

# Window Cleaning

## magazine

October 2011

This issue...

**Let some lite into your life**

*Super-Max 45 pole reviewed*

**Why save water?**

*What are the main benefits?*

**ErgoTec Ninja Review**

*Unger's latest squeegee*

**American window cleaner**

*discovers window cleaning secret*

**Water fed pole systems**

*D.i.y. or off the shelf?*

and much, much more...

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Welcome to the first issue of  
**Window Cleaning Magazine**



# Editorial

Autumn is here and today we launch the first issue of the Window Cleaning Magazine.

I write more about the magazine and why I have created this magazine later on.

It is this time of year I start to stock up with rock salt and dust down the oil heaters for the vans in preparation. I start to look at winter gear for our workers such as gloves etc as well. Choosing the right products that are tested by window cleaners is important so that we can all avoid costly mistakes. That is part of what this magazine is about, as well as providing help in expanding or starting your new business. Light hearted articles on the industry and reading about other window cleaners, will help us all with any questions we may have, as well as being slightly entertaining.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for subscribing to this magazine. The magazine is free and as you know sponsored by my company High Shine Ltd.

Your input is important, this is a magazine written by window cleaners for window cleaners. It is also an evolving magazine. We are listening to you. We will cover the most controversial subjects such as the licensing of window cleaners in Scotland, to what you really want from a trade association.

If there is anything you would like us to investigate, challenge or praise, just let us know.

Feel free to contact me on [info@windowcleaningmagazine.co.uk](mailto:info@windowcleaningmagazine.co.uk) or follow me at [twitter.com/leeburbidge](https://twitter.com/leeburbidge)  
There is also a WCM blog on the website [www.windowcleaningmagazine.co.uk](http://www.windowcleaningmagazine.co.uk)

I hope you enjoy it.

Lee Burbidge



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# Window Cleaning Magazine

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## Why a magazine?

*Hi, my name is Lee Burbidge.....*

Yes, I know. I have never launched, edited or designed a magazine before. Everything from spellchecking, layout and fonts to uploading PDF files and learning design software, I am having to do from scratch.

A kind of learn as you go. I am confident that this magazine will get better and better as I find new ways to improve the look of the magazine and what it can do online.

So then, why bother with it at all?

Some people have said to me, "great idea Lee, but there is only so much you can write about window cleaning".

There is so much information out there with new products and techniques.

Personally, I have always wanted to see a magazine not bound by its advertising sponsors, where window cleaners could read real reviews from real window cleaners about products.

A site that would be a central point for news in our industry.

It was really important to be a magazine written for window cleaners by window cleaners.

Which is why this magazine will be moulded by its readers.

Everyone is free to submit articles and photographs or tell us what you want and what you do not want.

Above all this magazine should be free to all its readers and should try to offer as much help in setting up and running a window cleaning business as well as guidance through ever changing Employment Law and Health & Safety Law.

I'm not a professional writer although I have now started to write articles for Window Talk.

This first issue is a pilot issue and requires as much feedback from you as possible, good or bad.

Largely to kick-start, I thought at the beginning there would be a lot of articles written by myself. How wrong I was. Our window cleaning community have done us proud with their contributions.

I plan to discuss the most sensitive subjects here as well to encourage debate on the issues that effect our window cleaning business today.

This is your magazine – a window cleaning magazine written by window cleaners for window cleaners. Wherever you are in the world, tell us about your corner of it.

You can submit articles, pictures or letters to [info@windowcleaningmagazine.co.uk](mailto:info@windowcleaningmagazine.co.uk)





# THE DAWN OF TIME

At the dawn of time, man peered from out of his cave dwelling uttering grunts that if translated today would mean “we need something to fill this gap”

The cave man would then forage for anything he could lay his hands on, such as wood and leaves in order to cover the cave entrance from draughts. It wouldn't take long before Homo-window-cleaning-erectus would turn up attempting to clean them for a short sit next to the fire. It was rubbish and it didn't work.

Man would have to wait until around 2000BC when the clever Egyptians were able to perfect the art of glass making. As it's popularity spread so did the development of window cleaning techniques and tools alike.

Now, I'm not a genius, but even I can see the 'development' in the early days was a simple sloppy rag and bucket of water, and that it was like that for a long time. I'm not too sure the word 'development' is right here.

However, things got kind of interesting around the 5<sup>th</sup> Century because the Greeks used a thing called a horse sweat squeegee.

The wife recons she is going to get me one. I have no idea what she means!

The Greeks used this tool for horse grooming. People realised that the absorbent material and long handle was perfect for cleaning windows. And they probably used horse sweat too. Yuk!

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century there appeared to be an explosion of advancements for the window cleaning trade.

Suddenly names such as Ettore (1936) sprung onto the scene with the invention of the window cleaning blade.

Why is it called a blade, anyway? Can you imagine living

out in the bush with only your blade for survival? There is no way I am going to cut my way through jungles or cut wood for a fire with that.

Imagine still, the face of a big brown bear when you stumble on each other (by accident), you both pause in anticipation of who is going to make the first move.

You whip out your Ettore blade from your window cleaning holster. The bear raises an eyebrow as if to say '.....are you serious?!'

