Stella McCartney Ltd (SMC) is a signatory of the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP) 2020 Commitment. This Commitment, managed by WRAP, seeks to significantly reduce the environmental impacts of clothing across its lifecycle.

As part of this commitment, SMC are exploring opportunities to build upon their existing work to extend the life of garments by providing a service to their customers.

**Key Facts**

- **Existing initiatives** - are in place for garment durability, including a communication campaign that was launched in 2014 (Clevercare).
- **Digital communications** have been reviewed to find ways to add messaging about durability to align with the Love Your Clothes (LYC) campaign.
- **Dry cleaning** – a significant number of garments are dry-clean-only. SMC were interested in gaining a better understanding of the potential environmental issues associated with dry-cleaning.
- **High quality garments** - the dry cleaners and tailors interviewed found SMC garments were high quality and only had issues with invisible zippers breaking and heavy make-up stains from SMC customers.
**Existing initiatives**
Existing initiatives by SMC include:
- Materials testing with suppliers and during production;
- Rectifying potential fabric and manufacturing issues before garments get to market;
- Providing tailoring services at point of sale;
- Launching and supporting the Clevercare initiative – a symbol added to all SMC care-labels that serves as a simple reminder to consider the environment when washing and caring for your garments;
- Developing relationships with preferred tailors and dry cleaners in the locality of a store; and
- Providing customers with information on appropriate care and cleaning of garments on swing tags.

**Stella’s World**
The SMC website already provides customers with information on sustainability through the Stella’s World section of the website.

In relation to maintaining or extending the life of clothing, Stella’s World provides information on mending clothes, caring for clothes - less washing, tumble drying, ironing and dry cleaning protects garments - and donating unwanted clothes.

This messaging was cross referenced with WRAP’s consumer focused Love Your Clothes (LYC) campaign to see if there were any additional messages that SMC could provide their customers.

Opportunities to add messaging on stain removal, accessorising and planning wardrobes were identified. SMC are considering LYC messaging as part of their website update in Autumn.

The [LYC website](#) is designed to raise awareness of the value of clothes with consumers and help make the most of the clothes they already have.
Environmental profiling of dry cleaning
SMC sell a significant number of dry clean only garments. These garments are too delicate to be cleaned via a wet laundering process that may damage the clothing.

SMC wanted to understand what the environmental profile of dry cleaning was to understand the impact of these types of garments.

The research found that very little has been published about the relative impacts of dry cleaning as an alternative cleaning option to domestic wet laundering.

While domestic laundering is the predominant cleaning method, dry cleaning is necessary for some delicate clothing that would be damaged by wet laundering.

Most dry cleaning processes involve the use of chemical solvents as the prime means of removing dirt and stains, in contrast to the wet laundering combination of detergent, water and (significant) mechanical action.

The dry cleaning process
The predominant solvent used in the UK is perchloroethylene or “PERC” (Defra 2014).

It is used by most dry cleaners because it removes stains and dirt effectively from all common types of fabric, but is a toxic chemical with human health and environmental concerns.

Because of the risks associated with solvent use, dry cleaners in the UK are regulated by local authorities and must apply for a permit to operate.

There is hydrocarbon solvent, siloxane and carbon alternatives to PERC. Unfortunately, there is currently insufficient evidence to be conclusive about whether the alternatives are better or worse than PERC from an environmental perspective.

It is therefore likely that electricity use for dry cleaning will be significant to the overall footprint of dry-cleaned clothes. Maximising and improving energy efficiency in the dry cleaning process is therefore likely to be important to reduce overall environmental impacts.
The dry cleaning process (contd)
Any business models that can reduce transport emissions in collecting and returning clothes for dry cleaning may also provide an important improvement.

The full Environmental Profile of Dry Cleaning report can be found on the WRAP website.

Consumer engagement: Dry cleaners & tailors
Interviews with SMC dry cleaning and tailoring partners sought to obtain insight into the types and performance of SMC garments received.

It also provided visibility on the guidance and aftercare instructions being communicated to SMC customers.

The diagram on the following page illustrates the results of the interviews.

These results demonstrate that quality was high and the main issues experienced related to breaking invisible zippers and make up stains.
Overview

Existing initiatives and Love Your Clothes

Dry cleaning

- garment types and fabric: no clear garment type. Range of fabrics received including silk, polyester, cotton and denim.
- common issues: most common issue is heavy make-up stains that are difficult to remove.
- frequency of issues: not possible to track repeat garments. SMC garments make up a low percentage of overall throughput of the dry cleaners.
- cleaning and labelling: all items were ‘dry clean only’. There was mixed opinion among dry cleaners on how clear the label instructions are.
- aftercare instructions: aftercare information is provided on an ad-hoc basis if requested. Verbally or written. E.g. if a stain could not be removed – advice on repeat incidence avoidance.
- quality and suggested changes: SMC garments were considered high quality and no changes should be made. Making garments more durable may result in thicker garments that are more difficult to shape and clean.

Dry cleaning and tailors

- common faults and improvements: the common fault reported by all tailors was broken zips, specifically the invisible zippers on the dresses.
- frequency of issues: SMC garments make up a low percentage of overall throughput of the tailors. A peak in items received occurs when new uniforms come on to the market from SMC.
- aftercare instructions: very little or no communication with customers on aftercare. Most services are alteration services. Specific issues such as a broken zip, advice is verbally communicated.
- repeat services: repeat service on one single item was an infrequent occurrence. Chiffon dresses occasionally require repeat repair. Customers can sometimes want further alterations.
- suggested communications: tailors were unsure how SMC could promote re-tailoring of clothes to address potential weight gain/loss in the SMC customer base.

Tailoring & alterations

- garment types and fabric: suits, trousers, jackets, dresses, skirts and tops. Dominant fabric for dresses is chiffon overlay with silk and uniforms are polyester, rayon, wool, and crêpe.

Diagram source: WRAP, 2015
WRAP’s vision is a world where resources are used sustainably. It works in partnership with governments, businesses, trade bodies, local authorities, communities and individuals looking for practical advice to improve resource efficiency that delivers both economic and environmental benefits.

Our mission is to accelerate the move to a sustainable resource-efficient economy through:

- **re-inventing** how we design, produce and sell products;
- **re-thinking** how we use and consume products; and
- **re-defining** what is possible through recycling and re-use.

Disclaimer:
While we have tried to make sure this case study is accurate, we cannot accept responsibility or be held legally responsible for any loss or damage arising out of or in connection with this information being inaccurate, incomplete or misleading. This material is copyrighted. You can copy it free of charge as long as the material is accurate and not used in a misleading context. You must identify the source of the material and acknowledge our copyright.

You must not use material to endorse or suggest we have endorsed a commercial product or service. For more details please see our terms and conditions on our website at www.wrap.org.uk Case studies were generated as a result of specific trials carried out by WRAP and the named organisations during January to July 2015.

wrap.org.uk  @wrap_uk