

Fashion that will last

Maxine Gordon visits the York boutique where green is the new black Pictures: Garry Atkinson

From washing our clothes at 30C, to switching to energy-efficient light bulbs and even choosing to holiday in the UK, there are endless ways we can reduce our carbon footprint.

Many of us will already be recycling our newspapers and wine bottles and may even have given up the second car in an effort to do our bit to ease global warming.

But does our environmental awakening stretch to what we wear?

Retailers such as New Look and Primark, along with the leading supermarkets, are at the helm of the fast fashion revolution, where new designs, often copied straight from the catwalk, come out almost weekly – and at prices it's hard to resist. In the past 15 years, Brits have doubled what they spend on clothes to £30 billion a year. Perhaps surprisingly, £1 in every £4 spent on clothing now goes on value ranges at stores such as Asda.

But while our increasingly green minds might not think twice about splashing out on organic food or starting a compost heap at the bottom of the garden, it seems we're slower to switch on to the environmental impact of our groaning wardrobes.

Fast fashion produces a damaging double whammy; its sheer demand is a drain on the world's resources, and its disposability is filling up landfill sites.

And if you can buy a T-shirt and a pair of jeans for just a few pounds, it begs the question of who exactly is paying the price.

For consumers who want to shop for clothes with consideration for the environment and ethics, the good news is that eco-friendly fashion is out there and the even better news is that much of it

is absolutely fabulous.

Once dominated by tie-dyed T-shirts and long, beaded skirts, much ethical clothing today is at the cutting end of fashion.

Shoppers can see this for themselves at a new boutique in York city centre, One, in Peter Lane, just round the corner from Superdrug in Market Street.

The light and airy shop, decorated in pretty pastel shades and large, ornate, painted mirrors, speaks of girly boudoir heaven. Delicate cashmere shrugs hang next to lustrous silk skirts; stylish tailored woollen trousers vie for space with pretty fine-cotton wrap dresses with silk trims and sashes.

A Pandora's box of pretty things, there's a fine collection of accessories too, from clutch bags and woven belts, to beads and jewels and shoes.

For the upcoming party season, it offers some glamorous outfits which are also one-offs.

The boutique's slogan is "fashion with a clear conscience" and the website address is www.responsiblygorgeous.co.uk – which says it all, really.

Owner Anne McCrickard says: "We sell fashion-conscious clothes for people with a conscience."

Everything in the shop has to pass certain ethical standards. Suppliers have to show their products use verifiable organic materials or conduct fair trade business with developing countries.

Labels available at One include People Tree, Ciel, Stewart+Brown, Makepiece, Deborah Lindquist and Satya. New for autumn and winter are cashmere collections from Mudra, a Nepalese label which helps raise funds for a local orphanage.

Many of Anne's products have fascinating stories



behind them, such as the funky felt slippers made by Peruvian women in a project to help victims of domestic violence.

However, despite the ethical and eco credentials of the goods in One, Anne has one overriding principle – everything has to be desirable.

"Someone rang the other day asking if I wanted to stock gardening goods. But the concept here is a boutique. I want to stick to a feminine theme."

She adds: "My things tend to be a bit more expensive than on the high street, but they are also more of a 'one-off' – you are not going to see anyone else in them."

And neither will the clothes date after one season. Anne said: "Most of the pieces here won't date. It's important for ethical fashion that the clothes will last."

