

**The champion** Jae Mather from Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) in Kent, in the south east of England, UK was the champion. His efforts (2004-2006), driven by a vision and affirmation of what works, challenged the status quo. It resulted in a radically new, eco-friendly cleaning services contract, at no extra cost. He had to negotiate the 'good, bad and the ugly' to get all on-side to dare to commit to do differently, both inside and then outside the Council. Time, awareness-raising and due diligence, with dedicated monitoring to support and guide the successful contractors, was essential.

**The journey** Putting 'sound' policy into practice was applied throughout all stages of the procurement cycle (p. 6, appendix 1) resulting in major improvements. The tangible and demonstrable changes in the new contract came through Innovation and were transformative, building new market opportunities, business development based on 'eco-innovation'. Significant work, with key learning, was needed to get the market place to understand the key issues of what was required.

The learning and support for the appointed contractor was an important ingredient for success. Follow-through with rigorous monitoring of the contract with support and incentives to help the new service bed down was fundamental. Confidence building of the cleaning operational staff, commitment and drive from the contractor's boss demonstrating top level support, was essential.

**The evidence outcomes** Jae Mather as Environmental Service Development Officer at MBC challenged and supported Ridge Crest Cleaning throughout the process of implementation. Their success is shown through the Environment Awards for Kent Business; MBC won an award in 2005 for Environmentally Responsible Purchasing, and then Ridge Crest in 2006 for putting things into practice. The Business Link 'Case in point' case study (below) shows the significant economic outcomes. ICLEI, an international non-governmental organisation, has set this work as a new benchmark. The outcomes were business development, profitably and significantly extended reach for Ridge Crest Cleaning that began to impact on the cleaning services market. Sustainability outcomes were achieved with economic, social and environmental benefits that also resulted in large increases in revenue along with decreases in operational costs. This work marked a quantum shift, recognised in Europe, cited in the EC Green Public Procurement (GPP) Toolkit and the National Sustainable Public Procurement Programme, accredited by Defra, linked to the UN Marrakesh Task Force work on Sustainable Public Procurement.

### What we can learn from this

How essential change management processes are to help make the shift in the thinking, outlook, practice and performance of contractors and internal clients. The power of eco-innovation to open up new business opportunities and 'change the market'. How essential it is to understand the capability of the market place, to help meet suppliers/contractors where they are, but inspire them in the way forward.

It is vital to challenge the 'status quo' but important to reassure your internal client(s) that doing radically different is an essential part of innovation. You won't get it right all of the time or first time. A carefully, but proportionately, applied risk-based approach can pay huge dividends, but needs persistence, and boldness to overcome obstacles, and real or perceived barriers. Getting folk to feel and own it as 'their idea' is key!

### How we still need to try harder

Take time to make the case and provide sound evidence and knowledge (from elsewhere) to support potential suppliers on what works (and *doesn't*), and what they might like to try. Specify and clarify the non-negotiables, and 'must haves' clearly in the contract. Ensure that these count right through from evaluation and award of contract linked through into active contract monitoring. The implications for non compliance must be made clear and upheld. A good client contractor hands-on relationship is built through time, and talk at all levels in the organisation. Learning together and avoiding the pitfalls for next time, needs to be nurtured and shared.

### Making it happen - technical aspects

#### a. Pre-tender: doing the background homework

- Identify the products currently being used.
- Get to grips with the science, the eco-claims understand and identify what chemicals should be totally avoided in an cleaning products and what the genuine markers are for eco-friendly (what as well as how it is to be used).
- Undertake market research on cleaning product costs and also for other eco-friendly alternatives to compile a cost comparison.
- Unbundle current contract costs to identify the whole cost of service analysis (products, labour, etc).
- Establish options to recommend, if more eco-friendly options can present a competitive option on price.

Before the requirements were set out in the revised office cleaning tender, Jae undertook the following. The previous cleaning contractor was asked to supply a list of all cleaning materials used on the contract including their costs. From this list, the eco-cleaning market in the UK was researched and eco-alternatives to most of the materials were identified.

A cost comparison of the materials was undertaken that revealed that some eco-materials were more expensive, and some were less expensive, compared to what was being used in the MBC contract. Looking at the unbundled costs of the cleaning contract, when taking the overall costs into account, the costs of using a more eco-friendly contract ended up being comparable to non eco-friendly claiming products. After doing the maths, Jae found that approximately 10% of the total costs for a cleaning contract of this size for MBC (around £100,000/year) were for the cleaning materials, with the rest covering the labour and administration and profits.

The conclusion was that *even if* the eco-cleaning products were to have cost 10% more than the regular ones being used, using the eco-friendly products would have a minimal effect on the cost of the whole contract (1%, which is far less than any given annual contract inflationary increase). The business case was clear.

