

Defending collection, sorting & circular procurement



Ministerie van Defensie



Project supported by LIFE funding



Organisation: Ministry of Defence

Innovative business model type: Procuring textiles with recycled post-consumer textiles fibres

Sector: Textiles

Organisation size: Large

Service: Procuring towels and overalls containing 10% recycled post-consumer textiles fibres & collection and sorting of discarded workwear.

Key Facts:

- The Royal Netherlands Ministry of Defence employs 58,800 people and utilises large volumes of textiles as uniforms and other products.
- REBus supported the pilots by adding two experts to the project team, evaluating the result, translating the category plan and supporting a report on recycling collection optimisation.
- The first pilot was the collection and sorting of discarded workwear. Discarded items had been incinerated, but the ministry wanted to find a more circular way to deal with disposal and procurement. A contract has now been awarded to the BIGA group for the sorting of 750,000 end-of-life items per year.
- The second pilot was about procuring towels and overalls containing at least 10% recycled post-consumer textiles fibres. Two contracts have been awarded: one for the supply of 100,000 towels, 10,000 cloths (containing 36% recycled post-consumer textiles fibres) and one for 53,000 overalls (containing 14% recycled post-consumer textiles fibres).

Key facts

Introduction

Results

Lessons learned

Case Study



Rijkswaterstaat
Ministry of Infrastructure and the
Environment

Introduction

The Royal Netherlands Ministry of Defence (MoD) employs 58,800 people, operating across the Army, Navy, Airforce, armed Military Police and supporting roles.

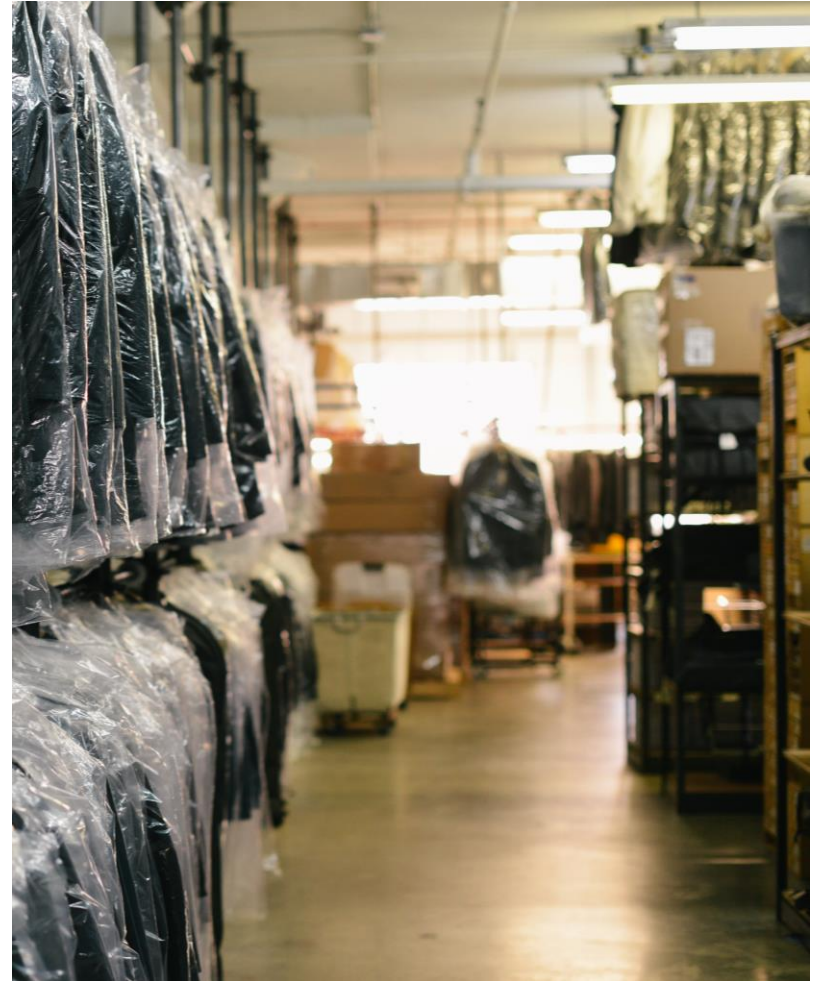
Pilot 1: REBM for the the collection and sorting of discarded workwear

The Ministry of Defence and its many military establishments utilise a high volume of textile products. Historically, when these items reached the end of their useful lives they were incinerated. However, the ministry was keen to follow a more circular policy and, as a result, chose to explore the potential for recycling and re-using discarded textiles.

