- Improved environmental performance

- Competitive advantage over others in your industry

As this is a mainstay of their business strategy, they may well be interested in exploring partnership opportunities.

*Recommendation 15: **Develop local business partnerships.** For example, contact local waste management companies to discuss potential partnerships.*

Generating income through Newsletters

For Project Dirt, and for similar platforms we have spoken to, newsletters are the key source of traffic to websites and an easy and affordable way of generating interest and engagement. Some platforms, such as Streetbank have allowed these newsletters to be sponsored by relevant and complimentary businesses (e.g. offering discount codes).

Whilst P&E Freegle sends out occasional ADMIN emails (e.g. when events are running, to do a survey), there is no regular newsletter. Users can opt in to receiving emails with individual posts or a daily summary. Each group also has a weekly community event summary.

At the same time, national emails are occasionally sent out, which do already include some sponsored posts (e.g. [here](#)). We would recommend exploring whether the national coordinators can provide regular content, to enable local (sponsored) newsletters to be easily produced, and integrated with tailored local content.

Extending the advertising plan laid out in Freegle's central business plan could not only cover the costs of creating such a newsletter but generate further income, whilst keeping users engaged and reminding them of the Freegle platform.



Case Study: Streetbank Newsletter

Streetbank is a site designed to bring neighbours closer together through exchanging skills and unwanted items. They run a regular newsletter for their members, focused on messages around waste reduction and the sharing economy, with some local content specific to each recipient.

Of particular relevance to this report, the newsletter not only is an important tool for marketing / awareness-raising, but also generates an income through including advertisements from relevant and complimentary businesses, such as Hubbub, Easy Car Ride and Ecotricity. This currently generates approx. £4k of income every year.

www.streetbank.com

*Recommendation 16: **Create a Freegle newsletter,** with national and local elements, combining both current live listings and interest; stories and blogs which show why users should use Freegle.*

Advertising

Another recommendation, building on the previous idea, is to examine where opportunities exist in the Freegle process to build in advertising space, on one or more of the local / national websites. Our conversations with similar organisations suggest that, whilst there were initial concerns about how the membership would accept advertising on their sites, it has not proven to be a significant issue for online users (who are increasingly used to seeing online advertising through their various social networks).

Online advertising can either generate revenue from a standard method (using e.g. banner or margin ads, on a PPC or CPM basis), or from selling ‘sponsorship’ packages for particular areas of the website(s), or indeed the whole site.

For the standard method, advertisers can be found using affiliate networks which will minimise the time requirement to set up advertising revenue streams. A good option might be to tie context-sensitive advertising (e.g. via Google AdSense) in with a search function, so that if (for example), a user comes to Freegle to look for a sofa and doesn’t find one, they are also offered sofas by advertisers on the same page. This is the most likely route to driving income for Freegle from the website.

For the sponsorship method, a local car/van hire company may be willing to advertise – targeting people sourcing bulky items in particular. Alternatively, targeted advertisers may be willing to sponsor specific areas or items, particularly if there could in future be segmented sections of the site (e.g. “Freegle for Parents”).

Recommendation 17: Explore potential for revenue generation via online advertising through respective ‘owned’ channels, including a) developing a fuller understanding of web traffic (and therefore potential revenue), and b) understanding what ‘real estate’ is available.

Event Sponsorship

We note that “workplace Freegle groups” have been trialled in the past, but with disappointing take-up. Nonetheless, social enterprise Restart, who work in a similar space to Freegle (using volunteers to repair electrical items to prevent them being thrown away) generates some income by running corporate and university events.

Universities in particular have been very successful in terms of take-up. Students are an easy audience, with limited budgets and having grown up in a ‘throw-away’ culture. Whilst it is not strictly within Eden district, it may be worth exploring running an event with University of Cumbria in Carlisle, which would have the added benefit of engaging with a younger audience (something which P&E Freegle have so far struggled with).

Recommendation 18: Contact local businesses to ‘pitch’ working with them. Create introductory letter and send out to relevant local businesses, offering a range of options to get involved, either through donations of items to list, event sponsorship or advertising in newsletters.



