

## A review of UK corporatewear arisings and opportunities

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This study reviews the barriers to the recovery of corporatewear and assesses opportunities for improved collection methods and end markets.

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Corporatewear is a little understood sector of the clothing industry, due to the limited consistency of recording and reporting. The aim of our report<sup>1</sup> was to determine the type, quantity and spread of discarded corporatewear from both the public and private sectors, and to estimate the value and volume opportunity of potential markets.

Of the 39.2 million corporatewear garments believed to be consumed each year (around 16,290 tonnes), approximately 90% are sent to landfill or for incineration. The majority of such clothing is polyester based, which is difficult to recycle through traditional routes, and the potential for reuse is limited by aesthetic and practical considerations. Corporatewear is often branded or 'tax-tagged' using methods which are difficult to remove, and there can be associated security sensitivities to consider.

Whilst recovery of corporatewear is perceived as challenging by some, opportunities are apparent. The size of the sector may be small by comparison to high street fashion but the nature of the sector allows for greater ease of intervention than high street retail, as specific organisations may control several thousand garments at any time, rather than attempting to influence many millions of individuals. There is also a strong push from companies to improve their corporate sustainability, and clothing is one such means to achieve that.

Interventions which could increase the volume of collection include:

- Encouraging design which considers end-of-life re-use and recycling, for example using subtle and detachable branding
- Improving user awareness of current collections (e.g. secure shredding) and ensuring the highest value applications are achieved
- Encouraging closed loop recycling of garments, for example the chemical recycling of polyester
- Improving recall systems, via education of staff and convenience of return of garments, and using current delivery systems to reduce transportation costs and energy consumption

The full report is available from WRAP's website

<http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/corporate-workwear-arisings-and-recovery-opportunities>

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<sup>1</sup> Written for WRAP, the Waste & Resources Action Programme: [www.wrap.org.uk](http://www.wrap.org.uk)

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**About Oakdene Hollins:**

*Oakdene Hollins is a consultancy and research business that advises on sustainable products and services, resource efficiency and clean technologies. We offer strategic advice to businesses, governments and their agencies, backed by sound data analysis. Our customers look to us for innovation and thought leadership, but also for sound and evidenced advice. This can involve:*

- *the mainstreaming of sustainability and resource efficiency into business operations*
- *researching and designing interventions throughout the product life cycle from raw material supply and product manufacture to use and end-of-first-life strategies*
- *enabling successful product and service innovation.*

*The company has developed substantial global expertise in resource management and economics. We have a growing involvement in business models that enable a more circular economy and we operate Europe's only centre that focuses on remanufacturing and reuse (see [www.remanufacturing.org.uk](http://www.remanufacturing.org.uk)).*

*Much of our work requires problem-solving abilities and a confidence to identify insights that can be presented to busy managers.*

*Oakdene Hollins aims to contribute to sustainable development not only through our advice and research, but also in the way we conduct our own business. We seek substantial improvements in resource- and carbon-intensity that mean a long term transformation in the ways in which we work.*

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