Other breakthroughs came along at this time, such as the leather shammy and scrim (later on microfibre cloths) all these products promised that glass would be streak and spot free. Soon, even soap and water was not good enough for window cleaning.

When the car industry introduced tinted glass it was necessary to develop detergents that would not destroy or scratch the special glass. Enter – ammonia free window cleaning products.

These were non corrosive but were still effective in removing stubborn water spots that would often cling to the windscreen. That did not include the man that cleans windscreens at the road side clinging on at 30mph. I always find turning the wipers on works very well at this point.

These chemical advancements would ultimately lead to window cleaning detergents for stained glass windows; a popular decorative fixture in the 1960's including frosted glass. Father Ted would have been pleased.

Today window cleaning detergents even promise to protect the glass from water spots by leaving a very thin layer of wax that seals out moisture.

Home owners could even now buy window cleaning kits that included fully automated window cleaning squeegees that rotate to reach all corners, no drip window cleaning rags, disposable window cleaning towels, and even soap-less window cleaning mops. What the hell is that? Apparently the soap is activated by the water. Funny, I thought it was soap less!

Nowadays some of the window cleaning tools even have lightweight fibreglass handles making window cleaning much easier on the forearm.

Other kits include fully extendable parts for cleaning out of the way windows.

With all these window cleaning tools and chemicals the chore of window cleaning became much easier.

But just when we thought life couldn't get any better, something happened that left us all rubbing the backs of our heads in dismay. Because you see a challenge was coming our way and it would prove to stretch personal safety to the max.

That change was the modern trend in architecture. Oh yes – I will construct a building that will make it humanly impossible for anyone to clean windows!

Logistical nightmares began to pop up all over the place. What with high rise buildings and floor to ceiling glass letting in massive amounts of light.

And then there is the more modern craziness..... canopy type structures over every row of windows on every floor. I have no idea what they are for..... I can only imagine they are to protect the heads of office staff when they feel a need to gasp for air during a rainy day or when they catch a crafty cigarette chanting "I know it's illegal. I'm not actually in the building. See, I'm hanging from my finger tips!!!!"

And then arrived the water fed poles.

It was met by unconvinced traditional window cleaners at the beginning in the same way as the squeegee blade was received back in the early 1930's.

With the increased rules and regulations surrounding working at height, water fed pole systems increased in popularity. It seemed to solve a lot of stuff, that's for sure.

The use of pure water for window cleaning was a marvel of an idea, where science meets window cleaning.

I think if Homo-window-cleaning-erectus was around today and he was showed how using the properties of water to our advantage would clean glass, he would have grunted 'voodoo magic'.

And he would be right!



## FWC IOSH ACCREDITED TRAINING COURSE DATES

2011 - "Cleaning Windows Safely "  
WFP & Portable Ladders

### OCTOBER

Tuesday	4th October	-	Stockport
Tuesday	18th October	-	Glasgow
Wednesday	19th October	-	London
Friday	28th October	-	Wales

### NOVEMBER

Monday	7th November	-	Stockport
Tuesday	22nd November	-	Aberdeen
Wednesday	16th November	-	London
Friday	25th November	-	Wales

### DECEMBER

Tuesday	6th December	-	Stockport
Tuesday	13th December	-	Glasgow
Wednesday	14th December	-	London
Friday	16th December	-	Wales

2011 – "Risk Assessment" for cleaning windows, gutters  
& external facades

### OCTOBER

Wednesday	12th October	-	London
Wednesday	19th October	-	Stockport
Wednesday	19th October	-	Glasgow

### NOVEMBER

Wednesday	9th November	-	London
Wednesday	23rd November	-	Aberdeen
Wednesday	23rd November	-	Stockport

### DECEMBER

Wednesday	tba December	-	Stockport
Wednesday	14th December	-	Edinburgh
Wednesday	7th December	-	London



## Interview with Alex Gardiner

### We profile Gardiner Pole Systems with Alex Gardiner

**WCM:** Alex, tell me about your company's background.

**Alex:** Gardiner Pole Systems was formed in 2005 as an offshoot of the family window cleaning business which had been in existence since 1980. My father had established the business and he was joined by myself in 1985 and then by my sister, Kirsty (current MD of Gardiner Pole Systems), in 1987.

Our window cleaning firm first started using basic water-fed pole equipment on some of our contracts in 2000, with a full switch to WFP in 2001. We were one of the first window cleaning firms in south-west England to use this equipment, and within a year or so we regularly had other window cleaners ringing us for advice and guidance on the systems.

**WCM:** Since this was the early days of WFP systems, what made you introduce them into your business? The WFP method was not easily accepted by the window cleaning community in the beginning.

**Alex:** It was mainly to be able to safely service my larger commercial contracts that had started to become dominant in my cleaning portfolio. At that time I was buying longer and longer ladders and working at greater heights, which I knew was not ideal. Then I recalled the use of WFP from a visit I had made a few years before to the US, where an acquaintance used this in his large window cleaning firm. At the time I did not pay much attention, but I had not forgotten about it. Introducing this to my business gave me a massive leap forward in the contracts that I could take on and it gave me an instant business advantage – one that at first I was not too keen to share with others!