Case Study: Restart events

The Restart Project is a London-based social enterprise that encourages and empowers people to use their electronics longer, by sharing repair and maintenance skills. The events that they run for the general public are free, however they generate part of their income through running events for companies and for universities, where they repair electronics for staff or students, for a fee. Currently this generates around 45% of their income.

<https://therestartproject.org/>

3. Fund raising

Alternatively, seeking external funds could allow Penrith and Eden Freegle to implement new marketing strategies in order to increase numbers using the platform. There are several avenues available for funding, including grant and crowdfunding.

Projects to raise awareness or generate further funding

Grant funding could be used to trial more ambitious projects such as a give and take pop-up shop, which could be run in collaboration with a local recycling centre, a local authority site, or in an empty shop space (to make it easily accessible for locals). Making productive use of empty space may also be a convenient tax break for the freehold owner. [Invest in Eden](#) has a specialised land and premises team, who may be able to advise on finding temporary sites.



Case Study: SITA UK – Re-use Pop-Up Shop

SITA UK runs the North Tyneside Household Waste Recycling Centre on behalf of North Tyneside Council. Sita has recently run pop-up shop events, selling on items thrown away by members of the public, that are better re-used rather than recycling or going to waste. They generated enough money to make donations to two charities.

As well as raising money for charity (chosen by the council's Chairman), the event helped to promote re-use and recycling in the borough.

"Not only will these two very worthy causes benefit, but people can pick up a bargain while helping the environment. It is fantastic that so many items are being diverted from landfill and more ideas are being developed to recycle waste." (Cllr Janet Hunter)

http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/browse-display.shtml?p_ID=549194&p_subjectCategory=23

Grants

Applying to Trusts and Foundations can be a very time consuming process. Since maintaining the platform is led by volunteers, it may be easier to access grant funding with the support of a professional grant finder, such as Granted (<http://www.grantedltd.co.uk>).

Alternatively [Fundfindr](#) and [Beehive](#) help find funds to apply for. Key relevant funders to consider applying to include Esmee Fairbairn and Tudor Trust. It may also be worth exploring WRAP (<http://www.wrap.org.uk/category/what-we-offer/funding>) for grant funding.

[Cumbria Community Foundation](#) has a huge variety of grants (e.g. [Community investment Fund](#)) providing investment of between £250,000 and £1m in community based, locally-led organisations which are providing essential support and services to improve the well-being of local residents, developing the local economy and creating positive social change for all individuals in the community.

Cumbria County Council has a [Community Waste Prevention Fund](#), which would be worth exploring.

Finally, it will be helpful to keep abreast of funding opportunities by strengthening networking with other local / regional third sector organisations. Attending networking events such as [Charity Comms North West](#), or networking events & fundraising clinics run by the [Institute of Fundraising North West](#) (which is dedicated to supporting fundraisers across the region).

Recommendation 19: Explore grant funding options through Fundfindr and Beehive, as well as getting in touch with a professional grant fund finder who can support fundraising activities.

Recommendation 20: Connect with the Cumbria Community Foundation to explore other local funding options.

Recommendation 21: Seek out charity networking opportunities and fundraising clinics across the region, to share knowledge from others in the sector about specific opportunities available.

Crowdfunding

Another potential avenue for Freegle is Crowdfunding. The Penrith and Eden Freegle group has around 4,000 members to draw on for a crowdfunding campaign. However, crowdfunding can be time-consuming and it may be necessary to seek some external support to undertake a crowdfunding campaign.

In terms of platform, [Crowdfunder](#) is targeted towards community projects and may be the most suitable for Freegle. Cat Fletcher has already used this platform successfully in 2015 to fundraise for a [Brighton Re-Use Centre](#). We can make an introduction if required.

A crowdfunding campaign may be more suitable to an idea like a give and take pop-up shop, which – being more innovative and visual, and with clear aims and budget – can capture the imagination of potential funders.

