

Greening the supply chain:

Scenery Salvage recycles the whole set

Do you need a door, a railway sign or even a spare pair of hands? You've come to the right place!



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For more than 12 years, Scenery Salvage has offered a full set recycling service to UK film, TV and theatre productions. It collects unwanted scenic material – built sets, props and costumes – and either reuses it or recycles the component materials.

The company recovers reusable items such as doors, windows, furniture, props and costumes and, with permission, hires or sells them to other productions. It breaks down the remaining materials into their component parts: mainly timber, metal, plastics and textiles. Where possible the materials are reused in-house.

Completes the recycling loop

Scenery Salvage completes the recycling loop by using chipped timber from old sets as a biomass fuel to maintain climate-control systems in its set storage facility.

Even materials that are relatively difficult to recycle, such as fibreglass and polystyrene, can be handled, although fibreglass is shipped to Germany for recycling as there is no processor in the UK. Clean polystyrene can be re-pelleted into new polystyrene. If it is contaminated with paint or glue, it can be melted and compressed into high-density logs. These can be used to make moulded products such as picture frames, or burnt as a biomass fuel.

The group provides set construction, storage, reuse and recycling services across the UK from bases in Great Missenden, near London, and Manchester. Clients include major studios and broadcasters as well as independent film productions of all sizes.



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Clients prefer their set to be reused or recycled

Owner Hugo Keating says set reuse must work financially as well as sustainably. "We're a business. All our clients would prefer their set to be reused or recycled rather than going to landfill – but if it's going to cost more, 80% would rather scrap it." The business always needs to demonstrate to clients that recycling is a cost-effective solution.

The idea of set recycling initially emerged from the set storage business. TV productions often store a set for six to nine months, until the next series. If a series is not recommissioned or the company decides to design a new set, the producers will ask Scenery Salvage to dispose of the old one. In the past, unwanted sets went to landfill but because of the high financial and environmental cost, the company decided to find a better way of dealing with them.

Moulds for Disney feature

The company has recently launched a new service for sets and materials that are commercially sensitive, with full documentation and video evidence to prove that items have been destroyed and recycled. Moulds for the latest Disney feature are one example.

Scenery Salvage also provides set storage and recycling for theatre companies including London's National Theatre and Royal Opera House.

Their experience shows that set recycling can be a viable business model that also creates green jobs. For more information, see www.scenerysalvage.com.



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