

HS2 contractor cuts single use plastic with recycled bottles for shoes

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Align joint venture, HS2's construction partner for the Chilterns Tunnels and Colne Valley Viaduct, has taken an innovative step to reduce the use of single use plastic on its construction sites.

Analysis of Align's purchasing data showed that the joint venture, which is made up of three companies, Bouygues Travaux Publics, Sir Robert McAlpine, and VolkerFitzpatrick: was using over 100,000 pairs of disposable blue plastic overshoes in indoor areas at its construction sites every month.

Neil Hancox, Align's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Director, who spotted the data trend collaborated with the company's family-run supplier of construction consumables to come up with an innovative and more environmentally friendly solution. And in a matter of weeks, Crawley-based OnSite Support Ltd returned with a prototype shoe made from recycled Taslan.

Each pair of the newly designed overshoes contains recycled material from six plastic bottles. The product is also fully washable and has an anti-slip sole to offer better grip on slippery surfaces.

Warren Lynes, managing director of OnSite Support Ltd said: We pride ourselves on driving innovation in

the construction sector and want to play our part in ensuring that Britain's new railway is delivered in an environmentally sustainable way.

"We saw huge potential in the idea put forward by Align and were eager to accept their challenge to design a product that would not only perform better environmentally but deliver health and safety benefits too."

The new shoes, which have been developed in three different sizes to meet the needs of male and female workers, are now in use across Align's HS2 construction sites. Within the first month, the shoe covers had proven effective in reducing littering as well as contributing to Align's target to ensure that 70% of plastic is recycled or reused by the end of the project.

Carl Baker, waste manager for the Align joint venture said: "This is a fantastic initiative and a great example of how we continue to challenge ourselves to drive excellence and respect the natural environment in the delivery of HS2.

"Early trials show that the shoes not only provide better grip, but they can be washed too. This means they can last for over six weeks, which really helps to reduce single use plastic waste. From concept to delivery, this simple idea has proven to be a great success."

OnSite Support is among the latest innovation-led SMEs to join HS2's supply chain. Over 2,000 companies have already won work on the project, 70% of which are SMEs and over 95% are based in the UK.

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd