



# Don't dump it, dye it

Getting the most out of linen with coloration





## Returning 100% of linen to stock, not rag

Regenex is best known as a stain removal specialist for commercial linen, having secured a great reputation for this service in recent years.

We're now well known in the UK and beyond as the laundry sector's go-to processors for restoring the pristine whites of stained or marked bedding, towels, tableware, and workwear.

Our gentle multi-bath system is consistently effective in reviving 75% of such material, so that it can be returned to laundry stock and we're proud to say that 500 tonnes of this linen has been successfully returned as serviceable linen to date.

However, another option we can offer is the dyeing of these items to prolong their life, an alternative solution which also conserves the world's resources and saves laundries considerable money on top-up stock, which typically totals 10% of a laundry's turnover.

The roots of Regenex are with long-established textile coloration specialist Bulmer and Lumb, in Bradford, West Yorkshire – therefore Regenex has the technology and the knowledge to handle a range of linen dyeing requirements.

As far as we are aware, we are the only company servicing specifically the UK laundry sector in this way. We're passionate about the results we can achieve,

and what this means for linen management moving forward.

Alongside our blemish removal operations, we have been becoming more renowned for dyeing a wide range of pieces for many purposes and requirements, among progressive laundries who can see the benefit of getting the most out of every napkin, and every towel.

Now more laundries, healthcare organisations and hospitality companies are waking up to the idea that – unless it is ripped, torn, or simply worn out – binning marked linen is wholly unnecessary, both financially and environmentally.

Through combining cleaning and dyeing, Regenex can return to stock 100% of any consignment of the dirtiest linens possible, which historically would all have been condemned to waste.

In this white paper we explore the subject of dyeing part-worn and new linen further, in the expectation that it will give laundry managers a plethora of new ideas, opening up fresh possibilities for making changes for the better.

*David Midgley, managing director*  
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**Regenex**

# The UK's big textile waste problem

Historically, laundries, hospitality companies and healthcare organisations have had very limited options for processing damaged and stained linen, and the vast majority has been ragged early.

All sorts of substances can mark such material, from oil, chemicals, and food to rust and mildew, as well as fake tan – which, as all laundry operatives know, leaves an unsightly brown stain which can seem impossible to lift.

These habits are unsustainable and must change, especially when it's considered that 70% of the carbon footprint of a bedsheet, for example, is emitted during its manufacture.

According to a recent study by Labfresh, the UK produces 206,456 tonnes of textile waste per year, making us the fourth largest producer of textile waste in Europe, despite our relatively small size.

Only a small proportion is recycled or reused, with more than half sent to landfill and almost a third is incinerated. As a track record, this is shameful and while individuals and fast fashion habits play a significant role, the commercial linen sector must also take its share of the blame.

The good news, however, is that professionals tasked with looking after linen are waking up to new ways of working – and together we must do all we can to make sure this is not a case of too little, too late.

## Minimising manufacture as a pinnacle of ambition

When it comes to doing the right thing by the environment, too much emphasis is put on the careful disposal of materials – that if unwanted goods are recycled, responsibilities have been met.

But the 'waste hierarchy' enshrined by the EU Waste Framework Directive and now transposed into UK guidance – which sets out the best options for managing waste in terms of what is best for the environment – has a very different perspective. Recycling is way down the ranking, just above the worst possible destinations for waste, of landfill and incineration.

It is actually far more effective in protecting the environment to try to manufacture as little material as possible in the first place. If and when goods are unwanted, not needed, or unsuitable for their original purpose, they should ideally be re-used rather than recycled.

This brings us back to the subject of linen and the need to get as much use as possible from every item before it is ragged

or worse – especially when it's considered that every double duvet cover takes 10,000 litres of water to make.



## Dyeing is an under-utilised solution for re-use of linen

There is no historical tradition in the UK for laundries to work hard to love linen longer – but times are changing and, as companies look to find more sustainable solutions across all operations, our attitudes to textile management are in the spotlight.

Where firms used to think a few pieces here and there, in the bin – day in, day out – was no big deal, attitudes are changing, and the industry is much more conscious that waste linen soon adds up.

White towels typically start greying, or succumb to stains, long before fabric wears out. And tough, polyester tableware supplied in a variety of hues will fade and become less attractive while the items themselves remain serviceable.

