

“The Recycle project is about engaging, supporting and mentoring young people into running the project. It’s not that they are just coming in to buy something and then leave, they are actually benefiting by contributing to the project itself”.

Cindy, Co-Director of Youth Works Recycle



enterprising youth

A group of former County Council youth workers in Warkton have set up a social enterprise called ‘Youth Works’, in response to the continuing devolution of government services to the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Cindy and John, the company’s directors, both have a long history of working with young people, and understand that “the youth in Warkton benefit from motivation and support”, and see this social enterprise as “a good opportunity for us to use our skills to give them a foot up”.

Cindy and John got the idea of setting up an umbrella social enterprise after being made redundant by the council. After accessing enterprise advice from a local support agency to register their company, they began to look for funding to get it up and running. After meeting with Mike, the Local Alchemy coach in the area, the idea of the Recycle project unfolded.

Their passion for working with young people had shown them the benefits of youth working in their own community. Two young volunteers from Warkton, James and Dan, make up the core of the business, with a dozen other volunteers that work on the project a couple of evenings a week, repairing and trading bicycles. James and Dan are both taking a City and Guilds qualification in bicycle repair, which will enable them to have a role in running the project and to train other volunteers.

The coach assisted Cindy and John in detailing the social, economic and environmental aspects of the Recycle project. Any additional bicycles are donated to a local charity which sends bicycles to Africa for healthcare workers to be able to get to and from their patients.

In developing the business plan, with the help of the coach, they were also able to access the Alchemist fund, as well as other income from local councillors whom the volunteers had been lobbying for support. Community backing has also been widespread, with the council providing an office and workspace for the bicycle maintenance, the local Church garage being made available for space to expand the project, and a local shipping company has offered additional financial support.

According to Cindy, “Youth Works Ltd has given us the opportunity to work with many young people who are not in education or training and who have experienced work problems, at their own pace, in the community, and to help develop their confidence and self-esteem”.

Cindy adds that “now that there is a shift in government policy away from direct provision of services and employment, the county council is making funding available for us to deliver. There is support out there for anyone wanting to start a social enterprise and it is important to use it – get the support and give it a go, but you have to put a lot of effort into ensuring that you are well funded – to generate good foundations for when things go wrong”.