## Tricky recycling of corporate uniforms dealt with by

## Ocado, Hubbub and prisoners

**Online retailer Ocado and Social enterprise charity Hubbub have devised a creative solution involving inmates from a Northumberland prison to influence the prevention of the 30 million items of corporate uniform that's thrown away unnecessarily each year in the UK.**

They point out that two in seven working people in the UK wear a uniform. Nearly 33 million corporate garments are provided for their use but around 90% - 15,000 tonnes - goes to landfill or incineration each year, wasting resources and causing significant damage to the environment as well as costing businesses money and risking their reputations if items aren't disposed of securely.

Concerns over security and brand protection coupled with the complexities of recovering and de-branding uniforms explain why so few are reused or recycled.

Ocado's old uniforms, previously destined for landfill, will be transformed by prisoners at HMP Northumberland into tote bags, aprons and other items, providing them with skills and work experience. The products have been designed by London sustainable fashion brand Everything In Colour and will be sold by Ocado with all proceeds going to the Ocado Foundation. Any textiles not fit for repurposing will be recycled for uses such as mattress filling.  
  
Tony Simpson from Sodexo Justice Services explains: "As a working prison our objective is to provide meaningful activity for prisoners to give them the best chance of finding employment upon release. The skills and work ethic they learn are proven to have a positive impact on reducing reoffending when they return into the community."  
The project demonstrates how creative thinking about textile waste can create a sustainable and replicable business model. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Ethical and Sustainable Fashion provided a launch pad for the project at an event held in the Houses of Parliament, to stimulate a wider debate on corporate clothing and the circular economy.

Suzanne Westlake, Ocado's Head of Corporate Responsibility added: "As a responsible retailer, we wanted to find a better solution to the problem of our unwanted uniforms in order to avoid them ending up in landfill. This innovative project has turned them into fantastic designer products and we hope our customers will show their support by buying them and helping generate funds for The Ocado Foundation. The Ocado Foundation works with many charities, including donating food to people who most need it.''

**CORPORATE UNIFORM FACT FILE**  
· Around 32.9 million garments (16,290 tonnes) are provided to the 11.6 million wearers of corporate uniforms in the UK.  
· Around 90% is sent to incineration or landfill – that's approximately 30 million items of uniform (or 15,000 tonnes) each year.  
· Potential to save £1.2 million from landfill tax alone  
· An additional 1,000 tonnes of corporate uniforms is captured for shredding from secure shredding companies but this is not recycled.  
· Currently only 9% of corporate clothing is recovered through textile collectors/banks.

**COMMON BARRIERS TO RE-USE**  
Corporate wear is responsible for 1% to 1.4% of all clothing in the UK, but there have been many barriers to recovering and reusing or recycling it, including:  
***· Logistics*** – the practicalities and costs involved in recovery are usually complex;  
***· De-branding*** – 89% of corporate wear is branded in some manner, which is often impossible to remove and presents a potential corporate risk at end of life;  
· ***Material composition*** - the blended fabrics used in the corporate clothing sector are problematic in terms of recycling;  
***· Brand protection*** – corporate security is strongly linked to branding, with companies having no control over its next-life wearer, thereby presenting possible damage to a company's reputation;  
***· Security risk –*** corporate uniform in the wrong hands presents a corporate security risk;  
***· Company responsibility -*** companies are not legally obliged to recall clothing from their staff once supplied, and therefore have no responsibility for what is the end fate of the garments. Source: Wrap Report ''A review of corporate wear arising and opportunities' 5/9/12

Adapted Source: <http://environmenttimes.co.uk/news/item/326-tricky-recycling-of-corprate-uniforms-dealt-with-by-ocado-and-hubbub>

Tasks

1. What percentage of corporate garments go to landfill each year?
2. What is the name of the sustainable fashion brand that Ocado are working with?
3. What does Tony Simpson identify as having a positive impact on reducing re-offending?
4. What do the recycled uniforms generate funds for?
5. **[](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=Ro5JWE6s&id=B20980925EDE81E2555398FCAB5CA289F4B25A47&thid=OIP.Ro5JWE6s90M-5sGqmyPbrgHaFa&mediaurl=http://www.yogabugs.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/DRAGONSDEN.jpg&exph=631&expw=863&q=Dragons'+Den&simid=608052253847654387&selectedIndex=1)Stretch and Challenge:**

You want to pitch to the Dragons’ Den an idea relating to recycling corporate uniforms.

Using the Corporate Uniform Fact File develop a list of advantages for companies to recycle uniforms. Also think of some strategies to counteract the common barriers to reusing uniforms.