So, in many cases, re-dyeing items makes textiles as good as new, and fit for many more months or even years' service in commercial or organisational contexts.

## Becoming carbon neutral

For hospitality companies and healthcare settings, becoming carbon neutral is a long way off, if seriously on the agenda at all – though in many organisations, ambitious plans are now in motion to make this happen in the longer term.

Minimising impact on the environment requires detailed analysis of all areas of operations – and getting into better habits with linen is a relatively easy and quick way to make a big difference.

Put simply, to reduce carbon emissions, a laundry must hang onto every piece of linen for as long as possible, without compromising customer expectations for clean, blemish-free stock.

Top-up stock should be ordered only when essential, in order to minimise the impact of fresh manufacturing – as recommended in the waste hierarchy guidance.

While laundries will naturally turn their attention to their own water usage and matters such as the use of detergents, they must also think about the impact their suppliers have on natural resources.

In all, unless fabric is damaged with holes or tears, management must strive to avoid any ‘early exit’ of linen at all.



## Saving money and resources in these challenging times

The laundry sector has been left severely depleted by the disruptions of the pandemic, including reduced business caused by the hospitality hiatus – and this situation is continuing to unfold. Many analysts predict that the effects of coronavirus on world economies will not be fully felt for years.

So, what can laundries do in the meantime, besides waiting for their order books to, hopefully, fill up again? For many, budgets are tighter than ever and the urgent need to maximise efficiencies looms large.

At Regenex we are big believers in the power of thrift – making the most of all stock, and avoiding unnecessary spend on top-up items. It is, after all, good practice to do the right thing in terms of carbon footprint - even when business is booming.

Now the Covid crisis combined with the widely recognised climate emergency means this philosophy makes more sense than ever – and Regenex can help laundries to achieve cash and carbon savings across the whole of their stock, from bedding to workwear, tableware to towels.

Regenex customers familiar with economising know that the cost of buying new stock is typically 35 to 50% higher than sending their material for cleaning.

However, dyeing is even more cost effective – up to 33% less

than stain removal – making it an even more thrifty option for the right items.

Allowing Regenex to re-dye stained workwear, for one example, represents a particularly significant monetary saving on replacements. Topping up the colour of faded tableware, meanwhile, could prolong its life by up to 85%.

## Minimising the ‘early exit’ through dyeing creativity and innovation

At Regenex we strongly believe that no good linen should be thrown away – chiefly because, as we are acutely aware in these times, there is no such thing as ‘away’.

Laundries are still binning perfectly functional stock, simply because it is discoloured. So, now is the time to get creative about onward uses for stained items.

In healthcare, blues, teals, and raspberry shades are prevalent. However, in hospitality, white linen is in far more demand than any coloured supplies as international hotel trends continue to favour pure, bright, spotless bedding and towels.

White towels are not the only in-demand colour. Spa settings, hair and beauty salons and many other commercial premises favour dark coloured towels – brown, violet, burgundy – precisely because they do not show marks such as fake tan.

But when good linen is stained beyond rescue, though otherwise clean and hygienic, there is room for creativity and innovation in what happens next.

It makes perfect sense for white towels to be redyed and re-purposed for alternative uses within a laundry’s supply network – and Regenex is now working with forward-thinking laundries keen to develop such systems.

## The future for laundry waste

One thing is clear, we cannot sustain current rates of manufacture and waste disposal in the UK and across the globe – and this includes what happens in the laundry sector.

So, any innovation in the treatment of linen will allow the industry to step up and play its part among wider, societal efforts.

Forward-thinking laundry owners and managers know it’s now or never – and that by becoming early innovators, they will reap the longer-term rewards.

The spotlight on textile waste is only set to intensify – and customers’ eyes are increasingly on the green credentials of the companies they spend their money with.

Changing old habits now will pay dividends, both environmentally and financially, in the months and years to come.

## Our current six areas of service

- ✔ Stain removal of white linen pieces for hospitality and healthcare laundries
- ✔ Stain removal and re-whitening for workwear garments
- ✔ **Topping up of shade for coloured tableware pieces**
- ✔ **Re-dyeing of tableware to new shades**
- ✔ **Dyeing of white pieces to new shades**
- ✔ Expert solutions to individual, laundry-specific problems.