### **b. Conducting trials**

The previous MBC contractor was then invited to trial the eco-friendly and bio-degradable products and to feed back on the results of a quality comparison with the normal products. The results were that the eco-products performed better than the regular products. Interestingly, and it just goes to show how we're conditioned, the cleaners didn't think that the products left behind a strong enough smell, i.e. unless it smells clean how can it be clean?

### **c. Setting specifications for the tender**

*The tender allocated 15% scoring to environmental components with specific reference to a minimum compliance to certain criteria. The list of cleaning product ingredient chemicals that were listed in the tender specified not to be used were: phosphates, EDTA, enzymes, optical brighteners, chlorine bleaches, petroleum-based additives, formaldehyde, titanium dioxide, chemical plasticisers, synthetic perfumes, synthetic dyes, sodium tallowate, glycerine and lanolin.*

**Specifications were that:** 'All the raw materials should be free from animal by-products and no raw materials or finished products should be tested on animals. And where possible, all the raw materials should be obtained from renewable sources. All containers and packaging must contain high levels of re-cycled material and the packages themselves must be recycled after use. Every bin liner will be bio degradable and the council's paper towels and toilet rolls will be manufactured from 100% post consumer recycled and chlorine free products.'

### **In terms of contract operations:**

'All of the materials must be contained within their original boxes with the labels clearly visible. Any materials found not adhere to MBC's requirements will result in a default to the contractor and a financial fine.'

### **d. Responses to the tender: what actually happened – learning from the process and being prepared to try again**

Initially the process of convincing the prospective cleaning contractors to supply MBC with eco-friendly cleaning products was met with confusion. All of the companies who submitted tenders agreed that they could meet MBC's requirements, but in the end none of them actually managed to achieve this.

MBC then set up meetings with the short-listed contractors and they were instructed to supply lists of all of the materials that were to be used for the cleaning contract, as well as samples of all bio-degradable bags and recycled toilet rolls and paper towels. Upon closer investigation MBC determined that almost all of the supplied lists and materials did not meet the required specifications (as outlined above).

The applicants were informed of this non-compliance and given another deadline to resubmit *compliant* materials. The second submission of tenders proved also to be unsatisfactory; each supplier only *partially* met the requirements but none of the suppliers fully met them.

### **e. Giving a strong clear lead**

MBC ended setting up 3 meetings in total. The last meeting involved Jae supplying all of the contractors with lists of companies that sold the products and materials that met MBC's requirements. In essence the process involved a great deal of hand-holding and awareness-raising of major contractors, so they could clearly understand and be shown exactly the kind of priorities that MBC wanted.

### **f. Creating the learning excellence performance relationship incentives**

MBC agreed to include the contractor in all press releases regarding the eco-friendly contract in an effort to provide a stimulus, incentive for the contractor to continue expanding the eco-friendly nature of all of their other contracts.

### **g. Innovation and inspiration**

On a positive note, the contractor was tasked with providing an eco-friendly silver and brass cleaner which they couldn't source through their suppliers. Jae supplied them with a home-made recipe to copy. The contractor agreed to make the preparation themselves and they considered offering it as a product for sale.