**WCM:** How did you start supplying other window cleaners with WFP parts?

**Alex:** By 2004 I had started having 'micro bore' hoses made for our window cleaning firm and installing flow valves on the poles – simple things, but in those days they were not available from suppliers. In early 2005 we had started casually supplying hoses and fittings to other window cleaners locally and I was dealing with between five and ten phone calls a week helping others with systems, etc.

**WCM:** That must have kept you very busy!

**Alex:** Yes. This was not something that I could continue long-term due to the time it was taking up. Kirsty (who was a computer consultant for the local council) said that she would be prepared to give it a go to turn things into a proper supply company. In 2005 we set up Gardiner Pole Systems and invested in a container load of fibreglass poles from abroad.



**WCM:** What were the ideas driving your newly-formed company?

**Alex:** Our philosophy was to be able to supply good quality products at affordable prices for the average window cleaner. Within the firm we had a large amount of experience in the Internet and computing and we decided that from day one the firm would be an Internet-based business – phone support was added later as the firm grew in size. The company has grown steadily from these simple beginnings, gradually employing more staff as required.

**WCM:** How many members of staff help you run the operation currently?

**Alex:** We now have 13 (just agreed another one this morning!) working for the company, but we still remain very much a small family firm.

**WCM:** Why did you start producing your own poles and brushes?

**Alex:** Having spent many years using equipment that was starting to put a strain on my body, and my father having a bad car accident which affected his ability to use heavy poles, I decided that we needed to look at our own pole development. The main poles that I used at the time were: a 45ft six-section CF Universal pole with an alloy head, which weighed about 9kg and had to be walked up buildings to use it, and a 30ft six-section Universal GF pole which weighed about 4–5kg – both were back-breakers. Fundamentally, I like to work with minimum strain and effort, so I was not happy with the current equipment.

We started development on our own carbon fibre poles in 2006, with a first prototype that would be later released in



2007 as the first SLX pole. Around this time we also looked into lightweight modular poles based on fishing pole technology – these were starting to be used by some DIY pole makers according to the Internet forums. I tried one out and then, following a deal with one of the UK's premier fishing pole suppliers, we released the original Super-Lite. The Super-Lite was a basic but very useable high-level pole.

**WCM: So how did the launch of that go?**

*Alex:* This pole was not profitable but it did kick-start a new chapter in high-level useable poles for our firm. A year later we released a modular pole engineered by us, which was stronger and more reliable, under the Super-Lite 2 name. This pole continues today, with improvements being gradually added over the years. The prototype SLX pole (short for Super-Lite eXtendable), which we had been using in our own cleaning business, was then released for retail sales in 2007. This pole took the UK market by storm and in our opinion revolutionised the working day for many clients.

It was only available in the 25ft size as this was the size of pole that I had needed to develop for much of my domestic window cleaning at the time. This quickly became our best-selling pole and led to further sizes being developed.

In March 2009 we released a complete new range of SLX poles featuring our new design lateral clamps – the world's first in clamp design for water-fed poles.

**WCM: How did your clamps differ?**

*Alex:* Up until this time all water-fed poles either used a twist-grip clamp or a longitudinal clamp. The lateral clamp design allowed for a much more compact clamp body, which allowed the pole to be more compact when closed. Another key advantage is that the direct action of the lever mechanism in a lateral clamp also allows for far greater clamping force to be applied with less effort and less strain on the cam. These clamps also allow for fingertip adjustment of the clamp if needed – no need for a special tool or an Allen key.

**WCM: What other developments have been made in your product range since then?**

*Alex:* These clamps have allowed the pole range to grow with the introduction of the CLX range in May 2010, which was introduced to enable more clients to get the benefit of carbon fibre but at a more affordable price. We also introduced our Super-Lite range of brushes in 2007, which have quickly become the brushes of choice for window cleaners who want ease of use coupled with quality cleaning.

We have also recently released the new Xtreme range, which pushes the boundaries of pole technology, using a new patented construction and design – still using our lateral clamps.



Alex working with pole



Support office staff

Our design philosophy has always been to make life easy for the window cleaner – basically because I am still a window cleaner. I work every week with our equipment and I always have prototypes on hand to trial. I will only work with the lightest and best-performing products on the market – this is why we constantly look at our range to find ways to improve it.

**WCM: Are there any plans to break the 80ft-plus barrier, and what do you think about poles that reach this high?**

*Alex:* The Xtreme already has a length of 78.5ft when used with six high-strength extensions. All it would take is to fit another (7<sup>th</sup>) extension and you would have a pole that is 83.5ft long. I just need the right building to try it on!

**WCM: What does the future hold for Gardiner Pole Systems?**

*Alex:* We are working on many projects at this time, all of which have the aim of making life simpler and easier for window cleaners around the world! I am particularly pleased with the new Super-Lite Radius-Sill brush range, as this has been a brush that has taken several years to get right, and I feel that this is exactly what the market has been asking for. Additionally, in partnership with another company our 'crash-tested' vehicle systems will soon be re-released and available throughout the world.

**WCM: That sounds really interesting, Alex. How do you feel about giving WCM readers complete exclusivity on all of the new products you plan to launch? We would love to read it here first.**

*Alex:* I would certainly like to share new products with all of your readers when they are about to be launched.

## *Let some lite into your life*

In my quest for the holy grail of water fed poles, a pole that ticks a lot of boxes and then ticks some more, my journey brings me to the Gardiner Pole Systems brand – in particular the Super Max 45.

