

Change Makers: Derby furniture charity voted UK's leading waste reduction enterprise

June 14, 2024



A charity tackling food insecurity which is expanding to redistribute second-hand furniture and white goods to people who need them most has been voted the UK's leading waste reduction enterprise.

Derby Furniture Alliance, part of Derby Food 4 Thought Alliance, stops perfectly good items from going to landfill by giving them to people in the city who might otherwise struggle to afford them.

After a public vote, the furniture project was yesterday announced as the winner of Biffa's national Change Makers competition, which was launched to celebrate innovative grassroots organisations working hard to reduce waste and its impact on the environment.

The group provides essential household furniture and kitchen appliances to people from all walks of life who need a helping hand, from those fleeing domestic violence and war, to young families and the elderly struggling with the rising cost of living.

All items are donated by members of the public or local businesses.

Derby Furniture Alliance, founded by Paul Brookhouse and Chandra Morbey, will now receive £10,000 prize money to invest in the project, alongside tailored business support from Biffa, the UK leader in sustainable waste management.

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Paul Brookhouse said: “Biffa’s prize money and support will make such a huge difference. It means we’ll be able to properly launch the project, get a dedicated space to store the items, and build an organised team.

“In our first year alone, we’ll be able to divert 500 to 1,000 pieces of furniture and electrical items from landfill, which would help 200 to 400 households in Derby and the South Derbyshire borders.”

Paul said they eventually plan to open a multi-agency one-stop shop in Derby city centre for people to access help and advice on a range of welfare-related subjects. They also want to provide training opportunities in appliance repair and refurbishment.

The four other Change Makers finalists recycle marine plastic in Cornwall, redistribute used running shoes in Sussex, repair and reuse unwanted IT equipment in Bolton, and repurpose old textiles in London.

The winner was announced at Biffa’s flagship Waste Net Zero conference in Birmingham yesterday, where sustainability experts from the business and wider industry explored how the UK can improve the circularity of materials and packaging.

Alongside re-use and redistribution, recycling produces fewer emissions than disposal, and having to use virgin materials to make new goods from scratch. This not only helps in the fight against climate change but ensures the preservation of valuable natural resources.

Martyn Mathias, Biffa’s regional depot manager, said: “We received over 150 inspiring entries from entrepreneurs working to reduce waste for the benefit of their community and the environment.

“Derby Furniture Alliance is the absolute epitome of that, and we’re really excited at the prospect of working with them to support their big plans for the future.”