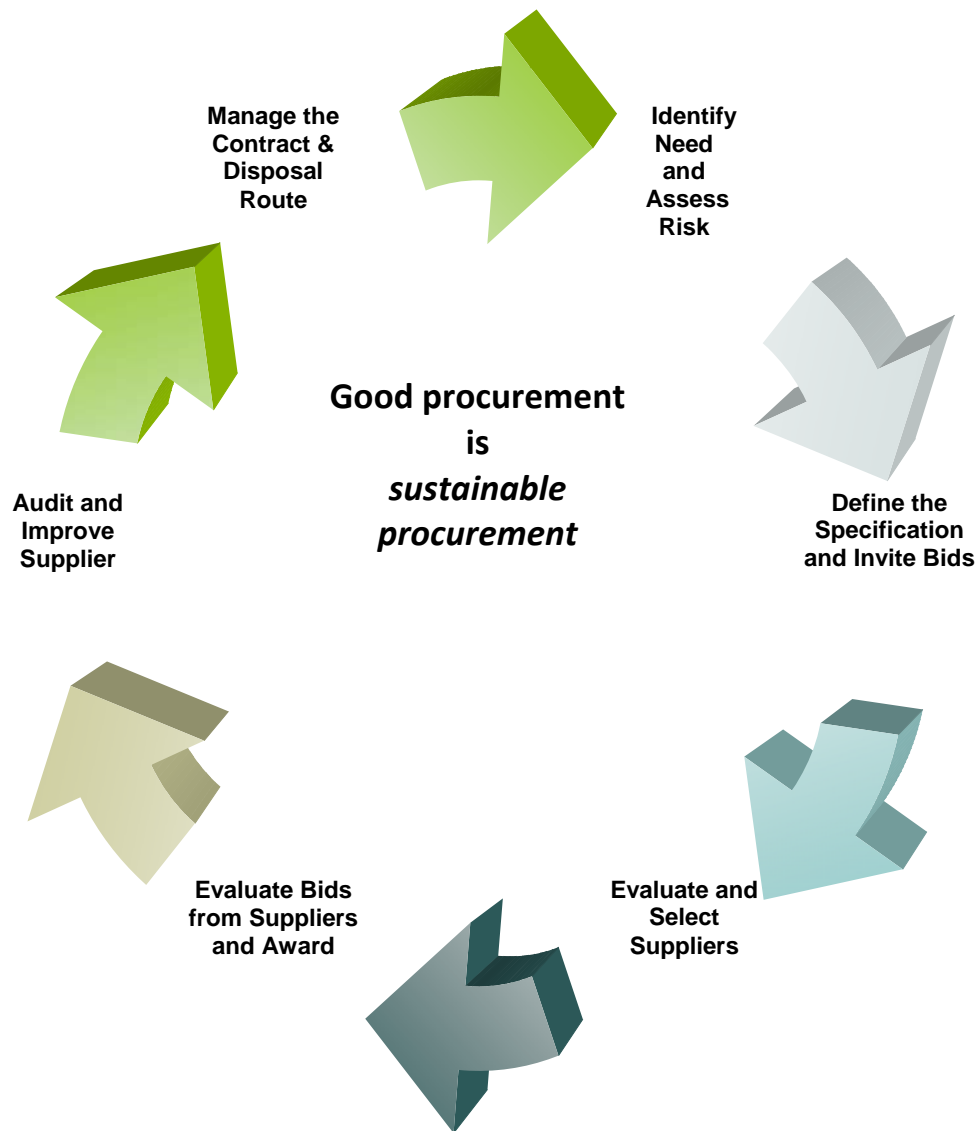
### **h. Contract monitoring**

MBC set up a scheme whereby the MBC monitoring officer had the keys to all of the cleaning materials storage sites to perform random checks for compliance. This is so often where things fall down, because after the contract is let, resources tend not to be allocated for monitoring. If nobody checks up, how do we know if what is being asked for is being delivered, to the right kind of quality and standard? It also shows the contractor that you are serious about the things you've asked for; if it matters you monitor and measure it. Again, through a maturing client-contractor relationship, a proportionate, risk based approach ensures that this is done effectively, and efficiently. As the routines become embedded, less frequent checks become necessary.

Appendix 1

Stages in the procurement cycle

Source: National Sustainable Public Procurement Programme



Case study developed by [fayblair@hotmail.com](mailto:fayblair@hotmail.com) with [jae@carbonfreegroup.com](mailto:jae@carbonfreegroup.com)



## Case in Point

### Ridge Crest Clean Green Credentials

#### What do we do?

Ridge Crest Cleaning is a full service cleaning company that offers a complete range of specialised services to commercial, public sector, leisure and industrial premises.

In 2005 Ridge Crest recognised the need to be able to offer an alternative to traditional cleaning services and in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council, introduced the UK's first environment-friendly cleaning contract. This meant using only environment-friendly, biodegradable, products that had not been tested on animals. In addition, greater use was made of the latest steam and microfibre cleaning systems.

#### How did we introduce sustainable business practices into our company?

Ridge Crest soon found that switching to environmentally friendly and biodegradable cleaning products led to cost savings as fewer were required.

As an example, in the past, 16 traditional cleaning products would have been required on a typical office contract, but only four green products are now used, leading to approximate saving of 20% on overall cleaning material costs. Above all, this simplified the cleaning process and enhanced the general cleaning standards.

The 'green' cleaning products used were all tested and found to be as good as or even better than the traditional alternative. Many traditional cleaning products contain irritants and sensitisers and it is thought that they can aggravate the condition in asthma and bronchitis sufferers. Therefore, using environmentally friendly cleaning products is not only good for the environment but also benefits the health of anyone who comes into contact with them.

Ridge Crest does not simply focus on the cleaning products it uses. All its containers and packaging contain high levels of recycled material. The packages themselves

are recycled after use. Every bin liner is bio degradable and the council's paper towels and toilet rolls are manufactured from 100% post consumer recycled and chlorine free products.

Ridge Crest have also introduced a new waste management and recycling service at Wimbledon Stadium, reducing the Greyhound Racing Association's waste removal and landfill costs from £35k per annum to £15.5k, whilst improving their "green" credentials.