I'm not too sure whether this is indeed the Holy Grail, but I will say this, it's a bloody good pole!

The strap line points out; 'a pole designed by a window cleaner for window cleaners'. And somehow I believe them. If it was not for the hysteria in the online window cleaning forums, I don't think I would have clicked on to Gardiner's web site to take a look at the reason for all the fuss. After all, I don't have a lawn that needs mowing or bushes that need pruning, so even stumbling on them by accident on the Internet was out of the question.

The forums boasted; 'I have looked and compared the Max 45. And I like the Max 45' and 'It could easily be an everyday pole'

Alex Gardiner, one of the company Director's, joined his father's window cleaning business in 1985. The business was first established in 1980. Their window cleaning business was one of the first firms to use wfp systems in the South West of England.

The rise of a great pole was born out of the necessity to ease personal injury. Over time, using current equipment began to put a strain on Alex's body and following his father's involvement in a bad car accident that affected his ability to use heavy poles, they decided to look at their own pole development. The rest, as they say, is history.

I decided that I needed to have a closer look at the Super Max 45 (SM45) and Gardiner Pole Systems dropped me one in the post.

The pole arrives at my house in that familiar cardboard tubing. How the hell the postman gets it on his bike, I don't know.

Popping the staples and removing the plastic lid I begin to unleash the beast. First impressions; solid, feels expensive, looks like a race car, feels quality driven, feels like a professional piece of kit.

Second impression; can't wait to use it!!!

You see, there is an all together more important aspect about this pole that's simply jaw dropping and that is the price. For a snip of the price against comparable poles, when it comes to cost, these wfp's are a no-brainer.

The SM45 is no ordinary wfp pole, ohhh no. It's not even boring. It's a wfp that oozes window cleaner street cred. If the The Super Max 45 was a car, it would be big, fast, and sporty.

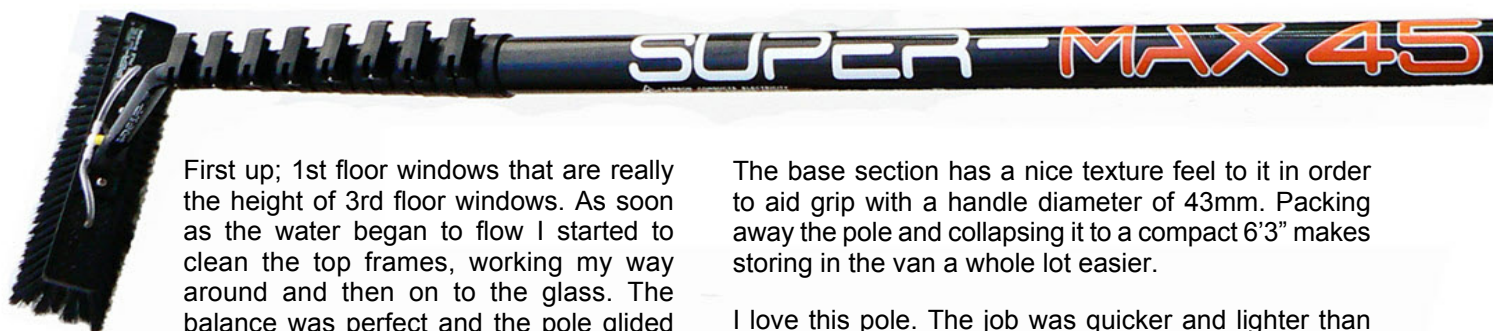
This product makes you feel like you really are that professional window cleaner that you keep telling people. This kit will make you want to work, and no sooner had it dropped at my door I was hatching plans to give it a real test.

I needed a site that provided all the day to day challenges window cleaners would come across. I selected an obstacle course of a window cleaning contract to push this Max to the max.

The client's building has four different levels to it, so some need to lower and raise the pole. I arrive on site and connect the hoses to the van and the pump is turned on.







First up; 1st floor windows that are really the height of 3rd floor windows. As soon as the water began to flow I started to clean the top frames, working my way around and then on to the glass. The balance was perfect and the pole glided through the work with no effort at all.

Effortless was the word that really did come to mind. Weighting in at only 2800g the SM45 has a reach of 50ft with a goose neck as standard.

It's not just the weight that makes the work easier but the brush too. The brush head runs over glass and window frames like silk. No clumsy bumping around at all.

Moving to lower levels and again raising the pole slightly for another section of the client's building.

The smooth action and soft feel of the clamps is amazing, they are beautifully crafted. No more nipping your fingers or scratching the skin off your hands from exposed screws. I would also go as far to say that dropping the pole one section, felt like it had been lowered by hydraulics. It simply is that smooth.

Earlier versions of this pole reported the infamous Black Hand you would get from the very use of the Super Max range. I can confirm that this is no longer an issue and I have not experienced this.

After using the pole on the really high stuff, I simply dropped it and began cleaning the ground floor windows! If I did this with my 35ft Ergolite I would have arms like Mr Tickle and I would

have poked everybody walking by as I rocked backwards and forwards cleaning away.

And that's not all; I came to the double door glass entrance of my client's building. It consisted of five or so steps with a side railing leading to a 3ft by 8ft area bordered with black railings. Above these doors is a glass skylight with the client's logo on it. I begin to clean this. And guess what? I didn't hit the railings, I didn't get arm or shoulder ache and more importantly, I didn't get wet sleeves!!