Discarded clothing is no longer burnt, instead it is re-used by the MoD, or recycled and turned into fibres, which the Ministry of Defence offers as a high-grade raw material on the market via Domeinen Roerende Zaken (DRZ), part the Dutch Ministry of Finance.

Pilot 2: Procuring towels and overalls containing 10% recycled post-consumer textiles fibres

The second pilot is about procuring towels, cloths and overalls containing at least 10% recycled post consumer textile fibres. These fibres are obtained by a supplier not necessarily made from the discarded Defence items. They can come from anywhere.



Key facts

Introduction

Results

Lessons learned



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Ministry of Infrastructure and the
Environment

Why REBus?

REBus supported the pilots by adding two experts to the MoD project team. Furthermore REBus helped by evaluating the results, by making a factsheet, translating the category plan and financing a report on optimizing the collection of collected items for recycling.

Consultation for Procurement

In order to assess the opportunities available for procurement, the MoD consulted the market with a market meeting and a request for information in January 2014.

One of the aims was to gauge whether they could introduce a requirement for suppliers to include recycled fibres in certain new products.

When the research showed that this was a viable option, requirements were rewritten to reflect new, more functional instead of technical requirements.

The outcome was that towels and overalls had to contain at least 10% recycled post-consumer textiles fibres, and suppliers had to be able to demonstrate this through examination under a microscope.

Results

Pilot one: Collection and sorting

An eight-year contract was signed with the BIGA Group for the collection and sorting of 750,000 items of military uniforms and equipment each year.

The clothing is sorted by hand by people who have been out of the labour market for some time. This type of labour helps the ministry to meet its social aims. Any clothing which is still suitable is re-used within the military, saving the MoD a great deal in procurement costs.

The contract provides for expansion to cover the whole of central government. Once sorted, DRZ sells the remaining clothing on the market.

Pilot two: Procurement

The first phase of the second pilot started with four items – towels, wash cloths and overalls.

Four-year contracts were awarded to two Belgian companies, which will supply the Ministry of Defence with 100,000 white and green towels, 10,000 wash cloths and around 53,000 green overalls.

The new textiles include a high proportion of recycled material – 36% and 14% respectively. However, the parties involved are being encouraged to innovate over the term of the contract, so the proportion of recycled material may increase over time.

Key facts

Introduction

Results

Lessons learned



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Ministry of Infrastructure and the
Environment

Lessons learned pilot two; procuring

Specifying requirements is essential to encourage the right responses to tender. However, the Ministry of Defence found that the original requirements included too many technical specifications. Instead, circular invitations to tender must be described in much more functional terms to give the market room for solutions.

Similarly, the market needs a reasonable time period to respond to tender requests for information. The usual 52 days from publishing the contract to closure is too short for the market to look into new or different production methods.

Additionally, the MoD would advise others who are considering a similar path:

- Not to stick too closely to existing tariffs for such a pilot; tight budget ceilings limit development potential.
- Keep suppliers informed on the invitation to tender schedule, so they have plenty of time to anticipate it.

"Our historical specifications were defined down to the last detail. We don't want to do that anymore."

Stephanie Grieving, Workwear Chain Specialist, Ministry of Defence



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Introduction

Results

Lessons learned



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REBus is a project delivered in partnership with:



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KTN
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Case studies were generated as a result of pilots carried out for REBus by WRAP or RWS and the named organisations from 2013 to 2016.

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