

University of Reading Facilities and Services Greenlands CleanConscience™

About the project

Summary

All partly used hotel soap and toiletries are currently sent to landfill, or are incinerated, as there is no infrastructure in place in the UK able to recover and recycle these materials. The intrinsic value of the waste as a resource – in excess of 4,500 tonnes per annum – is lost. CleanConscience™ is a start-up CIO, actively working on a financially sustainable solution, which addresses environmental, social, and humanitarian concerns.

Project partners

When it was identified there may be a solution to ending the nationwide (and global) problem of throwing away partly used guest soap and toiletries, we asked Gwen Powell to look into a solution to help the Housekeeping department at our Greenlands campus to create this. Powell invested 22 months of research and development into the project and founded CleanConscience™. Whilst the Housekeeping department learnt to collect and segregate the waste toiletries at source on every room departure, various recycling methods were trialed by CleanConscience™ until the best was found.

The results

The problem(s)

Based on thirty-five percent of the UK Serviced Accommodation Sector somewhere in the region of 4,500 tonnes of soap and toiletry waste is generated annually. According to the UK Waste Hierarchy, this waste stream should be seen as a resource rather than being landfilled or incinerated. Every year, 1.7 million children die from disease and infection. Half a million of these children could still be alive if they had soap to wash their hands with. Statistics show that just one charity in the UK supports 500,000 people at risk and/or living under the breadline yearly, by providing them with food, toiletries and other essentials. Nearly 7 million people of working age in the UK are disabled or have a health condition and the UK Government's Disability Confident Campaign is driving an initiative to get more physically and learning disabled people into volunteering and employment. At the University of Reading, we wanted to tackle these problems and with the assistance of CleanConscience™ we've identified a way to recycle and re-use toiletries from guest bedrooms, with a true triple bottom line outcome.

The approach

Recovering and processing the soap and liquid toiletries are labour intensive manual processes, involving sorting the soap and toiletries; the liquid containers with 75% or more product left inside are individually



Profile

- A Higher Education Institution
- 17,000 students
- 4,000 staff
- Urban/Rural

Category supported by



sterilised and packed into types – shampoo, body wash, conditioner and body lotion – in readiness for corporate volunteers to assemble CareKit™ comfort packs, which is then distributed to people in need in the UK.

The liquid containers with less than 75% product are manually decanted and the recovered plastics will be sold on to re-processors, achieving a nominal income for the charity. The soap based liquid toiletries will be reprocessed into an “eco branded sustainable” hand wash and equestrian shampoo, also achieving a nominal income. The bars of soap will be reprocessed and made available to global humanitarian projects serving those most at risk.

CleanConscience™ has taken on a trainee with Koolen de Vries Syndrome and offers volunteering opportunities for adults with additional needs, and work experience for students on the autistic spectrum, from the nearby Manor Green School, and once funding has been secured, interns will then be taken on.

The scheme has grown rapidly in popularity with several other hotels signing up, including some of the most prestigious London hotels.

Our goals

The vision and business strategy is to create CleanConscience™ satellite hubs, each dealing with their own catchment area's soap and toiletries. This model will allow for hotels to interact with their local communities and support local charities on a very personal level; it will also add value to their environmental and/or sustainability policies.

Obstacles and solutions

Not enough hours in the day	Secure funding and appoint more staff ASAP
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Performance and results

The project's performance will be monitored and evaluated based on:

- tonnes of soap and toiletries diverted from landfill or incineration
- tonnes of plastic recovered and reprocessed
- quantities of soap and toiletries provided to those in need
- person hours of volunteering and paid employment provided to people with disabilities

Reducing Waste: by preventing landfill and the needless incineration of waste that should, and could, be seen as a resource; **Disabled Volunteer and Employment Opportunities:** to provide initially volunteer, and later paid, sheltered employment for people suffering disabilities and/or learning difficulties; **Saving and improving lives:** by providing health and well-being enhancing soap and toiletries to disadvantaged communities in the UK, Europe, and overseas; **Shared Producer Responsibility:** establishing a *polluter pays principle* within the UK hospitality industry, and to get the co-operation from toiletry manufacturing and distribution companies.

The future

Lessons learned

Delegate, replicate, network

Sharing your project

CleanConscience™ secured membership of Considerate Hoteliers and Green Tourism. They have established a web presence via their website, Facebook Page, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ and publish a Blog and a monthly newsletter – resulting in 100+ enquiries from hotels across the UK in just three months since launching the project.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

We are all very proud to have been shortlisted for a prestigious Green Gown Award – not only in one category but to have done that in 3 categories is a major achievement for each of our teams as well as the University as a whole.

When the University's Vice Chancellor, Sir David Bell, heard that our institution had been nominated, he sent the following statement: *"We are delighted to be nominated for not one but three Green Gown Awards. This demonstrates the commitment of the University to sustainability as well as our ability to deliver all that we have promised."*

Further information

Projections show that each CleanConscience™ satellite hub will be able to easily service 4,000 hotel rooms. This will prevent approximately 50 tonnes of soap and toiletry waste from going to landfill, or being incinerated, in each catchment area annually. CleanConscience™ satellite hubs will either be positioned to provide UK-wide coverage, or as a result of there being a critical mass of hotel rooms in a particular region. The sequence and location of these satellite hubs will be determined by demand. Powell is working with forward-thinking hotels in Scotland that are coming together to incubate the CleanConscience™ (Edinburgh) satellite hub. Other satellite hubs being considered are Birmingham, Manchester, Brighton, Southampton, Cardiff, Bristol, Glasgow, Belfast, and Dublin is also in the pipeline.

Kate Cama, House Manager,
Henley Business School, University of Reading, Henley on Thames, Greenlands, RG9 3AU
k.cama@henley.com
01491 418805

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