

How we

reduced waste

by equipping people

Sunbelt Rentals created a bespoke prison-based repair workshop to refurbish Trakway, fencing and barrier equipment with HMP Sudbury. The initiative provides meaningful paid employment and skills development for prisoners, reduces waste through circular repair solutions and delivers significant commercial savings.



20,000 tiles
repaired annually



4,000 sqm
diverted from
landfill



42 prisoners
employed

Following Covid, the Trakway team faced recruitment challenges caused by a limited local talent pool and increasing repair demand.

Tasked with finding a sustainable solution, Sunbelt Rentals developed a prison-based workshop to maintain critical equipment capacity while delivering social value, environmental benefits and long-term commercial efficiency.

Leaving prison can be a difficult transition, with statistics showing that only 17% of prison leavers find employment within six months of release. However, if they can secure a job and successfully build a new life, it can greatly reduce prisoners' chances of reoffending.

Supported provided at a glance

- Prison-based repair workshop
- Specialist welding equipment supplied
- Paid, skilled prisoner roles
- Circular economy solution

Challenges

The primary challenge was identifying a suitable prison with the facilities and appetite to host a safe, compliant repair workshop while ensuring Sunbelt Rentals' operational standards and prison policies were fully aligned. This was coupled with securing the initial investment required to establish the workshop, gaining internal and external buy-in for a non-traditional workforce model, and designing an approach that could deliver meaningful employment and skills development despite restrictions around release on temporary licence and post-release employment pathways.

How we've supported them

Guided by our sustainability strategy, Our Planet, and commitment to sustainable working practices, Sunbelt Rentals supplied and continues to provide all equipment required to repair our stock, including welders, tools, fume extraction units, forklifts, PPE and consumables.

We developed clear visual method statements, delivered all initial training and mentor prison trainers, ensuring consistent standards and safe working practices.

By sustaining the workshop with a guaranteed flow of repair work, up to 14,000 hours per year, we provide meaningful paid employment for up to 42 prisoners at any given time, supporting skills development, rehabilitation and long-term opportunity while extending the life of equipment and reducing waste.

Result

The workshop has delivered substantial commercial, environmental and social value through a wide range of repair and refurbishment activities.

On average, prisoners repair the lugs on 20,000 Trakway tiles each year, equating to 4,000 sqm of product returned to service. With repair and transport costs of £100k per year compared to £300k for replacement, this delivers a £200k annual saving while increasing equipment availability and reducing the volume of kit sent for recycling.

Significant additional savings are achieved through aluminium panel hole welding, where around 400 damaged planks per month are repaired, equivalent to 45 full panels, resulting in savings of approximately £600k per year when compared to replacement costs, less scrap value.

Sacrificial end welding further extends asset life, with around 40 end planks repaired each month at a cost of £14 per unit versus £128 new, generating savings of £55k per year.

The workshop also repairs and builds panels, including assembling 6,500 panels in the past year, saving £8 per panel compared to supplier build costs (£50k annually), alongside close to £80k per year in panel repair savings, with full loads of 90 panels typically turned around in four days.

The workshop provides structured, paid employment that develops practical welding, fabrication and repair skills, builds confidence and pride, and enables prisoners to contribute directly to projects and major events. Alongside the commercial savings and waste reduction achieved, the programme supports instructor upskilling and reinforces a culture of inclusion, rehabilitation and long-term opportunity, demonstrating how equipping people with skills can truly transform places, spaces and lives.

Change of culture

Purposeful work created

Transforming lives

Leave the how to us.