The base section has a nice texture feel to it in order to aid grip with a handle diameter of 43mm. Packing away the pole and collapsing it to a compact 6'3" makes storing in the van a whole lot easier.

I love this pole. The job was quicker and lighter than any other pole I have used. It really is an everyday pole, as they say. A kind of Swiss army knife since the SM45 will do every window that you will need to do.

I showed this pole to my team.

I must have the smallest window cleaner in the UK working for me, Mr Antonio Miguel. Ant for short. Ant in size. Giving this pole to him the other day was such a joy to see. No longer does he have to stand on a soap box to alter the height of the pole.

Ant took off in the van to do two or three jobs with the



SM45. He returned several hours later at my office (funnily enough, whilst I was putting the notes together for this article)

Ant described his experience and I knew exactly what he meant. I showed him my notes saying to him, 'that is exactly what I just written'

Finally, I am left uttering 3 words:

A great pole.

*Lee Burbidge*





# Water fed pole systems

## *D.i.y. or off the shelf?*

### **I choose a D.i.y. wfp system**

**WCM:** Hello Martyn, how long have you cleaned windows for? And when is it that you decided to change from traditional window cleaning to wfp?

Martyn: I have been cleaning windows for 30 years. It has been some 6 years now since I changed from traditional to wfp.

**WCM:** What was the main reason for changing?

Martyn: I changed because one of my clients were taken over by an American company. The new people said that I would have to find a different way to clean windows other than ladders due to Health & Safety.

**WCM:** That must have been difficult to take? What did you do?

Martyn: Yes. I had to make a decision. Lose the job or invest in a wfp system, so I decided to go for the wfp option. I must admit this seemed quite daunting at the time. I tried to get as much information as possible. Cost was a concern.

I was told by someone that there was a van and system for sale on the Internet in Scarborough, 2 hours drive away. So after several telephone calls and persuading the seller to set up the system for our water in Leicestershire I decided to take a look.

This was a gamble for him as I may not have purchased the system after seeing it.

On a cold day in November my mechanic and I took the trip to Scarborough.

**WCM:** So what exactly was on offer?

Martyn: The van was a Vauxhall Corsa. The DIY system had a 300L tank, 18ft new pole and RO Man filters. I tried to write down as much info as possible from the owner as I knew nothing about wfp's. This man was helpful and he said that he had sold a few of these vans fitted with this system.

**WCM:** So everything was cool, right? Were you happy with what you saw and what the system could do?

Martyn: There was one downside to it. All the parts were from different companies (although I was given all the telephone numbers) and the van had done 60k miles and it had one or two problems which were fixed but this has not been a problem to me.

**WCM:** So what were the costs? How much did it cost to buy the van and the system with the pole?

Martyn: £3,300 and I still have the same van and system working today!

**WCM:** Wow! That's really getting your money's worth. So what does it cost to keep your system running?

Martyn: Well I change the filters every 6 months as recommended. The costs of the filters are roughly £30 each and there are three of them.



I do not use resin. The guy who sold me the system said I would not need it as that would be extra cost. I have always had good TDS readings so never had any problems.

**WCM: And Leicester is a hard water area as well! So was that it for your ladders? Thrown to the bottom of the garden?**

Martyn: I would not go back to ladders unless I was probably cleaning domestic, as getting the hose caught up would drive me mad.

**WCM: What poles did you use at the beginning?**

Martyn: The 18ft pole I was supplied with when I bought the system was very light, I think that was Face Lift. I think with all poles of this height, there is not a lot in the weight difference.

I found that I needed a 30ft pole too, which I sent off for. It was so heavy and I struggled with it as it was the early development days of poles back then. That was a Face Lift pole. I felt I wasted my money.



**WCM: (We feel the weight of that old pole) wow that was heavy!! Can't believe window cleaners use to grapple with these. What do you use now?**

Martyn: I use an 18ft aluminium Brodex a lot. It cost about £100 with a 3 year warranty.

The bigger poles have become so much lighter. Now I currently have a 35ft carbon.

I think that the running cost I have is extremely low, my work has more than paid for the system and the van, so all in all even building your own DIY system from scratch yourself should work out even cheaper.

**What are your views on going the D.I.Y. Route?**

You can discuss this article and others in the cleaning forums



## What got you into window cleaning?

**Featuring John Paul Bradley of Bromsgrove**

Mid February 2009 saw a big shake up for me. I had been given the news that I was being let go from my current job as a self employed office furniture fitter. Five days left, then nothing after that unless they had any large jobs coming in ( the recession had hit them hard).

The strange thing was, I wasn't even worried. I never had a problem finding other jobs quickly in the past, so I didn't think it would any different this time round. How wrong was I!

I left my current job on the Friday afternoon, said my goodbyes and got the usual handshake and thanks. I was told what ever work came in, that I would be the first person they would ring. I went home and enjoyed the weekend with my family, with the job of job hunting Monday morning.



Monday came and the search began. Previously to this I had worked in a few Mental Health Units for a couple of NHS Trusts as well as warehouse work too. I didn't want to go back to Mental Health as I left there due to unsociable working hours, that meant there were times I hardly saw my family.

