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Light Rain

Inside The Recycle Project: giving new life to unwanted items

Jorvik Radio gets a sneak peak of The Recycle Project, a local community interest company that is “turning waste into opportunity.”

The Recycle Project is on a mission to prevent as much waste as they can and bring new life to unwanted items.

Annie Goodwin, community liaison and workshop coordinator, and Darren Thompson, workshop leader and expert joiner, gave Jorvik Radio a behind the scenes tour of their new premises located in the Yorvale Business Park on Hazel Court in York.

“It’s about finding new homes for these things”, says Annie. She explains that they have to look at the rescued items and think, “How much life does that product have left in it? How can we keep it going?”

They explained how The Recycle Project is trying to promote the circular economy by finding new and creative ways to use discarded items.

Each month, they save over 20 tonnes of reusable waste from across North Yorkshire from going to landfills or incinerators. Until now, they have been storing and selling items from their warehouse in Heslington. Their new site will allow them to connect with the community by providing refurbishing and upcycling workshops. It will also serve as a shop where people will be able to browse and purchase items at low cost.

Other than the two workshop spaces and some staff areas, everything in the building is for sale. “We are a shop, so we are open for trade,” Darren explains. Once the workshops and sales floor are up and running, they plan to open an online shop on their website.



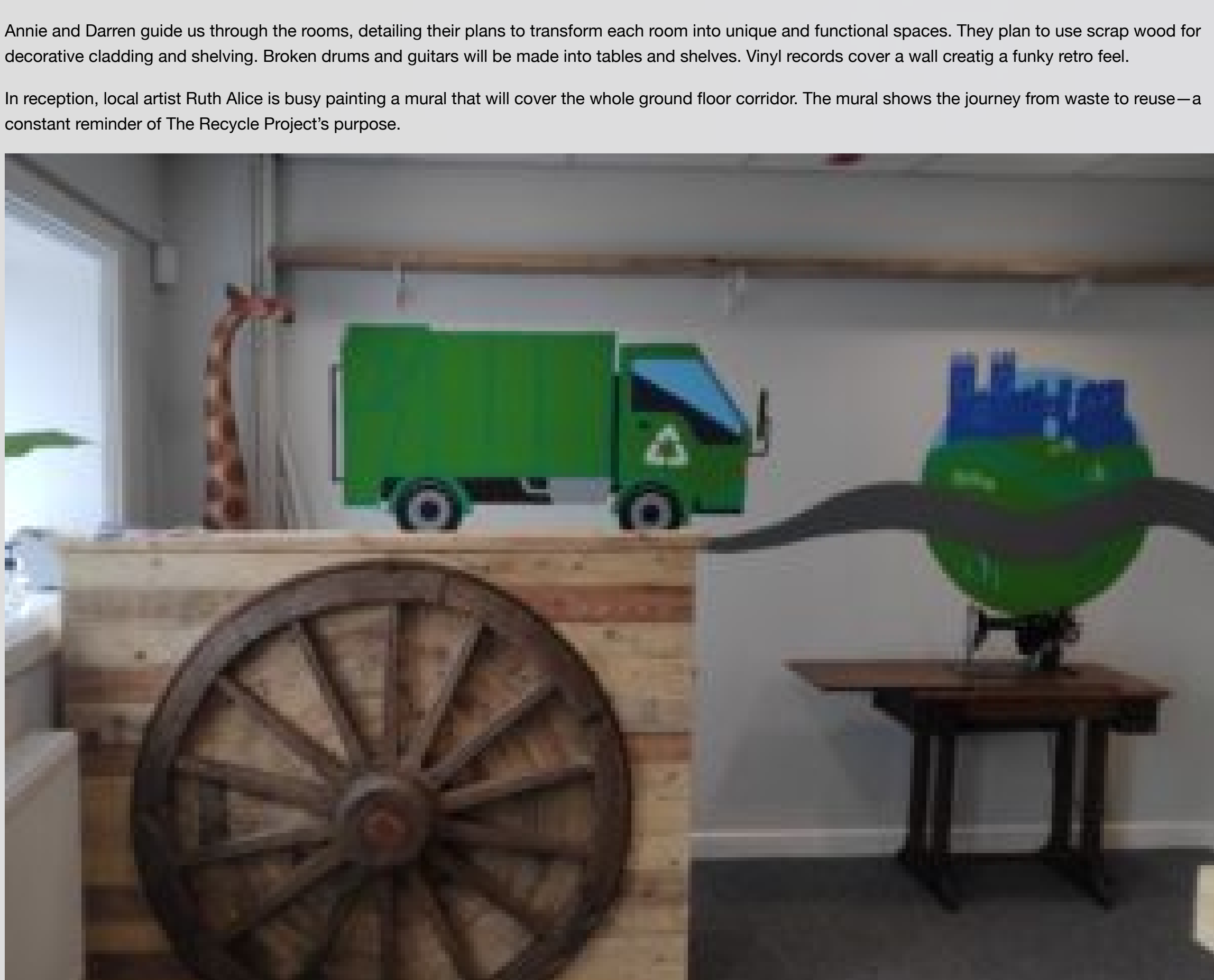
The initial concept for what is now The Recycle Project was dreamt up a few years ago by Bradley Mulhearn, the owner of the local bike shop ReCycle York. A few others got on board and started to turn that vision into a reality.

