

## NOVEMBER – SHOPPING AND STUFF

It is estimated that up to 45% of our carbon footprint is in the stuff that we buy, use and then throw away. At Christmas we go into hyper-drive with our conspicuous consumption and wasteful ways. So let's see if we can all have a Green Christmas and take our good habits with us into the New Year.

It is estimated that over £700m is spent on completely unwanted Christmas presents every year and that only 1% of all Christmas presents are still being used or enjoyed 6 months later. That represents a huge amount of resource heading to landfill or incineration.

### Just Don't Buy It

We clearly don't want to get all bah humbug about it, but how much of the stuff is actually necessary to have a great time? Most people would much prefer your presence than your presents and trashing the planet whilst spoiling the kids has to be one of the great ironies of Christmas. Have a present amnesty or do a Secret Santa so that everyone gets one present rather than a present from everyone.



'It's impossible to disguise the impact of the stuff we buy'

### Buy a Virtual Present and Help Others

Send a Cow was one of the first organisations to promote charitable giving on behalf of a friend or relative. They now do more than cows and have re-branded as The Ripple Effect [www.rippleeffect.org](http://www.rippleeffect.org)

Tree Aid also has an excellent selection of gifts that you can buy for people in the Drylands of Africa from a mighty moringa tree to setting up a family with a beekeeping business [www.treeaid.org](http://www.treeaid.org)

### Presents for Strangers Nearer to Home

How about spreading the love beyond your circle of family and friends and really changing someone's Christmas and perhaps their whole life? For £29.07 you can fund Crisis at Christmas to provide one homeless person with much needed warmth, healthcare, food and company. [www.crisis.org.uk](http://www.crisis.org.uk)

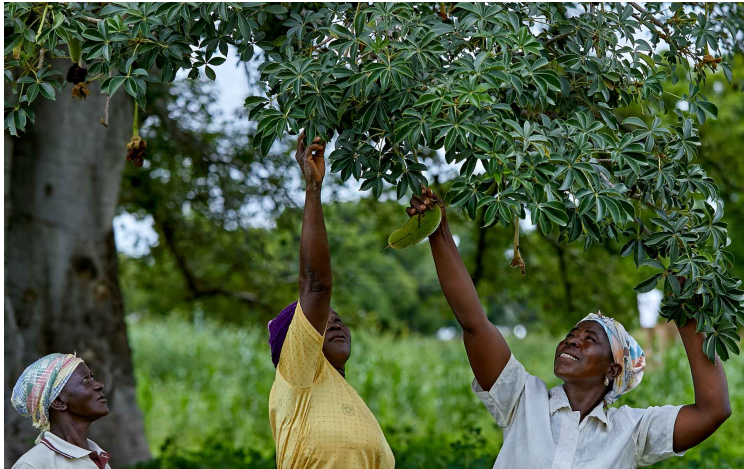
### Buy from Charities

Avoid getting everything from the behemoth that is Amazon and look to buy from charities, knowing that the profit will go towards doing good things. There are of course many charity shops selling second-hand and new items, but many charities also have excellent on-line offers. You can support Julia's House and 200 hospices nationwide at [www.shophospice.uk.org](http://www.shophospice.uk.org). The Centre for Alternative Technology has an excellent eco-store [www.store.cat.org.uk](http://www.store.cat.org.uk) whilst Crisis (see above) also has a good online offer.

### Eat, Drink and Be Merry

Most of us over-indulge at Christmas and there's little better than being treated with food and drink that we might not buy for ourselves. How about Fair Trade gifts from Traidcraft-the Medjoul dates from Jericho really are the 'king of dates' [www.traidcraftshop.co.uk](http://www.traidcraftshop.co.uk)., organic wine and other drinks from [www.vintageroots.co.uk](http://www.vintageroots.co.uk) or delicious vegan truffles [www.boojabooja.com](http://www.boojabooja.com)

## Purchase an Experience



Rather than buying a thing, how about buying someone an activity? What about learning about nature's larder with the fantastic Fred the Forager

[www.thewildsideoflife.co.uk](http://www.thewildsideoflife.co.uk), a day out on an e-bike in the Cotswolds

[www.cotswoldebikes.co.uk](http://www.cotswoldebikes.co.uk), or take a balloon flight from Royal Victoria Park in Bath

[www.virginballoonflights.co.uk](http://www.virginballoonflights.co.uk) Or alternatively, buy someone a membership eg for the National Trust or Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

**'How about a gift that grows like a baobab tree from Tree Aid?'**

## Plastic Ain't So Fantastic

Try to reduce the plastic in your Christmas and the rest of your life. Many plastics are still incredibly difficult to recycle and therefore most of them aren't. In September 2021 Ferrero Rocher announced that their rather nasty plastic trays for their 'Ambassador's Favourites' could be recycled with specialist recycler Terracycle. This would involve a By Brook resident driving some 45 minutes to the nearest Terracycle depot. Firstly it's not going to happen, and secondly if it did, it would be a horribly unsustainable outcome. Needless to say, Ferrero Rocher were unable to tell us how many of their plastic items Terracycle have actually recycled.

There are plenty of options if you type 'plastic free gifts' into the Ecosia search engine (more on this next month).

## Cut the Wrap!

It was once reported that wrapping paper used at Christmas in the UK alone would stretch from the earth to the moon. The huge ecological impact of this is worsened by the fact that much of it is impossible to recycle. Anything with glitter or other plastic elements which make the paper 'unscrunchable' have to be thrown in the waste. You can find more facts along with tips on stylish alternatives, as well as signing a pledge to cutthewrap# at Zoe Morrison's [www.ecothriftyliving.com](http://www.ecothriftyliving.com)

Around a billion Christmas cards are sent every year in the UK alone. Try to cut down where you can without upsetting Great Aunt Maud. Many of our churches enable people to sign a community card in the church, with money saved going to charity. If you do use Christmas cards buy sustainable ones from a charity and for those you receive, either re-use for labels or recycle.

**And Don't Forget to Support Your Local Independent Traders**-supporting local shops and makers will help to keep money in the local area and make our community as vibrant as possible.

## What can we do now?

We can all follow the above tips and prepare for a greener, fairer Christmas. Enjoy!

**Our final edition edition is all about Influence-how can we effect positive change for the planet.**

Get in touch at [mike@vertigosdc.com](mailto:mike@vertigosdc.com)

MIKE ROBERTS