

### Just hot air?

It might make you feel better, but can carbon offsetting really help? WWF's Kirsty Clough reports



● The theory of offsetting is simple. A tonne of carbon dioxide pollution has the same impact on the climate, regardless of whether it's released in Bangladesh or Birmingham – so paying for emission reductions elsewhere might be just as good as reducing emissions at home. This approach underpins the carbon-offsetting industry, which is now attracting huge interest.

WWF thinks that offsetting can play a limited part in a strategy to reduce carbon emissions. However, offsetting itself isn't a long-term solution to climate change – it simply won't deliver the large emissions reductions required to ensure that we avoid the most dangerous impacts of climate change.

The priority must be firmly placed on decarbonising our own lifestyles – not carrying on with our current behaviour while exporting our emissions reductions to the developing world. Indeed, there's a real risk that offsetting is becoming a distraction from the actions that need to be taken by government, business and individuals to put the world on a low-carbon trajectory. If too much emphasis is put on 'easy' options like offsetting, rather than dealing with the root cause of climate change – our ever-increasing consumption of fossil fuels – then we'll be doing little more than putting a sticking-plaster on a severed limb.

Another serious concern is that the

market for carbon offsets is currently entirely unregulated – and many offsets on the market lack any credibility at all. The growing number of stories in the media pointing to offset projects that have failed to deliver real emission reductions (or benefits to the host community in a developing country) suggest that if you're considering offsetting, you should seek the highest standards to be sure you're actually making a difference.

The Gold Standard for offset projects is an independent, transparent, internationally recognised benchmark for 'high-quality' carbon offset projects, supported by more than 40 environment and development NGOs, including WWF. This standard ensures that projects generate real, additional reductions, and deliver real, sustainable development benefits to the host community. Showing that a project has wider social benefits is crucial if offsetting is ever to be seen as anything more than transferring the responsibility for tackling climate change from north to south. Retailers selling offsets from projects that meet the Gold Standard criteria include Atmosfair ([www.atmosfair.de](http://www.atmosfair.de)) and Climate Friendly ([www.climatefriendly.org](http://www.climatefriendly.org)).

**Ffi:** [www.cdmgoldstandard.org/background.php?id=50](http://www.cdmgoldstandard.org/background.php?id=50) WWF's *One Planet Living*: [www.uwf.org.uk/oneplanet/what\\_you\\_can\\_do.asp](http://www.uwf.org.uk/oneplanet/what_you_can_do.asp)

refugees to the UK. *Contact:* [www.bristolrefugeeweek.co.uk](http://www.bristolrefugeeweek.co.uk), [www.refugeeweek.org](http://www.refugeeweek.org)

**STUDENT ACTION FOR REFUGEES (STAR)** *Contact:* Katherine Blaker (chief executive) 3 Bondway, Vauxhall, London SW8 1SJ. Tel: 020 7840 4442 Web: [www.star-network.org.uk](http://www.star-network.org.uk)

## REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

**ACORRN** Local network of re-use and recycling organisations with an email newsgroup open to its members. *Web:* [www.groups.yahoo.com/group/acornn](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/acornn)

**ACTION AID RECYCLING** collect empty printer cartridges and unwanted mobile phones, with 80% of profits paid to charity. Free, same-day collection available in Bristol. Also supply competitively priced branded and compatible cartridges. *Contact:* 14 Kingsland Trading Estate, St Philips Rd, Bristol BS2 0JZ. Tel: 0117 304 2390 Email: [recycling@aarecycling.org.uk](mailto:recycling@aarecycling.org.uk) Web: [www.actionaidrecycling.org.uk](http://www.actionaidrecycling.org.uk)

**BRISTOL WOOD RECYCLING PROJECT** offer sustainable re-used timber, low prices and great service. Wood for DIY, craft and gardening needs. Shelves, raised beds, etc, made to order. Firewood available, too. *Contact:* 13 Cattle Market Rd, St Philips, Bristol BS1 6QW. Tel: 0117 972 3219 Web: [www.burp.org.uk](http://www.burp.org.uk)

**CHILDREN'S SCRAPSTORE** provides low-cost waste materials for creative re-use by its member groups. Membership open to any group working in a creative play, care, educational or therapeutic setting. Artrageous, the low-cost art and craft shop, is open to the public. *Contact:* Caitlyn Jones, Children's Scrapstore, The Proving House, Sevier St, St Werburghs, Bristol BS2 9LB. Tel: 0117 908 2090 Email: [enquiries@childrensscrapstore.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@childrensscrapstore.co.uk) Web: [www.childrensscrapstore.co.uk](http://www.childrensscrapstore.co.uk)

**BURIED TREASURE** provides education, training, volunteering and employment opportunities for people, through projects such as computer recycling, organic environmental gardening and wood recycling. Also provide a commercial service to businesses to recycle their computers and timber. *Contact:* The Park, Daventry Rd, Knowle, Bristol BS4 1QD. Tel: 0117 903 9782 Email: [buriedtreasure2001@hotmail.com](mailto:buriedtreasure2001@hotmail.com)

