

Implementing a Sustainable Washroom and Cleaning Programme

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So, what steps can you take to implement a sustainable cleaning programme? How much will it cost? Are ‘sustainable products’ any good? And, what are the best products to make an impact?



Implementing a Sustainable Cleaning Programme

With the implementation of plastic packaging tax by the government, it is clear that companies need to put their money where their mouth is. 'Greenwashing' and compliance by the letter is not an effective environmental strategy anymore.

So, what steps can you take to implement a sustainable cleaning and hygiene regime, how much will it cost, are 'sustainable products' any good, and what are the best products to use to make an impact?

All good questions we will try to answer in this article.

1. Steps to take

Take a full inventory of all cleaning products used, considering the following.

a) Ecolabels

Many cleaning products still contain harsh chemicals and microplastics and use unsustainable manufacturing processes. To reduce this negative impact you could set a target to replace these environmentally damaging products with ecolabel products.

Official ecolabel products, such as the [EU Ecolabel](#) or the [Nordic Swan Ecolabel](#), have been audited, tested and certified to the highest standard of sustainable manufacturing processes.

Other unofficial ecolabel products exist and, although they might not conform to a regulation it doesn't mean they don't have sustainable values, so they should also be considered.

b) Consumption

Cutting down and controlling your product consumption is one of the first main steps to sustainable cleaning. The use of cleaning chemicals, paper towels, liquid soaps, toilet tissue and hand hygiene can all be controlled using dosing and measuring systems, creating huge savings in product use and subsequent waste.

c) Supply

Consider the following:

- Can a multi-purpose product do the job of 5 different products you're currently buying?
- Can you bulk buy more products to reduce transport costs?
- Can your supplier offer you products that are packaged more efficiently and sustainably?
- Is there visibility in your supply chain to tell you where your products come from?
- Can you buy locally more?

d) Packaging

Think about these questions:

- How many single use plastic containers, pump bottles or trigger spray bottles are you using that can be replaced with a concentrate system and / or refillable containers?
- Do you know how much recycled content is in your plastic packaging?
- Do your cleaning products come in cardboard or paper packaging that is 100 % recyclable?

Next you can consider your broader activities and where improvements can support your sustainable cleaning programme.

Water use

Bucketless mopping systems and the latest scrubber dryers will measure and control water usage. Chemical dosing systems will accurately measure water dosage alongside the chemical.

Energy use

Natural light is far better than artificial for doing most things, including cleaning. Open blinds as much as possible and consider LED lighting for when lights need switching on.

Waste

As much packaging and waste from cleaning should enter the recycling chain. Giving cleaners easy access to the right bins with clear labelling should encourage accurate disposal.

Lastly, set out your SMART objectives – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely - and implement staff training and customer communication.

2. Costs to consider

Direct costs

Surprisingly to many, you could achieve significant savings in up-front costs.

Consider the e:dose system. A one litre bottle of an e:dose concentrate chemical can make 100 trigger spray bottles, which equates to around 10-15 pence per bottle. Not only is this extremely cost effective but the reduction in single use plastic is huge.

If you swap to dispensing systems in your washroom the cost of your consumables are likely to reduce considerably.

- Using a paper roll towel system instead of c-fold or z-fold towels could save around 25 % in paper costs.
- Swapping your hand care from a bulk fill to a cartridge system can see cost savings of 25 -35 %, depending on the cost of your soap or sanitiser refill cartridges.
- Single sheet dispensers can achieve between 15-20 % cost savings in toilet tissue paper but we have seen a whopping 40 % saving in the past.

Indirect costs

The cost-in-use values of washroom dispensing systems can offer many indirect savings when compared to 'cheap generic' products.

- Less product used equates to less waste disposal costs.
- Controlled toilet tissue usage equates to less cost on drain blockages and washroom maintenance.
- Washroom dispenser systems equate to less time refilling and cleaning.

Of course, the question we all need to ask is how much it's going to cost the future of the planet by not implementing a sustainable cleaning system...

3. Are sustainable products any good?

Are we preconditioned to think an effective cleaning product needs to leave a sparkling shine and a floral fragrance masking the harsh, but reassuring smell of chemicals and bleach? Do we automatically think more is more? And, can plants compete with chemicals?

Shine and smell

The revolutionary [Toucan Eco flow](#) creates an antibacterial cleaning solution from salt, water and electricity that is discharged on tap from either a 10 litre or 5 litre tank. The claim is you can stop using 80 % of cleaning chemicals and disposing of the single use plastic they come in.