## The Regenex offer

**R**egenex has been operational in Bradford, West Yorkshire, since early 2017 following a detailed programme of research and development into stain removal method for commercial linen.

So far, we have used our expertise in six specific operations, although our flexible approach to problem solving in collaboration with the industrial laundry sector makes us an ideal partner for any problem area.

The multi-bath process that forms the core of our business – and our growing reputation – has its foundations in almost a century of textile dyeing expertise, accumulated by our parent company, Bulmer and Lumb Group.

On our site, we have the technology and expertise to colour a full range of textiles in any bespoke shade,

on behalf of laundry customers. Our dyestuffs meet industry standards and our effluent management systems are stringent, and subject to tight controls.

Regenex's technical director, Paul Hamilton, is a chartered colourist and a Liveryman of the 550-year-old Worshipful Company of Dyers, overseeing a team of versatile dyeing technicians.

To date, less than a fifth of Regenex's work is currently made up of coloration tasks but we have the capacity to expand and we are seeing an upturn among laundries in exploring in this option, for getting the most out of linen.

Despite the enforced pause on hotels and leisure – a large part of our core custom – we have set a new goal to process 1,000 tonnes of the UK's dirtiest linen before our fourth birthday at the end of 2021.

**Would you like to test Regenex's services for yourself?**

**We are offering a FREE 400kg trial to any new customer. Get in touch today.**

# Loving linen longer with coloration:

## Repurposed workwear

As items of linen stock go, workwear is among the more expensive – meaning it is important to get the most possible wear out of every garment. White lab coats, for one example, can quite quickly become discoloured with chemicals.

Some forward-looking customers are using Regenex to refresh their pool of white workwear garments, partially through the contract to ensure pristine white garments give their business and employees the right look and image.

Alternately dyeing them navy blue, or another, comparatively rich shade, perhaps for engineering use, can ensure that they stay in circulation for as long as possible. Regenex is working with ongoing customers to maximise life cycles for such garments.

## Blue blankets for hospitals

One way that Regenex's dyeing service can come into its own for laundry customers is when bespoke coloration is needed to transform a consignment of new textiles.

In one example, a total of 14 tonnes of urgently-needed 100% polyester thermal blankets were ordered by a laundry supplier to the NHS.

At the time of purchase, these were available only in white – whereas the health trust in question required blue. The laundry had its order sent to Regenex for coloration, and was able to meet its customer's requirements and timescales.



## Medical scrub suits coloured

Regenex recently was called upon by a laundry contact to colour 100,000 medical scrub suits for use on healthcare frontlines.

The white workwear, ordered for emergency use, was dyed in shades of cobalt, raspberry and ciel to meet the requirements of the NHS trusts which will use them.

These scrub suits – ordered in white when increased demand meant no other colours were available – are now in more suitable colours, denoting rank, and will be used to equip hospitals. These include the temporary Nightingale sites, set up to meet the need for more beds, caused by the pandemic.



## Topped-up tableware

Tableware is one textile requirement to the hospitality industry which is often seen in colours other than white. Ivory, navy and other shades are popular in restaurants and the dining halls of hotels, conference centres and other venues.

Tablecloths and napkins are often made of polyester or a poly-cotton mix, a particularly harsh fibre to be landfilled as it does not decompose like pure cotton.

It is very hard-wearing but its original shade can start to fade after 20 washes or so – therefore, topping up its colour can significantly prolong each item's useful life by up to 85%.

## Some of Regenex's work so far



### Longer life for continuous roller towels

The use of continuous roller towels (CRT) in public and workplace bathrooms have seen a resurgence in recent months, due to concerns that hot air dryers can aid the spread of coronavirus.

Traditionally white with a blue stripe – and expensive to buy, due to the volume and quality of fabric involved – the towels tend to be discarded once they begin to lose their bright, clean appearance. Dyeing them blue all over can double their useful life, allowing them to retain a much smarter appearance for the duration.

### Rich, dark towels from once-bright whites

Regenex has dyed once-white towels to deep, opulent shades – including chocolate brown, burgundy, and aubergine – for use in spa facilities, and other health and beauty settings.

