

Research and Consulting in Sustainable Innovation, Waste Economics, Low Carbon Technologies

2D bar codes for tagging of textiles through to end of life

The use of technology in sorting of end of life textiles

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Many challenges face reprocessors of discarded clothing and household textiles. High amongst these is the effective sorting of end of life textiles, particularly in light of rising costs and falling demand. The ability of a textile to carry information about itself through to the end of life has value at all stages of the life cycle and particularly on sustainability.

Our diagram highlights some of the key benefits of such labelling for all stakeholders along the supply chain:



A study for WRAP, *Technologies for sorting end of life textiles*, undertaken by Oakdene Hollins and Manchester Metropolitan University, determined that the most suitable technology for this task is a 2D bar code label, since they are ubiquitous, cheap, robust, non-contaminating and can be read by both scanners and smart phones. Introduction can be

managed gradually since 2D bar code labels augment existing practices. The cost of printing and attaching a custom polyester bar code label is estimated to be less than 2p per item.

Note:

The report, *Technologies for sorting end of life textiles*, can be found on the [WRAP website](#). It provides a technical and economic evaluation of the options applicable to clothing and household textiles .

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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.

Much of our work requires problem-solving abilities and a confidence to identify insights that can be presented to busy managers. Our customers look to us for innovation and thought leadership, but also for sound and evidenced advice. This can involve:

- *putting sustainability and resource efficiency at the heart of 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).

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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