

## Cornish Real Nappy Project Press Statement

23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005

### Why washables are still the best option...

Last week the Environment Agency published the findings of a £200,000 research report on the environmental impact of nappies. It concluded that there is no significant difference between the environmental impacts of disposable nappies and washable nappies. So what does this mean for the increasing number of washable nappy users in Cornwall who believe they are doing their bit for the environment?

**Member Concern:** In the past few days the Cornish Real Nappy Project, managed by ReZolve Kernow, has been asked many questions about the report by its members. Concerns have been raised about why the report did not consider the fact that disposable nappies are the largest single-item household contributor to landfill sites. Or the fact that a baby using disposable nappies produces approximately one tonne of nappy waste during its time in nappies and that for every pound spent on disposable nappies, the taxpayer has to spend 10p disposing of them.

It has also been questioned why some key assumptions in the report are based on only 32 responses out of a total of 2,000 people surveyed. One particular assumption points to the fact that parents use 47.5 washable nappies a week yet most parents find that about 20 are adequate!

**Get Real!** The report considers the energy used to iron nappies in its findings? How many parents actually iron their nappies? It has also been assumed that people who are environmentally conscious enough to be using washable nappies, tumble dry them? Furthermore, the energy consumption of washing machines has been based upon those available in 1997, rather than modern, energy- efficient models. Emphasis is given in the report to people who wash their nappies at 90°C, instead of the 60°C as recommended by manufacturers.

**CRNP Response:** Bec Thomas, project manager for CRNP said *'We are currently preparing a response to the Environment Agency report raising a number of concerns with regard to the assumptions made. CRNP has been promoting the use of washable nappies within the county for the past 4 years, one of its core aims is to reduce the quantity of disposable nappies going to landfill, a very real problem for Cornwall and one that is solved by choosing washables. Another aim is to provide parents with a fully informed choice so they can make up their own minds as to what is best for them and their baby'. Bec goes on to explain 'Using washable nappies, for many parents, is not just about having some control over their own environmental impact, for example, choosing to buy green energy and environmentally friendly detergents, washing at lower heats and line drying, for many it's also about saving money and controlling what chemicals get used next to our baby's skin. Using washable nappies can save upwards of £500, and even more if the same nappies are used on other children'*

It's not just CRNP that have something to say about the report, a number of national organisations have concerns;

**Women's Environmental Network:** "This lifecycle analysis is a wasted opportunity to put the long-standing debate about nappies and the environment to rest," says WEN's Ann Link. "It says what most other LCAs have: that both systems use similar amounts of energy but the disposable system uses more materials and puts more into landfill. But it has missed the point of its own findings. Even in its current flawed state it shows that parents who use cloth nappies can save waste confident in the knowledge that washing them will cause no more global warming than disposable nappies. The biggest impacts it identifies are all to do with energy production and use - abiotic resource depletion (fossil fuel use), global warming and acidification - yet if parents use 24 nappies and follow manufacturers' instructions to wash at 60°C using an A rated washing machine they will have approximately 24% less impact on global warming than the report says."

**Nappy Alliance:** Guy Schanschieff, Chairman of the Nappy Alliance, said 'Whilst the report is certainly a starting point, it is flawed, and we are disappointed that we were not consulted prior to it being compiled. It fails to adequately capture new and up to date information regarding consumer use characteristics in the UK for reusable nappies, particularly with respect to new products in the market versus more traditional reusable nappies. Furthermore, it fails to take into account that modern reusables offer parents more scope to reduce their environmental impact and as reusable nappy manufacturers we have already made good progress in this area by producing nappies that don't require pre-soaking and can be washed at lower temperatures.'

And the final comment goes to a local dad from Fowey 'If the impacts are just the same for both I know which one I prefer – the one that saves us money, prevents waste and is best for my baby'.

Agree or disagree with the report? If you have any comments, positive or negative, the Cornish Real Nappy Project would really like to hear them, you can make your comments on line by visiting [www.crnnp.org.uk](http://www.crnnp.org.uk) or calling 0800 328 8175.

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Editors Notes

If you would like images to accompany this press release please contact Beth Moon on 01579 346266

**The Cornish Real Nappy Project**, formed in 2002, is managed by ReZolve Kernow and funded by the County Environmental Trust, CRED, Cornwall County Council and the Environment Agency. Their aim is to reduce the volume of disposable nappy waste going to landfill. Throughout the county the team provides valuable parent to parent information, advice and support on the financial and environmental benefits of real nappies, enabling parents to make a fully informed choice.

Tel: 01579 349316

Website: [www.crnnp.org.uk](http://www.crnnp.org.uk)

e-mail: [info@crnnp.org.uk](mailto:info@crnnp.org.uk)

**The Nappy Alliance** is a member organisation made up of representatives from Alliance members include Bambino Mio, Cotton Bottoms, Green Baby, Little Green

Earthlets, Lollipop, NANS, Perfectly Happy People, The Nappy Lady, Tots Bots, and Twinkle Twinkle, Zorbit and Onelife.

For press information contact Gaye Price-Jones/Leslie Burns

Tel: 0870 7708826

e-mail [info@pjpartnership.co.uk](mailto:info@pjpartnership.co.uk)

**Women's Environmental Network** (WEN) is a registered charity which campaigns on issues which link women, health and the environment. Other current issues include food, chemicals and the environmental impacts of disposable sanitary and continence protection.

Tel: 020 7481 9004

Fax: 020 7481 9144

Website: [www.wen.org.uk](http://www.wen.org.uk)

Email: [nappies@wen.org.uk](mailto:nappies@wen.org.uk)

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Press Office Tel: 01392 442008

Press Office Fax: 01392 442026

Out Of Hours: 01392 442053 (Ask for the duty Press Officer)