I spent the week looking on the usual. There was not much around but I applied for what there was.

A couple of weeks went by and I was still applying for the jobs I had done in the past, but not heard anything.

In the first week of March I realised that I would have to apply for anything I was qualified (and over-qualified) to do rather than being picky about what I did.

Well, I managed one telephone interview. The job was filling pre-packed sandwiches at a factory Friday to Sunday nights (12 hour shifts). Not that I wanted, but I needed a job to pay the bills.

The woman on the phone went through the usual job description, hours, pay etc and then hit me with the first question (and last) .... ' what experience do you have?'. My reply was simple ..... ' I make my kids lunch everyday'. She was quite blunt about it and replied, 'I'm sorry, but we need someone with more experience'. And that was the end of the conversation.

Mid March came and I was getting desperate. I had the bills to pay at the end of the month and I was nowhere near what I needed to earn. My wife and I sat down and had a brain storming session. If I couldn't find a job , then I would have to create one, we decided.

After a few ideas were discussed, window cleaning came up. I had thought and looked into this years previously, but got a job and it was forgotten about. It wasn't something I was against. So for the next three to four days I spent 16 hours per day researching through forums I had found (sometimes falling a sleep at the computer).

I decided that it was something I could do and wanted to go the wfp route. So I borrowed enough money from my Mother-in-Law to cover the bills, and borrowed the money to buy my equipment from my mum.

I spent the next few weeks knocking doors asking if people needed a window cleaner and posting leaflets through doors where no one was home. At this point I had no equipment and I had never cleaned a window in my life. I was determined to make it a success and told people it would be a couple of weeks before their first clean.

The 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2009 was my first day as a window cleaner (my wife's Birthday too). My kit arrived a few days previously and I had been practicing as well as picking up tips on You Tube. My wife and children went off out for the day and I set out to do my first jobs of the day. They were all local (same estate as I lived on) so I used a sack truck, two 25L barrels of water, backpack and pole.

That day didn't go too well. The first customer refused to pay me which knocked my confidence a lot and the others were awkward access.



Looking back now, I was new and very nervous.

In my first month I managed to earn enough money to pay the bills by not just window cleaning, but cleaning conservatory roofs and fascias too. It was a good feeling, but hard work.

For the next couple of months, I was cleaning in the day then knocking on doors and posting leaflets as soon as I had finished, right through till 8pm each night. On Saturdays and Sundays I was knocking from 11 am to around 4 pm.

Around June time I had built up a good customer base. Maybe around 100 customers (some monthly, some bi monthly)

I was cleaning all day nearly and didn't have much time to knock in the evening. This is when my wife helped me out and boy did it pay off!

My wife was knocking during the day time for me whilst the children were at school (about 5 hours per day, 4 days per week). She was a hit. The people

she was speaking to really liked the fact that it was a family business and that they were not only meeting the window cleaner, but his wife too. My wife used to confirm the next days jobs the evening before, and she really got to know the customers.

By the end of August we had got enough customers to sustain a good monthly income (289 at its peak). The worry that initially set in had disappeared and as the customer base increased, the better things got.



## Do you have an interesting story to tell?

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The Federation of Window Cleaners is an independent Non-profit making organisation  
Representing the window cleaning industry whilst supporting the needs of Domestic  
& Commercial window cleaners

## Interview with Andy Willis of Impact 43

*Andy:* Impact 43 is a family business including my wife Dina, son David, and son in law Jami. Also close friend Phil Willis who I have worked with for over thirty years. We are a close family and have made sure we set boundaries to keep work and family time separate.

**WCM:** Tell me about the services IMPACT provides.

*Andy:* Impact 43 provides specialist training for the window cleaning industry, this includes a sole partnership with South Thames College in providing the City and Guilds QCF Level 2 qualification in window cleaning, and we provide this on a nationwide basis.

Everything we do is specific to the window cleaning industry. In fact we are about to launch a new contract and funding for the QCF specifically tailored at domestic window cleaners with additional benefits and workshops. The QCF has been carefully put together into an exciting qualification and training opportunity for window cleaners.

**WCM:** How did you get into the window cleaning industry?

*Andy:* I left school and went to work for my cousin's window cleaning company St James's Window Cleaning Company based in Piccadilly.

**WCM:** What company inspired you?

*Andy:* My cousin sold his company and I didn't want to work for the new owner so I joined the Great International Window Cleaning Company in the late 70's, which was the oldest window cleaning company in the UK and worked with some really good guys including Phil Willis (no relation) who is now one of our A1 Assessors.

**WCM:** Do you miss being on the tools?

*Andy:* Yes sometimes, I have always enjoyed being on the tools.

**WCM:** What changed your direction from window cleaning management to training?

*Andy:* I was Managing director of a young successful business in the late 90's; we had a commercial window cleaning division and operated a combined cradle maintenance and window cleaning service. The company was very dynamic and ahead of the game. Then a suspended access cradle came off the roof of St Magnus House in Lower Thames Street and two window cleaners tragically died. We did not employ the two guys but we did maintain the cradle.