#### How did we benefit from being more sustainable?

The company has experienced growth of more than 2,200% since its formation in 2004, with annual turnover increasing from £93k in 2005 to £2.15m in 2007. Pre-tax profits have shown an increase of 4900% over the same period. This phenomenal growth is due to their commitment to the environment and to delivering a quality service.



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**Maidstone Borough Council has won an Environment Award for Kent Business 2005 for Environmentally Responsible Purchasing. We are the first council to ever win an environment award in Kent.**

Jae Mather (pictured left with Jenny Mallion), said:

"The award was based upon the eco-friendly cleaning contract that was put together in 2005 for the new cleaning tender and it included expansive provisions for all of the non eco-friendly chemicals and materials that were not to be allowed to be used for the purposes of cleaning the council's buildings.

The policy is also now being used by I.C.L.E.I. Local Governments for Sustainability, as a benchmark of best practice across their world-wide network of more than 350 councils.

The award is also based around our new green purchasing policy which is part of the council's commitment for sustainable procurement in the Climate Change Action Plan.

"Kent County Councillor John Davies, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transportation, commented: "The Environment Awards for Kent Business have established a tradition of attracting entries of the very highest calibre, making it very difficult to select a single overall winner. Each year these Awards prove the undoubted commitment of Kent businesses to improving the environment."

"These outstanding businesses have received the accolade 'Kent Environment Business of the Year' in recognition of their efforts to limit their impact on the local environment and clearly share a desire with every short listed organisation in the awards, to lead by example. I very much hope that their fellow Kent businesses will be inspired to follow suit."



### **Green before it was good PR: June 20th 2008**

[http://www.greencleaningmatters.co.uk/stories/articles/-/contractors/green before it was good pr/](http://www.greencleaningmatters.co.uk/stories/articles/-/contractors/green_before_it_was_good_pr/)

**While many firms now recognise the demand for environmentally-friendly cleaning is growing, Kent-based Ridge Crest Cleaning was one of the first contract cleaners in the UK to achieve ISO 14001 – and claims to be the first in the country to operate a completely 'green' cleaning contract, with Maidstone Borough Council.**

When Ian Beach set up Ridge Crest Cleaning in 2004, he was clear about his mission.

"I knew there was a market for an environmentally friendly end-to- end service provider with great commitment to customer service and a focus on quality. I wanted to make schools, offices and other business premises cleaner and fresher places for people to work in, with minimal impact on the environment," he says.

With over 20 years' experience working as a senior manager for some of the UK's leading business organisations such as the RAC, Ian had a clear notion of what businesses and other organisations were looking for when they hired a cleaning contractor. From the provision of hard working and trust worthy members of staff, to the manufacture, supply and storage of cleaning and toiletry products, he believed in making contract cleaning environmentally responsible.

With this compelling business philosophy, it's no surprise that just under four years since its inception, the Kent-based company is going from strength to strength, securing major contracts within its key educational, local government and retail sectors. It has enjoyed 80 per cent growth in turnover year on year and also claims to be the first company in the UK to operate a completely environmentally friendly cleaning contract, in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council.

Responding to an open tender for the provision of cleaning services, Ridge Crest Cleaning was selected from 40 applicants to be the Council's preferred cleaning contractors. Responsible for cleaning its offices and Council-run premises, Ridge Crest undertook a promise to use only environmentally friendly, biodegradable cleaning products.

And the attention to detail was unrelenting. Every bin liner had to be bio degradable and henceforth, the Council's paper towels and toilet rolls were to be manufactured from 100 per cent post consumer recycled and chlorine free products. Additionally, all the raw product materials had to be free from animal by-products and testing and obtained from renewable sources. What's more, all storage containers and packaging had to contain high levels of recycled material with the packaging being recycled after use.

Three years on and Maidstone Borough Council's offices are now some of the cleanest and greenest in local government. What's more, Ridge Crest's services have helped the Council to win a major Environmental Award. "Although the exact benefits are hard to quantify, we're undoubtedly playing a substantial role in reducing deforestation and pollution," says Waste Collection Officer, David Campbell Lenaghan.

"We're extremely proud to be leading the way in the provision of eco-friendly public services." Following the successful implementation of this seven-year contract, Ridge Crest has adopted a similar approach for all of its subsequent cleaning contracts.

In line with Beach's original intentions, commitment to the environment is now an integral part of the company's mission statement with recycling, saving paper and using LPG vehicles forming an established day-to-day means of conducting business for the company's 360 employees. Ridge Crest is also working towards becoming carbon neutral by 2010. When it comes to recognising its responsibilities to safeguard the environment, Ridge Crest is entirely up front about its commitments. "The 'front line' in provision of green cleaning services at Ridge Crest comes in the close liaison between client, supplier and local site management," says Beach.

