



**SUSTAINABILITY
ON THE AGENDA AT
CUMBERLAND WITH
REUSABLE GOWN TRIALS**

Operating theatres in West Cumberland Hospital are currently undertaking a trial of Elis reusable surgical gowns, with a similar roll-out underway in the Cumberland Infirmary. Initial feedback has been positive, with the Trust acknowledging the benefits they offer and the role the products can play in tackling the high use of disposable items in North Cumbria theatres.

North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust first started using Elis reusable gowns during the Covid pandemic, at a time when most other types of personal protective equipment (PPE) were proving difficult to source.

Following this, the interventional radiology and cardiology departments were the first to take the initiative to introduce more sustainable working practices. They switched from single-use to reusable gowns in July this year, and it is hoped that the latest trials taking place will lead to more widespread use of the products within the Trust as it works towards the target of achieving net zero emissions across the NHS by 2045.



While the main driver of change is sustainability, the Trust has recognised the added advantages reusable gowns offer over disposable alternatives. These include reduced cost per use and the elimination of clinical waste disposal charges associated with single-use items, as well as the continuity of supply that a provider such as Elis can offer – particularly in the event of another pandemic – with multiple laundry sites able to adapt flexibly to increased PPE demand.

Feedback from the trial has included: "I really like the feel of the gowns," "Future generations will not understand why we took so long to take such a simple step," and "Reusable gowns are a no-brainer. When do we start with reusable drapes...?".

“ **Ludger Barthelmes, (consultant surgeon) at North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust, comments: “The NHS contributes to 4-5% of total carbon emissions in the UK. Operating theatres are particularly energy intensive, with a single procedure estimated to generate carbon emissions equivalent to driving 450 miles in an average petrol car.**

“The Greener Theatres checklist published by the four Royal Colleges of Surgeons in the UK and Ireland highlights reusable gowns as an effective means of reducing the environmental impact of operating theatres, and we are therefore keen to implement the switch to more sustainable surgical textiles within our facilities”

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