

Sustainable furniture for transport hubs on a journey to go full circle

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Sustainability has been at the heart of **Green Furniture Concept** since its inception more than 10 years ago. Now, the company, transforming UK railway stations with its seamless, comfortable, placemaking furniture, is exploring going circular.

Described by the Ellen McArthur Foundation, a circular economy is based on the principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems.

“Everyone is still fixed with a linear way of doing things, but this is just so wasteful, when the materials can be used instead of being disregarded,” said Joakim Lundgren, head of sustainability at Green Furniture Concept.

“We are currently exploring leasing out the furniture and buying it back and reusing it. As a company we have evolved from more general sustainability-taking away unwanted chemicals and choosing material with care-towards implementing and working with the principles of circular economy.”

The concept is currently being tested by the company who bought back a seven-year-old Nova C seating

circle from a railway station in Halmstad in Sweden.

Joakim said: “We are looking into product requirements that come into play after the use phase – disassembly, repair, material reutilisation – already at the drawing board, so we are thinking about the complete loop rather than just the sustainability output of the materials and the products in a linear way.

“There aren’t many companies that we know of that successfully implemented circularity in full at a business level so we are evaluating it with the buyback to see if we can get the products back and what kind of financial models work.”

It is the latest steps to do good for the environment taken by the company that has created over 14 miles of seating in public interiors around the world, including transforming the likes of London Victoria, Waterloo and Liverpool Street stations, and Stockholm Central station.

The company pursues the principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems.

Joakim said: “We were born out of the desire to do good and once we started this company, we wanted to impact the furniture industry in a positive and environmentally friendly way, but at the same time still give people great looking furniture.

“That was the baseline for us and it will always continue to be our baseline as we look to create furniture that doesn’t just look great, but is also something that isn’t destroying our planet or our human health.”

Green Furniture Concept recently received the Red Dot Award for Product Design 2021 for its Ascent Series. It is a modular beam seating system designed for large scale interiors and waiting areas. It offers the possibility to reconfigure and adapt quickly when new demands are needed in the ever-evolving public spaces.

“We wanted to have an aluminium beam to support the structure of our Ascent Series, but not just aluminium, a low-carbon aluminium guaranteed to contain at least 75 per cent post-consumer recycled material,” said Joakim.

“The material was important in making sure we have a production method that is sustainable. We teamed up with Norsk Hydro to introduce CIRCAL which if we buy back can be re-melted and reused, which is important as we look to circularity.”

Concluding Joakim looks to the future with a great sense of optimism. He believes the finer details such as furniture in transport hubs, will play an important role in getting passengers back and improving satisfaction levels. If this can also be done sustainably, it further adds to the green credentials of rail travel.

“People see a visit to a railway station as more of an experience and you want to be enhancing that experience with products that reflect a comfortable and exciting area, rather than just cold grey seats,” he said.

“For us as a company we also need to test the circularity principle and see if the customers are onboard. In terms of what is ownership, do the clients need to own the furniture or can it just be a lease system? The idea would be for us to get the furniture back and just refurbish and re-manufacture parts and send it back out. That is the ultimate goal and on our next journey when it comes to sustainability.”

Visit greenfc.com for more details.



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