

Climate Solutions Forum for October - Report by Kate Bailey

Over the last few months, as we explained in last month's Forum, our group has been working to find practical solutions to local environmental issues. We are delighted that Sue has found a sustainable recycling system for empty medicine blister packs and this is proving to be popular amongst members who have found the system in Boots shops to be inconvenient. We will be providing a collections bag and a donations box at each monthly meeting and the group convenors will also be accepting empty blister packs. The Terracycle 'bin' will hold 7500 blister packs and, because we have to pay for its collection and recycling treatment, we are asking members to make a small payment every time they donate their blister packs.

In October we shared news of 'Clothes Swaps' and 'Textile Recycling' projects that will put our discarded items to good use. We also learned about the many innovative ways that fabrics for clothing are produced without oil being the principal raw material. Some of these projects started as solutions to plant waste from food production, following estimates that about 1.3 billion tonnes of food produced for human consumption are disposed of each year.

For example, wine-making grape waste in Italy is being turned into fibres, yarns and even leather substitutes for clothing in H&M shops. The Swiss QWSTION back-pack company is using 'Bananatex' yarn made in Taiwan from banana plant fibres; the plants regrow within a year so these products are very sustainable. In Kenya the stalks of green nettles, planted to prevent soil degradation and erosion, are used to produce fibres similar to the linen from flax plants. Bamboo, coconut, apple, mango, cactus, pineapple leaf and banana peel waste is being dried and processed in different countries to produce yarn for clothing and textiles and to reduce the vast quantities of plant waste going to landfill.

There is 'Good News' this month about the world's first microfibre recycling plant, recently opened in Bude, Cornwall, which aims to stop plastic particles, shed by synthetic fabrics during washing, from polluting rivers and oceans. Two different fungi, that release enzymes that digest polyurethane plastics, have been discovered in Pakistan and the Amazon Basin. There are hopes that these organisms may lead to the development of affordable 'nature-based' solutions to plastic waste that will operate in weeks rather than centuries. The BBC reported this month that renewable energy has overtaken coal and the world's leading source of electricity in the first half of 2025. And the International Energy Agency has forecast that global renewable electricity generation will increase by almost 90% between 2023 and 2030. In 2025 China (with a sixth of the world's population) has supplied or installed about half of the world's new renewable energy equipment but remains, with the USA, one of the biggest emitters of CO₂.