**COMMUNITY RECYCLING NETWORK (CRN)** National voluntary organisation which aims to promote community recycling as a practical and effective way of tackling the UK's growing waste problem. Provides advice, training, information and practical initiatives for over 300 local projects in the UK. *Contact:* 57 Prince St, Bristol BS1 4QH. Tel: 0117 942 0142 Fax: 0117 934 9947 Email: [info@crn.org.uk](mailto:info@crn.org.uk) Web: [www.crn.org.uk](http://www.crn.org.uk)

**ECT COMMERCIAL** Part of the UK's largest community recycling organisation, providing recycling services to small and large business across South Wales and the west of England. *Contact:* ECT Commercial Recycling, 112 Burcott Rd, Avonmouth, Bristol BS11 8AF. Tel: 0117 982 3835 Web: [www.ectgroup.co.uk](http://www.ectgroup.co.uk) Bristol contact: ECT Recycling, Eastville Depot, New Stadium Rd, Eastville, Bristol BS5 6NL. Tel: 0117 982 3825 Fax: 0117 951 8197 Email: [bristol@ectrecycling.co.uk](mailto:bristol@ectrecycling.co.uk) Bath contact: ECT Recycling, Midland Rd Depot, Upper Bristol Rd, Bath BA1 3AT. Email: [bath@ectrecycling.co.uk](mailto:bath@ectrecycling.co.uk)

**EMMAUS** sell secondhand goods in shops in St Philips and 19 Broad Weir, all reconditioned by formerly homeless people in their workshop. *Contact:* David Perry (community manager), Emmaus Bristol, Barton Manor, St Philips, Bristol BS2 0RL. Tel: 0117 954 0886 Email: [community@emmausbristol.org.uk](mailto:community@emmausbristol.org.uk) Web: [www.emmausbristol.org.uk](http://www.emmausbristol.org.uk)

**FREecycle BRISTOL** Grassroots movement of people giving away stuff for free. Each group is run by local volunteer moderators. Membership is free and everything posted must be free. *Web:* (local) [www.groups](http://www.groups)

*Race Relations*, 2-6 Leeke St, London WC1X 9HS. Tel: 020 7837 0041/7833 2010 Email: [info@irr.org.uk](mailto:info@irr.org.uk) Web: [www.irr.org.uk](http://www.irr.org.uk)

**INFORMATION CENTRE FOR ASYLUM & REFUGEES (ICAR)** explores ways of improving the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. *Contact:* Schools of Social Sciences, City University, Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB. Tel: 020 7040 4596 Email: [icar@city.ac.uk](mailto:icar@city.ac.uk) Web: [www.icar.org.uk](http://www.icar.org.uk)

**REFUGEE ACTION** provides advice and support to refugees and asylum seekers across the SW region (apart from Devon and Cornwall), and works to influence public attitudes to ensure that refugees are welcomed. *Contact:* 9 Hide Market, West St, St Philips, Bristol BS2 0BH. Tel: 0117 941 5960 Fax: 0117 955 5036 Web: [www.refugee-action.org.uk](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk)

**REFUGEE COUNCIL** offers advice for asylum seekers, refugees and their organisations in Britain, is actively involved in policy formulation and promotes refugee rights at home and abroad. *Contact:* Refugee Council Head Office, 240-250 Ferndale Rd, London SW9 8BB. Tel: 020 7346 6700 Advice line: 020 7346 6777 Web: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

**REFUGEE LEGAL CENTRE** *Contact:* 153-157 Commercial

Rd, London E1 2DA. Tel: 020 7780 3200 Email: [rlc@refugee-legal-centre.org.uk](mailto:rlc@refugee-legal-centre.org.uk) Web: [www.refugee-legal-centre.org.uk](http://www.refugee-legal-centre.org.uk)

**REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL** *Contact:* 1705 N Street NW, Washington DC 20036. Tel: +1 202 828 0110 Email: [ri@refintl.org](mailto:ri@refintl.org) Web: [www.refugeesinternational.org](http://www.refugeesinternational.org)

**REFUGEE STUDIES CENTRE** The leading multidisciplinary centre for research, teaching, dissemination and capacity building on the causes and consequences of forced migration worldwide. *Contact:* Department of International Development, University of Oxford, Mansfield Rd, Oxford OX1 3TB. Tel: 01865 270722 Web: [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk)

**REFUGEE SUPPORT PROJECT (RSP)** provides support for elderly and disabled members of local refugee groups and general/educational support for families with young children. Information and advice service available where English is not the first language. *Contact:* St Werburghs Community Centre, Horley Rd, St Werburghs, Bristol BS2 9TJ. Tel: 0117 904 7696 Email: [rspoffice@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:rspoffice@ukonline.co.uk)

**REFUGEE WEEK** UK-wide programme of arts, cultural and educational events that celebrate the contribution of