

A stitch in time



SIMON BIRCH talks to **Bryony Moore** about her work with a pioneering project that's challenging the fashion industry.

Bryony Moore is on a mission – with a sewing machine. The Manchester-based activist is taking on the environmentally destructive fashion industry one stitch at a time.

How? By getting people to rethink their clothes-shopping habits through teaching them the skills they need to keep their clothes firmly in their wardrobe and, crucially, out of the dustbin.

“It's estimated that every year in the UK we send around 300,000 tonnes of clothing to landfill,” says Moore.

And there's more bad news:

“Textile production creates more greenhouse gas emissions annually than all international flights and maritime shipping combined,” states Moore. Not good.

Along with two other friends, Moore helped set up Stitched Up in 2011, a not-for-profit co-op based in Manchester.

“Our name, Stitched Up, refers to the way we feel that the fashion industry affects its workers, shoppers and the planet,” explains Moore, adding that.

“All three of us come from a creative background and have a shared liking of clothes and style. However, we also have a shared concern about the environmental and ethical impact of the fashion industry.”

Having been a researcher for five years with Ethical Consumer and with an interest in the fashion industry, Moore knows only too well just how difficult it is to bring about meaningful change within the fashion industry:

“I got to know in detail how the fashion industry works and its massively negative impact, especially regarding workers' rights.”

“I realised that the industry wasn't going to change any time soon, so I decided to do something practical about it,” adds Moore, explaining why she helped launch Stitched Up.

So how is Stitched Up taking on the fast fashion industry?

Almost ten years on from their launch, Stitched Up now runs a packed programme with everything from sewing and upcycling workshops to clothes swaps and sustainable fabric sales.

“What we aim to do is to get people to stop shopping for new clothes and instead start fixing what they've already



Bryony Moore, one of the founders of the groundbreaking **Stitched Up** project.

© Stitched Up

got. Being creative, practical and visual is a really good way to engage people in the issues,” says Moore.

“Our base acts as a hub where people can get together and learn new skills to help them keep the

same clothes they already have and not throw them away just because, for example, a zip's broken or a tear needs fixing.”

“Most people think that they'll get rid of their trousers if they get a small hole in them but once they're shown how to fix this they're really pleased with themselves.”

“It's all about learning how to repair clothes, which is something our parents and grandparents used to do, and to learn how to dress more sustainably,” explains Moore, adding that:

“There's now a real skills gap because sewing isn't being taught in schools any more as it's been axed like so many creative subjects.”

The message from Moore is simple: by keeping our clothes in use for longer and by swapping, upcycling and repairing them, we can make big reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

It's estimated that every year in the UK we send around 300,000 tonnes of clothing to landfill

“Sustainable fashion should be for everyone and it doesn't matter what age or gender you are,” believes Moore.

“So, our next stage is to increase the access to our work by working with a wide range of people. This includes vulnerable adults and young people as well as working in

low-income areas of Manchester. It's important that we're not just reaching middle-class white women.”

And what of the future?

“The plan is to stay in Manchester but open more branches,” says Moore, adding that:

“Ideally every town and city in the country would have a version of us.”