Zero Waste Update for October 2024 Newsletter

The Dark Side of Fast Fashion and buying too many clothes
Fast Fashion is cheaply produced and priced garments that copy the latest catwalk styles and get pumped quickly through stores to make the most of current trends. The biggest fast fashion firms include Zara and H&M.



As a population we are buying too many new clothes and putting too many (just under half) of what we buy into the waste bin, consigning them to landfill or incineration. Both are bad for emissions. We know that incineration to produce energy produces as much CO2 as coal as the latest analysis from the BBC reveals.

The level of recycling has stagnated since COVID and incineration is seen as an alternative to landfill. This and the sheer volume, cheap cost and poor quality of clothing is overwhelming the reuse and recycling sector, including many charity shops - see here for the latest report from WRAP.

You can also watch a very positive 4 min film of Ruben Reuter from Channel 4 visiting Patrick Grant from 'The Great British Sewing Bee' to talk about the harm caused by fast fashion here and what we can do to reduce the harm.

Environmental impact
According to the European Parliament, the fashion industry is estimated to be the cause of **10% of global carbon emissions**. More than international flights and maritime shipping combined! The extensive use of natural

resources including water, energy and oil all adds to the environmental toll, for example it takes 2,700 litres of water to produce one cotton shirt, the equivalent of 2.5 years drinking water for one person.

Of the 100 billion garments produced each year, 92 million tonnes end up in landfill sites – this is a truck full of clothes every second!
Furthermore, brands use synthetic fibres like polyester, nylon and acrylic which take hundreds if not thousands of years to biodegrade. A 2017 report from the International Union for Conservation of Nature estimated that 35% of all micro plastics (tiny pieces of non–biodegradable plastic) in the ocean come from the laundering of synthetic textiles like polyester.

Human and ethical costs
Factories producing garments are often in developing countries where the labour is cheap and the industry largely unregulated both in terms of human welfare and the environment. Garments are often produced in sweat shops with poor working conditions and low pay.

We must act now
See here for steps we can take for a more sustainable planet.