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Media Release

Eco-friendly RUH

A new way of disposing of scraps of food from meals is helping the environment and saving money at the Royal United Hospital.

Food waste was previously collected from the hospital's wards and restaurants after mealtimes and taken to the kitchens, where it would either go into black bags and be sent to landfill or added to one of seven macerators – large waste disposal machines.

The macerators used substantial amounts of water – a cubic metre a day each – and led to a large amount of food waste ending up in the sewerage system, with the potential to cause pipe blockages.

Now, we have installed a single 'biodigester', which is fed with leftovers from patient meals and food waste from the hospital's Lansdown restaurant and Atrium café.

The machine works by constantly turning over food until bacteria breaks it down organically, turning the waste into a water soluble liquid which can be safely flushed down the waste water pipe. This liquid contains a large amount of aerobic bacteria, which is also beneficial when it gets to the sewage treatment plant by helping to break down harmful micro-organisms.

Environment and Sustainability Manager Luke Champion says: "With 2,000 meals a day being served up at the RUH it's inevitable that there will be a lot of food which simply doesn't get eaten and getting rid of it in an eco-friendly way has previously been difficult for us to do.

"Now we able to break down a large quantity of food waste on site in a much more environmentally-friendly way.

"Along with dealing with leftover food, the biodigester will also be able to help us reduce wastage by identifying any wards which may be ordering too many meals, or serving up portions in too large a size."

The biodigester will generate estimated savings of £35,000 a year – £3,000 on electricity consumption, £7,000 on reduced landfill waste charges, and £25,000 on water usage.

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