"It is these three combined that develop the solutions required for compliance with strict – and expanding – environmental legislation." With other contractors now beginning to think about providing 'green' contracts, Ridge Crest's approach provides a clear benchmark, demonstrating that it is possible to service large cleaning contracts, while operating in an environmentally friendly manner. "We are committed to reducing our impact on the environment, while maintaining our rigorous quality standards," concludes Beach. "We have worked hard to come up with an environmentally responsible solution – without passing on the cost to the client. And it has definitely been worth the effort."

### ENVIRONMENT AWARDS for Kent Business 2006 RIDGE CREST

#### The Proof of Performance

Ian Beach, Managing Director, explained: "Everything we use is ecologically friendly, with an impact on the environment during manufacture that is minimal. We have also embarked on the route of making far greater use of the latest steam and microfibre cleaning systems. The cleaning products we now use have all been tested and found to perform as well, or in some cases even better, than the established standard alternatives."

But Ridge Crest's planning goes beyond the relatively simple consideration of the cleaning products it uses, it encompasses what they are stored in too. All containers and packaging must contain high levels of recycled material, with packaging itself recycled once it has been used. An 'environmental culture' has now deeply penetrated the entire company and its 360 employees – recycling, saving paper, using LPG vehicles, etc, are an established day-to-day means of conducting their business. In addition the company has expanded its environmental interest into the sphere of waste management.

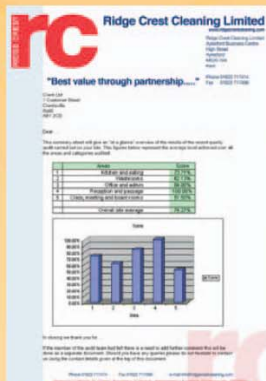
When the company secured the Award for Promoting Environmentally Sound Cleaning in the Environment Awards for Kent Business, Ian Beach commented: "I believe this recognises our continued commitment to the protection of our environment throughout every part of the business, which has been a major contributory factor to the company's outstanding levels of growth during the last two years."

"We have encouraged our clients and suppliers alike to embrace the environmentally friendly approach, which they have done with equal enthusiasm."

For further information visit [www.ridgecrestcleaning.com](http://www.ridgecrestcleaning.com) or call 01622 717414.



It was in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council that Ridge Crest set up its first environmentally friendly contract.



Ridge Crest conducts a detailed environmental audit for all clients and potential clients.

These awards are co-ordinated by the Kent Sustainable Business Partnership who is supported by Kent County Council, Business Link Kent and the Environment Agency.

The Awards Judging Panel and Kent Sustainable Business Partnership are supported by a wide range of statutory, NGO and voluntary organisations engaged in business support and environmental improvement.

For sustainable best practice information consult the Regional Business Learning Centre at [www.e-generation.co.uk](http://www.e-generation.co.uk) or contact Kent Sustainable Business Partnership on 01622 221859.

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contract CLEANING

# Organic growth proves fruitful

**I**n 2004, an Beach set up Ridge Crest in 2004. But the breakthrough came in early 2005 when it won what he claims is the UK's first environmentally-friendly contract with Maidstone Borough Council. "At that time we were led by the council," admits Beach. "The tender stipulated rigorous environmental criteria. We simply stuck to that and bid, demonstrating everything was as environmentally-friendly as possible. And we won the contract."



*Ridge Crest Cleaning won what it claims was the UK's first green cleaning contract with Maidstone Borough Council in 2005. Then it applied the philosophy across all contracts. The result is rapid growth – and lower environmental impact and costs for clients. Brendan Coyne reports*

As the contact progressed, the advantages became clear. "It cut the chemicals on site. We only used four products: Sulfamic acid, microfibre and steam for the washrooms; eliminated chemicals while still providing a sterile environment in the kitchenette by using microfibre and steam," Beach explains. "For general purpose degreasers and hard surface cleaning we used a derivative of orange peel, an extremely powerful degreaser which tackles a variety of applications including carpet cleaning." He says all consumables are recycled and chlorine-free.

All contracts are now approached in the same way, something Beach feels is a major growth factor: Ridge Crest's first year turnover was £95k; this year the books closed at £2.1m. "When tendering, clients might sit through several similar presentations. Our approach sets us apart. It gets them interested." But are they willing to pay for it? "They pay less, we have demonstrated cost savings with all of our clients," Beach claims. "The low number of products simplifies site procedures, cleaners are much easier to train and retain exactly what to do with each chemical, CoSHH is simplified, so productivity is higher. We also have a high level of management: an operations manager looks after only five contracts; the industry norm is more like 15."