Andy Willis

**WCM:** You have experienced at first hand the force of HSE prosecution then?

*Andy:* At the time the HSE leaked a report into the industry, which gave some initial views that the accident may have been as a result of maintenance issues. Within six months as a result we lost sixty six percent of the business, before this we had ninety nine percent contract retention. Therefore no question the report had a direct response to the business. The directors were cautioned and for three years we waited for the final outcome which found it was an original manufacturing issue and nothing to do with us. By then it was too late, all Directors sold houses to support the company but sadly we sold off the remaining parts of the business and that was the end of that.

**WCM:** That must have had a real effect on you?

*Andy:* Yes, not just financially, I will say everyone came out of that stronger. It gave me a very clear insight into Safety law; I have since committed a lot of time on qualifications and study. One thing is for



sure ignorance is no form of defence and there are a lot of window cleaners out there who just don't understand the legality issues of what will happen to them and their company when things go wrong.

**WCM:** You then changed a career path and became a leading working at height consultant for over eight years working for property management companies, did you enjoy this time?

**Andy:** Yes I went to work with Time Consultancy and was Senior Working at Height Consultant on managing agent portfolios such as DTZ, Jones Lang LaSalle, NB Real Estate, Land Security, and Broadgate Estates. This involved me completing duty holder working at height assessments and audits of window cleaning contractors.

**WCM:** You have recently gone on record to say a majority of commercial window cleaners using water fed poles do not comply with statutory regulations, that seems quite a sweeping statement?

**Andy:** Yes, when operating a water fed pole, The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety At Work Regulations 1999, The Provision Use Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) and Working at height Regulations 2005 all include statutory law that reflects on the risk of a pole being dropped, and where this could result in a member of the public or others being struck and injured you need to put into place controls to prevent or minimise. As a minimum creating a safety exclusion zone.

**WCM:** Tell me how many operations are strictly complying with this statutory need.

**Andy:** This basically means you measure the height of the pole being used and then have to create a safety zone around you to this distance. We focus on this within our QCF Level 2 qualification.

My other key issues are accessing and egressing flat roofs and external balconies from portable ladders, and the waste of money in repetitive training.

**WCM:** What changes would you like to see made in the window cleaning industry.

**Andy:** Training, and transparency for competency, this both in employees and managers. Clearer specifications, and tenders being managed more efficiently

**WCM:** How can we improve health and Safety Issues in window cleaning?

**Andy:** In my experience, the single most important factor in the equation is a lack of training. Even though the Health and Safety Act of 1974 made it a statutory requirement for employers to provide training to employees, and even

though statutory law includes regulations that spell out training in more detail, some commercial window cleaning companies, property owners and duty holders are still apparently unaware of their responsibilities. Either that, or they are aware of them, but are failing to take them seriously.

Residential and domestic cleaners are even in a worse position, most don't commit to training, this is generally because they don't really understand the benefits. Cost is a major factor to most individual window cleaners but I have seen a reluctance for them to commit to 100% funded training so what chance are you going to have to get them to commit to training they have to pay for.

**WCM:** You have mentioned recently also there is a statutory need for self rescue from equipment?

**Andy:** The Working at Height Regulations 2005 also supports the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations, in particular those regulations highlighting the need to organise, plan and manage the use of elevated work equipment, and to make provision for self-rescue when things go wrong. The provision of self-rescue when using suspended access equipment has been a statutory requirement since 2005.

We must allocate sufficient time for operations: we must cost them properly, and we must take into account correct risk management. This ranges from identification of hazards (anything that can cause harm) and risk (the likelihood of the harm occurring) putting into place legal and correct controls to



Andy Willis and directors

ensure management of risk correctly. The burden of responsibility needs to be lifted from the window cleaners and collectively shared with the Duty holder and principle contractors..

**WCM: You recently resigned your position as an executive committee member on the Federation of Window Cleaners (FWC) can you tell me why?**

*Andy:* Yes, The best way I can answer this is to give a football club as an example. I often hear what the Federation has done over the years, but that's irrelevant. As a football club you are only good as your last game and season, and your managers and players. If the FWC was a football club it would have been relegated and would have disappeared from all leagues probably into Sunday local football.

But as with all clubs there is a chance for new things, new management, new players which the FWC has attracted within a new commercial steering committee, and it's on this basis, I have decided to get involved again with the FWC. What's clear is it needs supporters and all window-cleaning companies to get financially behind it.

**WCM: What will the new FWC Commercial committee aim to achieve that has been different to the past? Is there a need for a trade association?**

*Andy:* The FWC has recently attracted several new committee members from various corners of the industry, and together we will be working hard to address industry shortfalls and promote the benefits of joining the FWC:

I have put forward my own suggestions for areas that I feel need attention, based on feedback over the last three years from many of the leading commercial window cleaning contractors within the QCF and NVQ course.

- Should the window cleaning contracts be taken out of the daily office cleaning contracts and tendered separately?
- Can we create a code of practice for specifications and tendering, and within this clearly specify works, risk controls, equipment to be used and levels of competency required?

I also feel the need to:

- Implement a system to audit and check supervisor and managers. They should eventually be issued with a card that clearly outlines their qualification level.
- Address specific problems related to Suspended Access Training.

The FWC has endorsed my new role in the committee: Both myself and committee member Kevin Robson plan to take an IPAF (International Powered Access Federation) approach, ensuring that cleaners are trained on a particular type of equipment once, and then only site specific operation training is required when actually on site. This approach will bring down costs for both duty holders and window cleaners, and will eliminate a great deal of wasted time and pointless expenditure.