An incredible claim, but one which is supported by the EU testing and accreditation showing a 99.999 % effectiveness against all forms of microorganisms, plus a very fast contact time and practically no regrowth.

The point is of course, only minimal, completely natural products are used that create no shine and no smell but produce the same level of hygiene as the ones that do, at a fraction of the cost and waste.

Is more really more?

Then there are the concentrated chemicals where a 1 litre bottle contains enough concentrate to make 100 trigger spray bottles.

This means your tiny 10 ml dose of concentrate mixed with that readily available commodity of water, in a refillable trigger spray bottle, will give the exact same result as a ready mixed 750 ml formula sold in a single use plastic bottle.

Plants versus chemicals

Plant based products can still carry the same incorrect misconceptions but the Natural Scrub Hand Cleaner from GOJO is one of the many ranges helping to change this.

The Ecolabel scrub achieves a highly effective clean on medium to heavy soils such as grease, oil and tar using no solvents, and 85 % biodegradable ingredients, including apricot stones and corn seeds.

4. What are the best products to make an impact?

These are some of the products we believe offer significant sustainable values at this current time.

Chemical cleaners

The e:dose is a unbeatable and simple to use chemical dosing system that has been proven to reduce chemical usage by up to 50 % and plastic waste by 98 %. The system is colour coded for easy and accurate use and provides multiple cleaners and application methods.

Paper products

Look out for toilet tissue and paper towels that carry the Nordic Swan or EU Ecolabel or have FSC Certification. These certifications mean that the product has been manufactured in accordance with strict environmental and responsible stewardship guidelines.

As paper products are high-volume consumables, be mindful of the carbon impact of importing; buying products from a sustainable UK manufacturer can have a huge positive impact on your carbon emissions.

Carrying the FSC label means a product has been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, a non-profit international organisation and, has met their 'gold standard' for ethical production. As stated by the FSC this means 'the wood used is harvested from forests that are responsibly managed, socially beneficial, environmentally conscious and economically viable.'

Cleaning cloths

A new Ecofibre range has recently been launched, including a non-scratch scourer made from 40 % plant fibre and 15 % recycled polyester and a microfibre cloth made from 55 % recycled plastic bottles. Both products come in recycled and recyclable packaging.

Natural cleaners

With salt, water and electricity being the only ingredients and only misconception standing in its path, it's fair to say the Toucan Eco range, and similar products, could be the future of surface cleaning.

Hand care

GoJo state their Purell Healthy Soap Range consists of 90 % natural ingredients with the raw materials strictly selected according to their toxicity profile. The product's main claim to sustainability though is it's fast and clean rinsing, saving an average of 22 litres of water per refill⁴.

Products that reduce consumption

Anything that can control usage, reducing consumption and waste will help reduce environmental impact. As touched on above, these include washroom paper and hand care dispenser systems, plus the super concentrate chemical dosing systems.

- The k-One Centrepull Toilet Tissue Dispenser dispenses one sheet at a time and has been proven to reduce usage by up to 50 %.
- The k-One Mechanical Towel Dispenser dispenses one optimally sized sheet at a time, and has seen the amount of paper dispensed reduce by up to 5 times compared to a standard folded towel system.
- Swapping from a bulk refill to a cartridge based hand care system for your soaps and sanitisers will significantly reduce the amount of product used and single use plastic thrown away.

Closed loop chemical systems

A closed loop system (or circular economy) means that products and their materials stay in use for as long as possible, retaining their maximum value. This is viewed as a key component for adapting to a more sustainable way of life.

For cleaning chemicals, empty containers and bottles would be collected from the customer, refilled and returned, ensuring the plastic packaging has the longest life cycle possible and the impact on land fill and pollution is reduced.

Exciting development work has been going on at Knighton for the past 18-24 months and a system is in the final stages of testing. We hope to be able to make this available as a product line soon.

Summary

The chaotic supply and demand of cleaning products seen during COVID appears to be behind us, so we can turn our focus back to the extremely urgent picture of climate change.

Knighton Janitorial are making sustainable products and practices a key focus, with advice, information and recommended 'Green' products on our website.

We also specialise in Washroom Audits where we can review your existing systems and offer options that can reduce waste and costs.

[Contact us to request a washroom audit for your school, warehouse or other high usage establishment.](#)

Telephone our Sales Team 01332 811810 or email sales@knightonjanitorial.com