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## Case Study: Carpet Tile Re-use

### Summary

Carpet Recycling UK is leading the development of a carpet tile re-use network to provide an energy efficient alternative to landfill, where an estimated 80,000 tonnes of carpet tile ends up each year in the UK. During dilapidations works of large scale office buildings in Manchester, the contractor Amspec was able to utilise this network to remove and redistribute 5000m<sup>2</sup> of existing floor tile for resale as affordable flooring for low income customers. As reuse represents the most resource efficient solution for disposal of used carpet tile, Amspec were able to meet the high environmental standards which were set by their client, Friends Provident.

### Background – Why reuse carpet tiles?

An estimated 20 million m<sup>2</sup> of carpet tile is sold annually in the UK, 95% of which is bitumen-backed, making it difficult to size reduce and energy intensive to recycle. The majority of carpet tiles are fabricated with a durable nylon pile giving them a potential lifespan often much longer than their actual life on the floor. Consequently reuse, sitting higher on the waste hierarchy than recycling, is the environmentally preferable option. The emerging Carpet Tile Reuse Network aims to grow the capacity to store and handle more tiles nationally and provide a convenient reuse service for contractors.



*Above: Carpet tiles lifted for reuse from the Friends Provident offices*

### Process

Amspec was referred to Reading-based Scout Enterprises, a social enterprise with recycling and reuse expertise through Carpet Recycling UK. The quantity and quality of the existing tiles were assessed and 95% of the tiles on site were deemed suitable for reuse, and all but the cut tiles were lifted and palletised. A price was negotiated per pallet for removal, with the



*Example of used carpet tiles at the Environment Agency in Wales*

contractor also covering haulage and packing costs. Tiles were collected in two loads with no significant additional labour input required than would be involved in lifting and sending to landfill. The tiles were then transported to the

South East, North Wales and Glasgow for cleaning and re-sale to primarily to domestic, charity or small business customers. 3000 tiles have so far been sold for use in a variety of settings for affordable flooring; predominantly low income households and not for profit organisations.

### **Benefits of carpet tile reuse**

By enlisting the help of Scout Enterprises, Amspec were able to implement the waste management plan developed by consultants GVA Grimley and meet their clients sustainability needs with auditable recycling figures contributing to ISO14001 certification. Costs of collection were also in part offset by the £1,200 saving in landfill avoidance - the equivalent of one and a half articulated lorry loads of carpet tile. The client met the additional cost of securing a sustainable solution to carpet tile replacement.

### **Future development of Reuse Network**

New industry targets are under discussion as part of a National Flooring Efficiency Plan and Carpet Recycling UK will be seeking support to further develop the Carpet Tile Reuse Network in 2010, to meet the increased demand for reuse that new targets are likely to create. The case for carpet tile re-use may also be further strengthened by quantifying the carbon savings of reuse over recycling and landfill, and funding has now been secured to commission The Building Research Establishment (BRE) to undertake this.

Membership of Carpet Recycling UK offers contractors access to this carpet tile re-use service and their support will in turn accelerate the growth of the network. Contractors will also be able to source good as new carpet tiles from reuse network members and as a “closed loop” solution, these constitute the most resource efficient option.

For further information about membership of Carpet Recycling UK, or about the Carpet Tile Reuse Network visit [www.carpetrecyclinguk.com](http://www.carpetrecyclinguk.com) or contact Kate Chappell on 07787160169.