Plans to open their new site were put on hold when the pandemic and lockdown restrictions hit. With restrictions now easing, they are taking the opportunity to get their premises up and running.

Weeks before their planned opening in early June, The Recycle Project is alive with activity. “We are very much just in the middle of it now,” Annie says as she takes us through the site. “We’re really, really working hard to get the premises ready to open the doors for everybody.”

Annie and Darren guide us through the rooms, detailing their plans to transform each room into unique and functional spaces. They plan to use scrap wood for decorative cladding and shelving. Broken drums and guitars will be made into tables and shelves. Vinyl records cover a wall creating a funky retro feel.

In reception, local artist Ruth Alice is busy painting a mural that will cover the whole ground floor corridor. The mural shows the journey from waste to reuse—a constant reminder of The Recycle Project’s purpose.



The Recycle Project wants to do more than reduce waste. Through their free workshops, they hope to create opportunities for local people to interact and connect with one another after a year of isolation and restriction due to the pandemic.

“A lot of people have been suffering with isolation and things like that and we just want to provide a nice community space for people to learn new skills, make friends and be a part of something exciting really,” says Annie.

They want to make the sessions inclusive and open to everyone regardless of age, background, skills and ability. “Anybody can come,” says Darren. “We’re aiming towards the whole community to come down. All the courses are going to be free. So, anybody can come and join in.”

With a background in social work and mental health, Annie sees these workshops as a way to help people learn new skills and improve their wellbeing. She also plans to work with local organisations and social prescribers to create a referral system for their workshops.

Annie believes that selling low cost items and offering free workshops is another way to help those who have suffered financially during the pandemic. “York is an expensive place to live, so the fact that the workshops are free, we thought that would be a really great way to give back.”



Workshops will include beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. “We wanted to do that so there was something for everyone,” Annie says.

The beginners sessions will be based in their classroom style workshop and will involve simpler projects based around arts and crafts such as creating keychains from Legos, and coat hooks from golf clubs. They will create “the sorts of things you see on Pinterest...People love stuff like that,” explains Annie. “We get such an abundance of items that we can create so much.”

“The intermediate courses will be reusing pallet wood and building things out of that like planters ...or maybe even a table,” says Darren and Annie will be leading the intermediate and advanced sessions in the wood work area. “The advanced courses will be actually taking some stuff that we get in and actually reconfiguring it into something completely different.”

Darren talks about burning their logo into original creations from their workshops. “Hopefully, we can start building a brand ourselves of unique one-off pieces done through community help.”

Refurbished and upcycled items from their workshops will make their way onto the sales floor, with any profits going back into providing workshops.



Right now, there are six people involved in getting The Recycle Project up and running. Within the team, they have an impressive range of expertise in areas such as joinery, sales, bike mechanics, counselling, mental health and marketing.

“We are just normal people with families and lives and we’ve just pulled together,” says Annie. She talks about the work they are doing and confesses that she had no idea that she would get this invested in it.

They are hoping to recruit volunteers and some staff down the line. But until then, they are all working nearly full time to create a welcoming space for the community.

When asked how many people they are expecting to come through their doors over the next 12 months, Darren and Annie look at each other with uncertain smiles.

“I couldn’t give you a number,” Annie responds. “A lot. I’m hoping a lot.”

You can listen to Darren and Annie’s interview with Jorvik Radio’s Bill Colman on the Tuesday, 11 May episode of *Love in the Morning* (<https://listenagain.jorvikradio.com/LoveInTheMorning>).

You can find out more about The Recycle Project on their [website](https://therecycleprojectcic.com/) (<https://therecycleprojectcic.com/>) and follow them on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/therecycleprojectCIC) (<https://www.facebook.com/therecycleprojectCIC>) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/the_recycle_project_york/) (https://www.instagram.com/the_recycle_project_york/).

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