Does the reduction in chemical offset the investment in microfibre? "Yes, microfibre lasts – you can wash the latest products at least 100 times, and the washing cost is no different to a traditional cloth. It has many benefits." Glass cleaning is one example. Beach says warm water in a spray bottle and a microfibre performs as well as expensive glass cleaners. "Even better, it won't leave a smeary finish over time."

What about daytime cleaning as a means of cutting utility bills? "It definitely has its merits but many of our clients are within the educational sector; you don't get into classrooms during the day. And two of our major clients are distribution depots where we are Asda's preferred clients," says Beach.

**Waste not, want not**  
Of Ridge Crest's other contracts, Beach says cash and environmental savings made for Wimbledon Stadium are interesting. "The Saturday car boot sale and Sunday market generate huge amounts of cardboard and plastic waste, plus glass and plastic glasses from the greyhound

stadium. Previously, says Beach, all of it went to landfill. "I investigated recycling and put procedures in place. Now for the cardboard they receive £45 per tonne, for the plastic £60 per tonne, and their glass is taken away free of charge." The measure cut the landfill bill in half, from in the region of £30,000 to just over £15,000. "Naturally," says Beach, "they were delighted"

**How green?**  
How green is Ridge Crest itself? "We do all of the good housekeeping things, save energy, recycle all of our waste, plan our routes very carefully," says Beach. "We aim to become carbon neutral by 2010, and we have just started an audit to enable us to offset our footprint."

**The future**  
Whereas Maidstone Borough Council took the lead with environmentally friendly contracts, Beach says a lack of governmental coherence, both locally and nationally, is hampering sustainable cleaning. "There's no joined up thinking. Whereas Maidstone took the initiative, other councils in the region are less interested."

After the Maidstone contract launched, Beach says he had a lot of interest from government officials. "Wasn't Milliband involved in environment at one time?" he deadpans. "Well his secretary called a couple of times. But since then, it's all gone very quiet."

So how should the situation be addressed? Something like the Dutch government's commitment to sustainable procurement by 2010 – thought to be worth EURO30bn? "I think government should issue guidelines on the type of methods and contractors that local councils should use. Personally I think tenders should be sought only from ISO14001-accredited firms."

Perhaps Ridge Crest Wales, which launched last month, will receive greater attention from the Welsh Assembly. Following its sponsorship of the Welsh Rugby Player's Association of the Year awards, the firm has appointed Welsh rugby captain Ryan Jones as chief executive.

Either way, the Ridge Crest's steep growth curve is a reasonable hint that greener contracting is a sound business plan.

[www.ridgecrestcleaning.co.uk](http://www.ridgecrestcleaning.co.uk)

Sustainable Wales | 5

# A greener, leaner cleaning service comes to Wales

**R**idge Crest Cleaning Limited is one of the fastest growing companies in the UK. It is a specialist in the cleaning and support services sector and expanding its highly successful operation into Wales.

When Ian Beach established Ridge Crest Cleaning Limited in 2004 he didn't consider himself to be a pioneer. Yet that's exactly what he's become. The following year, in partnership with a major local authority in Kent, Ridge Crest introduced the UK's first 100 per cent sustainable cleaning contract. Delivering a complete range of services to commercial, public sector, leisure and industrial premises, Ridge Crest uses only environment-friendly and biodegradable products and utilises the latest steam and microfibre cleaning technologies.

In 2006, Ridge Crest's commitment to sustainable business won it the Kent Environment Award for Best Practice. **Responsible for sustainable cleaning** Mr Beach, a 20-year veteran of the

service industry, soon recognised that his customers required an alternative to traditional cleaning products and methods.

He said: "Development of our eco-friendly cleaning contract just made perfect sense. Our clients are becoming increasingly aware of their need to protect the environment and to operate in a more sustainable way. We can help them to improve their green credentials with something as essential as their cleaning requirements."

**Eco-effective, cost-effective**

As well as being a committed environmentalist, Beach is an astute businessman and knew that his service had to be competitive.

He said: "On a typical office contract, 16 traditional cleaning products are required but only four green ones. Our way of working has led to a saving of around 20 per cent on overall cleaning costs while simplifying the process and improving general standards of cleanliness."

Its work for the Greyhound Racing

Association alone has saved the organisation more than £20,000 annually. What's more, many traditional cleaning products can be harmful to the user as well as the environment. Ridge Crest's products do not contain irritants or sensitisers – another good reason for going green.

**Credible, committed and commercial**

Ridge Crest's business is proving to be highly successful and is a good example of how a commitment to sustainability brings new opportunities. Its focus on the environment is at the core of the company's values – from recycling and saving paper to using LPG-powered vehicles, it's become an established way of doing business for all of its 360 employees.

