Your PPE – considering sustainability

The COVID-19 pandemic has added a new waste stream to our lives – personal protective equipment (PPE). For the majority, this is in the form of masks.

It is vital to protect our health as well as that of others. However, we must not forget the ongoing waste crisis. Fortunately, there are ways to reduce health risks whilst limiting our negative environmental impacts.

1. **Masks**: Government advice encourages making your own face covering. We recommend using a reusable or home-made face covering and washing it regularly.

- Surgical grade N95 respirators and surgical grade masks are vital to NHS workers and supplies are limited. 'These should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings, like those exposed to dust hazards.' (GOV.UK)
- Masks are not recyclable.
- There is no evidence to suggest that other single-use masks are more effective than reusable ones.

2. **Gloves**: There is a consensus amongst scientists that gloves are not effective at limiting the spread of coronavirus. There is also a worldwide shortage of gloves and they are more vital in hospitals than on the tube. They are also not recyclable. We recommend washing your hands with soapy water regularly instead, for 20 seconds at a time of course.

3. **Cleaning products**: It is recommended that indoor spaces are well ventilated, and surfaces are kept clean. For many people this means an increased amount of cleaning products, gels and soaps.

- Rather than throwing your bottle away, you could look into refillable alternatives. Some examples include Ocean Saver and Ecover.
- Avoid disposable wipes – they contain plastics and are single-use. Use reusable cloths and refillable cleaning sprays instead. The cloths can be washed at 30 degrees with detergent. The second-best option is to use blue roll and a cleaning spray.

For more guidance take a look at the Government's website – Staying safe outside your home.