

Government has ignored innovation in recycling industry over disposal of PPE and LFDs, say MYGroup

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The Government has ignored the latest capabilities available to process ‘unrecyclable’ material with its decision to burn stocks of unusable personal protective equipment (PPE) and approach to disposing of lateral flow devices (LFDs), says MYGroup.

Despite the technology existing to recycle and return such waste material back into supply chains, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has said that at least some of a £4bn surplus of unused PPE will be disposed of through burning by the providers it has procured to handle the waste.

This has been followed this week by reports that more than 40 million out-of-date LFDs may be thrown away, joining the countless numbers of LFDs used during the pandemic, which the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) advised the public could not be recycled through conventional recycling facilities.

After hearing in late March of early reports that the Government was planning to write off and burn surplus items of PPE, MYGroup wrote to ministers across several Whitehall departments, including the DHSC and Defra, highlighting its success in recycling over 15 million face masks, visors, goggles, aprons and swabs, as well as LFDs during the pandemic. MYGroup was the unseen processing partner behind high profile, celebrity backed campaigns to recycle PPE, such as The Sun’s ‘Mask Force’, fronted by TV personality Jeremy Clarkson.

The company stressed that capabilities exist to avoid sending such waste to landfill or burning and invited Environment Secretary George Eustice MP to view its facilities as part of Defra’s recent drive to develop the UK’s infrastructure for processing plastic waste.

MYGroup was also featured on a BBC Breakfast segment in April, which covered its processing of LFD equipment, specifically and highlighted the lack of available grants and funding to support the development of new and innovative waste management facilities to meet the challenge of material so often deemed ‘unrecyclable’.

To date, MYGroup has received no response from the DHSC and only a brief reply from Defra indicating the burning of PPE was solely a matter for Health officials.

Last month, in a damning report on the DHSC’s spending of public money on PPE, the Public Accounts Committee said the Department had ‘no clear disposal strategy’ for the excess, and that it ‘plans to burn significant volumes of it to generate power.’

‘From public advice to simply dispose of used LFDs in general waste bins, plans to send billions of excess PPE up in smoke and now reports that millions of expired tests are set to be thrown away, the Government has proved it has no plan, imagination or ingenuity in approaching hard-to-recycle material,’ said Steven Carrie, Director, MYGroup.

‘The rushed, blundering procurement of pandemic equipment by the Government has already been well documented, so it’s sadly no surprise this lack of care and rigour has extended to its strategy for disposing of it.’

‘The DHSC is taking the low road, the easy option and lazy procurement decisions when innovation is staring it straight in the face – even when its own sister Whitehall department is calling for it.’

MYGroup is calling on the DHSC to reconsider the decision to burn its stocks of PPE and invites the Department to view its facilities. The company also echoes the recommendation made by the Public Accounts Committee that full details of disposal plans should be published and quarterly updates made on progress.

About MYGroup

- MYGroup provides total waste management solutions for some of the biggest brands in the UK,

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using innovative technologies and processes to 'recycle the unrecyclable', from agricultural, construction and hazardous waste, to the processing of food waste for energy, scrap metal and plastic.

- Four state-of-the-art facilities around its home base in Yorkshire, alongside continued investment in new processes and environmental schemes, means MYGroup has the resources and expertise to handle ~800,000 tonnes of waste a year, efficiently and effectively, and fully in-house from end-to-end.
- MYGroup's ReFactory arm is a specialist in 'closing the loop' on waste considered hard or 'impossible' to recycle, able to re-work and transform waste material – especially plastics and textiles.
 - The waste is processed into a material called 'Stormboard', which can be used for construction, shop fitting and joinery, as well as in community settings, such as for school benches and desks.
- Find out more at: <https://mygrouppltd.com/>

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