**Win-win for Wales**

Ridge Crest is introducing its sustainable cleaning contract in Wales, a prospect that Mr Beach is clearly excited about. He said: "As a Welshman, I'm delighted that the focus of our growth in 2008 should be on Wales. We've had tremendous interest in

our services already and I know that many businesses here are eager to operate in a more sustainable way. Our contract gives them the opportunity to save money, have their premises cleaned more thoroughly and help the environment. It really is a win-win solution for everyone."

Ridge Crest is launching its recruitment campaign. If you want to get involved in Ridge Crest's exciting opportunities in Wales visit [www.ridgecrestcleaning.com](http://www.ridgecrestcleaning.com), contact Ian Beach on 01622 717414 or email [ian@ridgecrestcleaning.com](mailto:ian@ridgecrestcleaning.com).



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### ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE



# Clean, green and winning

Ian Beach on how he turned Ridge Crest Cleaning into a polished success, his green credentials and his passion for supporting rugby in Kent schools.

### Tell us about yourself

I am 50 years old, a family man with five children. I've worked in the service industry for more than 30 years. My first managerial positions were at the RAC, where I became the youngest general manager at 26. In the 1990s I held senior roles in two of the UK's top 50 fastest-growing companies.

### Describe your business

We provide a complete range of facilities services to commercial and public sector premises, delivering a high quality cleaning service that is both environmentally responsible and cost effective for our clients. We won environmental awards for our green credentials in 2006 and 2007, using environmentally friendly and biodegradable cleaning products.

Our commitment to the environment is an integral part of the company's ethos and something our 350 employees have bought into. We have 17 clients – 70 per cent of them schools. My first contract was with Skinnners' School, Tunbridge Wells and soon after Tonbridge Grammar joined the fold.

### What motivated you to set up Ridge Crest Cleaning?

For years I wanted to run my own company and manage my own destiny. I had an opportunity to sell a shareholding in the last company I worked for and put £50,000 into setting up Ridge Crest Cleaning in 2004. I wanted to make schools, offices and other

business premises cleaner and fresher places for people to work in, with minimal impact on the environment while delivering that much-needed personal service.

### What was your business breakthrough?

We pioneered the UK's first environmentally friendly cleaning contract, in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council, in 2005. We then adopted a similar approach to secure cleaning contracts at Wimbledon greyhound stadium, four Riva bingo halls, three Asda distribution depots and an Asda recycling depot.

### What's the secret of your fast-growing success?

It's partly due to our passionate commitment to personal service. Our clients know that if something needs sorting out quickly, they can speak directly to me. In addition, our overheads are low and 70 per cent of our costs are wages. Since the business was established, our profits have rocketed, with sales growth of more than 2,200 per cent. Annual turnover has increased from £93,000 in 2004/2005 to £2.15m in 2007/2008.

### What are your plans for the future?

We aim to develop our position within the education sector and build on our 'best value through partnership' approach. We launched Ridge Crest Cleaning Wales in 2008 with Ryan Jones, the Wales rugby captain,

as chief executive. It aims to become carbon neutral by 2010 and has started an audit to offset its carbon footprint.

### What do you sponsor in Kent and why?

We made a substantial donation to the Gift for Learning campaign to complete the new-build of Tonbridge Grammar School and supported Skinnners School's Eco-Schools award-winning project. At Hamstreet School, near Ashford, we sponsored the installation of solar panels for their swimming pool and initiated rugby coaching.

### How do you relax?

My overriding passion is rugby. So when I'm not watching Ospreys or Wales, I'm supporting the local teams I sponsor. I also part-own a two year old racehorse, Sapphire Prince, and three yearlings from the USA. They are with highly successful Kent-based trainer John Best.



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# Green cleaning bucks the economic trend

"WHERE'S THERE'S muck, there's brass", is an age-old Yorkshire saying that barely travelled as far as the South East, but an Aylesford-based cleaning business has got the message so well that it is one of the fastest growing companies in the UK.

Set up in 2004, Ridge Crest Cleaning has grown sales by more than 2,200 per cent, with annual turnover increasing from £93,000 in 2004/2005 to £2.15m in 2007/2008. This growth generated a pre-tax profit increase of 4,900 per cent over the same four-year period. Last year alone the company experienced an 86 per cent growth in turnover and 160 per cent pre-tax profit increase.

Ridge Crest delivers a complete range of facilities services to commercial, public sector, leisure and industrial premises using only environment-friendly and biodegradable products. Its breakthrough came in 2005 with the launch of the UK's first green cleaning contract in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council.