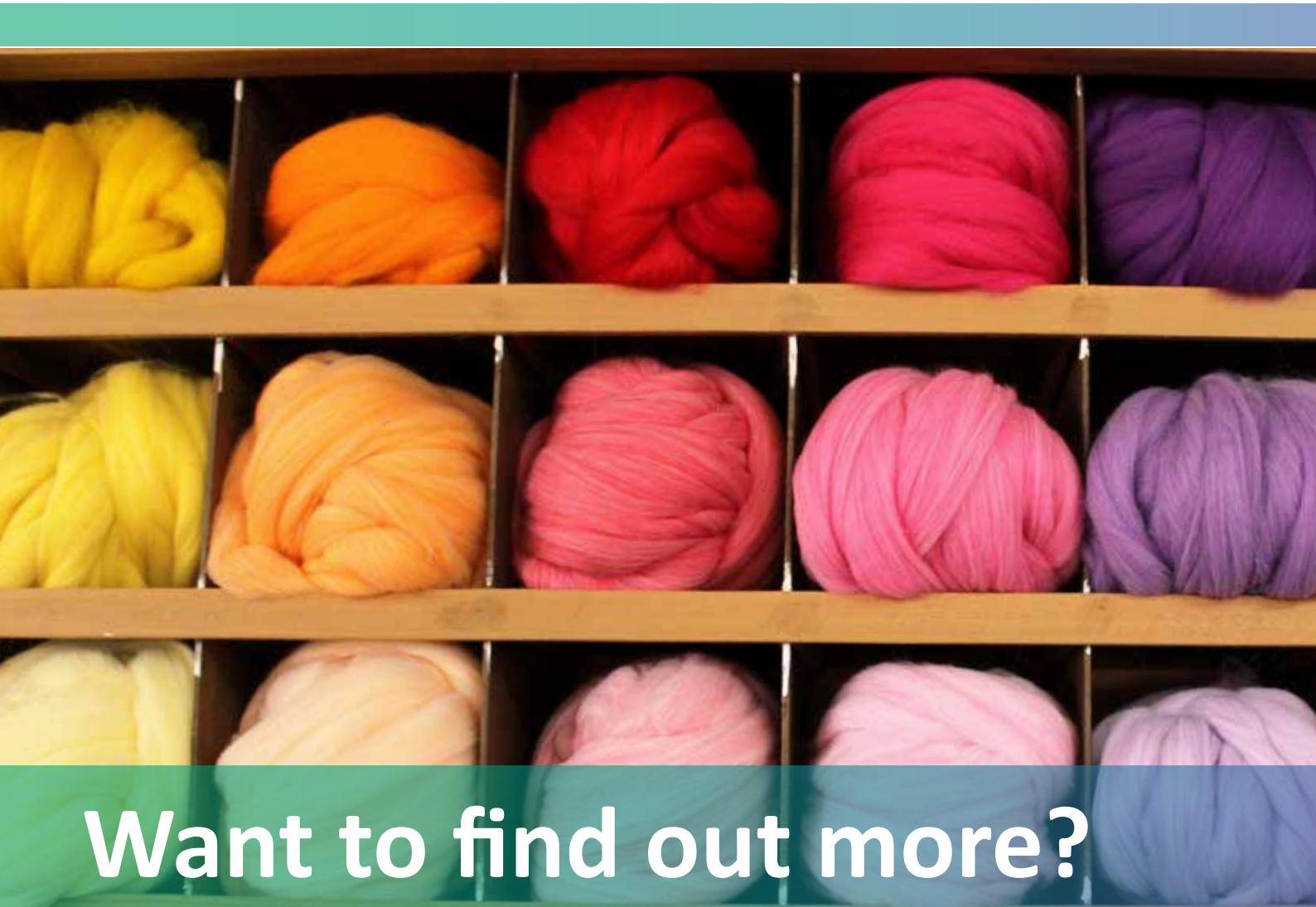
The possibilities for still-good towels are wide-ranging and we're currently working with customers on other repurposing requirements such as towels for pets and animal care establishments.

### Coloured cleaning cloths

Downgraded cotton or polycotton pillowcases and other items of linen have long been used by hospitality cleaning staff for their suitability for cleaning glass and ceramic surfaces without leaving streaks.

To be doubly sure of differentiating cleaning cloths with best-quality hotel room linens, Regenex has been working with some laundry customers to dye rejected items in distinctive shades of pink, yellow or any other specified colour.





# Want to find out more?

Get in touch!



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