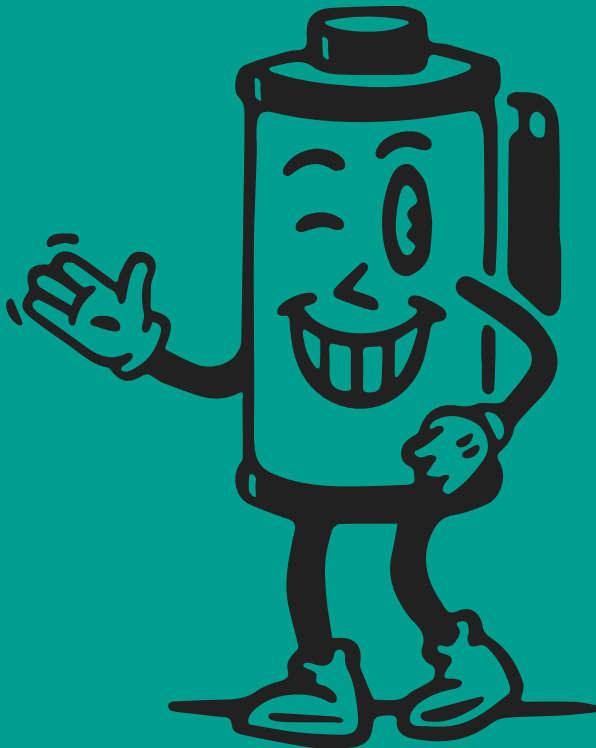


TAKE IT EASY



Set up in 2020, Take it Easy is an independent photographic lab based in Leeds, with a focus on creating an inclusive community and space for photographers to develop film, learn and share experiences. I spoke with Louise Fletcher, Head of Marketing and Lab Assistant at Take it Easy about their approach to sustainability and creating a photographic community.

Interviewer Megan Wilson-De La Mare

MW Can you tell us about your experience working alongside photographers using film and their attitudes to sustainable development methods? In what ways have you incorporated this into your approach at Take it Easy?

LF Like in any industry, we know that running a film lab can create a lot of waste and we try our best to be as sustainable as possible. I think that in general both film labs and film photographers are much more concerned about sustainability now and are trying to reduce this waste wherever possible. We're always looking at ways we can improve and we know this is something that our customers appreciate. It's great to see other labs also coming up with creative ways to reduce waste, as well as places like The Sustainable Darkroom popping up, who help to educate people about environmentally friendly photographic darkroom practices.

MW What measures have been put in place at Take it Easy to reduce waste?

LF Our chemical waste is collected in the lab using a Metafix filtration system. This filters the chemicals meaning the waste is safe to be poured down a drain. The silver from the developing process is also recovered via this system, and can later be used to make things like jewellery or cutlery.

We also keep the metal film canisters that come from processing film and sell them to customers who can use them to reload cameras or use them in crafts. All of the money from these

sales goes to Map, a Leeds-based charity that is an alternative education provider working with young people who are unable to access the mainstream school system. Additionally, we supply plastic film canisters to local based Motley Plastics, a bespoke fabrication studio with a passion for sustainability and supporting the local community. These canisters are melted down into slabs and are used to create beautiful objects such as tables and coasters. We feel it's important to be proactive about sustainability, so we do not sell disposable cameras as they're such an archaic and wasteful means of taking photographs. We're also always keen to try and investigate new ways of reducing our environmental impact as much as possible.

MW What has been important to you in developing a photographic community at Take it Easy?

LF It's important to us that we try to create an inclusive film community – we don't want people to feel intimidated walking into the lab. We want it to be a space for everyone no matter whether you're a professional photographer or you are just starting out, and we're always happy to help or give advice. This is also one of the reasons behind starting Make It Easy. Along with The Photo Parlour in Nottingham we decided to see how we could create a space to support people, from beginners to practitioners, in making the mystery of analogue photography simple. We do this through online resources, as well as physical access to facilities such as cameras, darkrooms and scanners. In essence, our goal is to move away from the convoluted way in which labs have traditionally operated and focus on creating an inclusive and accessible environment. ○