*Recommendation 22: **Explore Crowdfunding.** Reach out to Crowdfunder and ask about the suitability of P&E Freegle, and the time and resources involved in running a crowdfunding campaign.*

Alternative funding sources

Additionally funding for specific projects or programme-led activity, could be sought through social enterprise loans and incubator projects, such as those outlined below.

- [Big Potential](#): Social investment support and funding for in-depth investment readiness
- [Wayra](#): Telefónicas social incubator programme offering funding
- [Social Incubator North](#): up to £25k interest free investment loan but tailored one-to-one business support, and even access to business premises.

It is likely that these will require a complete understanding of the social and environmental impacts related to any project work supported, as well as a sound and thorough business plan.

*Recommendation 23: **Explore alternative funding sources** such as social enterprise loans and incubator projects, to help expand programme-led activity.*

4. Recommendations

In total, we have made 22 recommendations covering the three core areas of this report.

Increasing Site Usage

*1: **Volunteer review.** How many volunteers are there? Who has expertise that can be useful to the entire network as well as undertaking a volunteer recruitment drive? (with a focus on finding volunteers with skills in specific key areas, such as fundraising).*

*2: **Review user base and segment users** in order to understand them better. Ask users what their main motivation is for using the service, and what would be the most successful methods to keep them coming back.*

*3: **Develop marketing strategy** including elements to respond to different user segments and react to context; both relevant community context (e.g. reaction to floods) and individual life 'events' (e.g. moving house).*

*4: **Develop gamification strategy** for the Freegle website, and ensure that there is a local element to that strategy. Pilot in Penrith & Eden.*

*5: **Improve P&E Freegle's shopfront site.** If funding could be generated to cover the costs for Chris Cant (P&E Freegle's lead volunteer) to develop the site, this template could be rolled out to other Freegle Networks.*

*6: Encourage consistent and **regular sharing of Freegle's (national) posts** by local Freegle groups on their own pages, to reinforce messaging and vision (leading to greater buy-in).*

*7: **Push suggested tweets / Facebook posts** as part of thank-you messages, once an item is exchanged.*

*8: Apply for Google Grants funding and/or share national funding awarded to **test programme of locally-specific PPC ads** to attract new / returning users (or simply to raise brand awareness), particularly those who may be otherwise throwing items away.*

*9: **Identify / recruit local (Penrith & Eden) Freegle champions** who can help to promote the importance of re-use, the Freegle story, and let local people know about the network.*

*10: Create and implement a formalised **support package for Freegle champions**, to be piloted in P&E before sharing nationally.*

*11: **Create Press database**, provide volunteers with press resources and create user surveys (which can award them gamification points for completing) which will generate content for press and media.*

*12: **Set targets and goals for press coverage and links** from other websites in order to drive new and returning users to the site.*

Income Generation

13: Feasibility study for selectively charging fees. Survey members or pilot trial scheme to establish if any of these public-facing fee-based income-generation approaches would be feasible.

14: Community Shares Issue. Consider raising capital and distributing ownership of Freegle through community shares.

15: Develop local business partnerships. For example, contact local waste management companies to discuss potential partnerships.

16: Create a Freegle newsletter, with national and local elements, combining both current live listings and interest; stories and blogs which show why users should use Freegle.

17: Explore potential for revenue generation via online advertising through respective 'owned' channels, including a) developing a fuller understanding of web traffic (and therefore potential revenue), and b) understanding what 'real estate' is available

18: Contact local businesses to 'pitch' working with them. Create introductory letter and send out to relevant local businesses, offering a range of options to get involved, either through donations of items to list, event sponsorship or advertising in newsletters.

Fundraising

19: Explore grant funding options through Fundfindr and Beehive, as well as getting in touch with a professional grant fund finder who can support fundraising activities.

20: Connect with the Cumbria Community Foundation to explore other local funding options.

21: Seek out charity networking opportunities and fundraising clinics across the region, to share knowledge from others in the sector about specific opportunities available.

22: Explore Crowdfunding. Reach out to Crowdfunder and ask about the suitability of P&E Freegle, and the time and resources involved in running a crowdfunding campaign.

23: Explore alternative funding sources such as social enterprise loans and incubator projects, to help expand programme-led activity.