"It is all down to a commitment to delivering a quality personal service in an eco-friendly way," says Ian Beach, founder and managing director. "I wanted to make schools, offices and other business premises cleaner and fresher places for people to work in, with minimal impact on the environment whilst delivering that much-needed personal service. Our service is business-friendly and cost-effective. Use of fewer, but more effective products, offers up to a 20 per cent cost saving, so many of our clients can see an immediate return on investment early on in the contract."

Ridge Crest recently won the contract to clean Quantum Leap's 60,000 sq ft 'Battersea Evolution' venue in London and a further two new contracts in the education sector; it will provide cleaning services at the temporary sites of the new Evelyn Grace Academy in south London and also work with the Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre in Tenterden, the biggest school in Kent.

The company's commitment to the environment is now an integral part of its ethos, with recycling, paperless working and the use of LPG-powered vehicles forming the day-to-day means of conducting



Cleaning up... Ridge Crest's Ian Beach.

business for its 350 employees. It is also working towards becoming carbon neutral by 2010.

"Earlier this year, in partnership with Ryan Jones, Wales rugby captain, Ridge Crest launched its highly-successful operation in Wales.

**Kings Hill** is celebrating one of its best years ever, having completed property deals on 156,000 square feet of office space in the first six months of 2008. Said Andrew Blevins, managing director of Kings Hill developer Liberty Property Trust UK: "It is our second best year ever, second only to 2006 when we completed on 180,000 square feet. With only 20,000 square feet of available space remaining, we are planning our next phase of speculative development and hope to start on site early 2009." Kings Hill is a thriving community with around 4,000 people living in the residential village; 15 per cent of all households have at least one person employed by a business on site. Around 100 companies are based at Kings Hill, ranging from international and national corporates to SMEs.

Bids for £11.6 million of transport investment in Dover and Shoreham (West Sussex) have been backed by the **South East England Regional Transport Board**. The South East is able to bid for cash from the Government's Community Infrastructure Fund now that the towns have been named as new 'Growth Points'. The money for transport improvements will support major new housing and

economic development. The region successfully secured £93 million in 2007-08 for 'Growth Areas' that included Kent. Thames Gateway and the new bid covers projects including Dover Priory train station improvements, new bus lanes, real time travel information, extra bus stops, improved pedestrian crossings and better public transport access to White Cliffs Business Park.

As UK banks talk to the European Investment Bank (EIB) to get a share of £4bn in loan finance, **Business Link in Kent** is reminding business owners that robust business plans make the difference between being approved or turned down for finance. Says Business Link Adviser Ian Netherton: "Lenders are unlikely to consider an application for funding without a comprehensive business plan. Our experience means that we know what the lender will be looking for in a business plan and we can help you prepare your plan in the best light possible." To book a clinic with a Business Link Adviser or to request a 'Sources of Finance for Small Firms' factsheet, phone Business Link on **0845 600 9 006** or email [info@businesslinksoutheast.co.uk](mailto:info@businesslinksoutheast.co.uk)

**London Ashford Airport (Lydd)** has spent £1.7 million and thousands of man hours preparing reports and undertaking environmental studies to support its planning applications. More than 20 volumes of information have been produced since December 2006, when the airport submitted its proposals for a runway extension

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### **‘Welcome to the fourth edition of Green Cleaning, Cleaning Matters’ annual guide to sustainable cleaning solutions. June 17th 2011’**

**Source:**

[http://www.greencleaningmatters.co.uk/stories/articles/-/news/foreword/welcome to the fourth edition of green cleaning cleaning matters annual guide to sustainable cleaning solutions /](http://www.greencleaningmatters.co.uk/stories/articles/-/news/foreword/welcome%20to%20the%20fourth%20edition%20of%20green%20cleaning%20cleaning%20matters%20annual%20guide%20to%20sustainable%20cleaning%20solutions/)

‘In the build up to the publication of this guide we invited Cleaning Matters’ readers to take part in a series of polls on sustainable cleaning.

One of the most telling findings was that when asked whether they perceived green cleaning products to be as effective as more traditional products, less than half of readers (48%) said yes. One of the reasons for this may well be that while green cleaning technology has come a long way, education in terms of its implementation is still lagging. Readers were almost equally divided on whether or not it is a priority for a company to have achieved an environmental accreditation, such as ISO 14001 certification when sourcing cleaning solutions; 48% answered yes, and 52% said no.

On the subject of water efficiency, 26% of readers said it was definitely a priority when sourcing a product or service, 51% said it wasn’t and 23% said it was sometimes a consideration. The articles in this guide explore all of these issues in more detail, as well as providing perspectives on the market for green cleaning products and services in general. There is also essential advice on how to implement green cleaning technologies and practices effectively so that their full potential can be realised. We hope that you find the guide useful’

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