**WCM: I hear through the grape vine the FWC are looking at a new training matrix?**

*Andy:* Yes, the new FWC Commercial Committee is also currently in the process of finalising a new training matrix, which will set out a clear Programme of Training Requirements under five categories:

- Level 1 - Domestic Residential
- Level 2 - Light Industrial
- Level 3 - Commercial High Level
- Level 4 - Supervisory
- Level 5 - Management

I feel this is a good time to join the FWC with the committee fully focusing on residential domestic and commercial activity.

**WCM: Getting back to IMPACT43, I have noticed some recent flack on the industry window cleaning forum *Clean It Up* lately would you care to comment?**

*Andy:* I feel that *Clean It Up* is a good forum but would benefit greatly from more controls. This would include transparency of users. Basically if you want to be a member this is my name, company and contact details.

The forum has a minority of users that for reasons I don't understand just want at any time to make negative comments on companies, and some in particular about IMPACT and our training courses. None of these have attended a course and I would challenge these users to step up and show me their commitment to training and advancing as a window cleaner.

I also see window cleaners on the forum who have attended the QCF City and Guilds level 2 qualification with us who are switched on window cleaners making good suggestions and giving good advice but they also receive negative comments to the point many have said 'we just don't make posts any more' and use it to monitor what is happening in the industry. All I can say is what a waste. Also, some of these minority cleaners from time to time make comments that give incorrect advice and suggestions that could even be dangerous or result in legal prosecution.



**WCM:** You recently threatened legal action, which I personally thought was a bit strong.

**Andy:** Why? If I go online and say your company is undercutting other window cleaners and bringing down the value of window cleaning and you are providing a rubbish service etc., are you going to stand for it, if what I am saying is a complete fabrication? No I am sure you're not.

Look, I have a clear understanding that we should and need to have freedom of speech and that this is fair and just. At the same time if you go on the forum and make slanderous or libellous comments that can damage the reputation of your company then there is recourse, the purpose of libel law is to prevent this. After all, is it not tough enough at the moment without a hand full of window cleaners going on a mission? If I provide a bad service then I will hold my hands up and weather any flack for sure.

**WCM:** One of the recent comments was about you having a 75% stake in Clean Safe Window Cleaning is there a conflict of interest when working with window cleaning companies completing their QCF level 2 qualification?

**Andy:** No. I have been in the window cleaning business for over thirty years and know many of the industries leading window-cleaning companies. I have always operated with integrity. I don't have any day-to-day operational input into Clean Safe, just financially backing my son's company which is a residential window cleaning company in the County of Lincolnshire.

*Andrew Willis has been in the window cleaning industry for over 30 years and has been on both sides of the cleaning fence.*

*He began his career as a window cleaner contractor, and then began representing the duty holder in auditing commercial window cleaning companies.*

*For nearly ten years - up to 2009 – he represented managing agents like DTZ, Jones Lang LaSalle, NB Real Estate, Land Security, and Broadgate Estates.)*

### **Andrew Willis (Partner) Impact43 Group**

**Tel:** +44 (0)1205 364333

**Fax:** +44 (0)1205 205300



## Getting new customers

**Lee Burbidge:** It is our mission to bring you as much information as possible about growing your business. Some ideas will work, some will not. Telemarketing is something that I have used in the past in order to expand my window cleaning customer base, as I was too busy window cleaning to get new customers. Here Kate Baker goes into more detail.

### Outsourcing telemarketing – is it for you?

Here in the UK the cleaning industry operates in a variety of forms, from the large national outfits through to regional enterprises, each with its preferential client base and perhaps a niche market.

At the regional level, and more aptly in the local market, businesses range from medium-sized firms to the heart of British enterprise – the man with the van.

For the larger companies telemarketing has become part and parcel of the business model, and many have their own dedicated marketing teams employed in-house by the company or group. While the man with the van would probably relish the thought of a steady flow of new contracts on tap, in reality, without serious investment in the business it is likely that the van or the man would eventually 'conk out'.

The ambitious individual could always recklessly invest everything in the company without considering the consequences, lose everything and then gain a leading role with one of the world banks – but that's another story!

For the small or smallish businesses wishing to grow steadily outsourced telemarketing may well provide a solution.

Outsourcing may assist the companies wishing to move away from domestic contracts and expand into the commercial market or those wishing to expand their existing client base into new territories.

Outsourcing for the domestic market is a possibility via the telephone; however, data for the domestic market can be very expensive.

To many of these companies the use of telesales as a marketing tool is something of a new concept but it is one that is becoming more popular and accepted.

For those unsure of its worth outsourcing offers a low-commitment service – many of our clients initially

start with a trial of a few hours in order to test the water. This permits them to get a feel of the service without a major investment.

Companies using outsourced services remain in control and they can pick and choose the hours required and the areas targeted. This is especially important for companies wishing for a steady growth rate and not falling in to the 'run before you can walk' scenario.

There are some important factors that may need to be considered before approaching outsourcing services. One of the first questions a new client often asks us is: 'What is the success rate? This is a big unknown and although this may be a UK phenomenon, we have found that success is very much dependent on area, probably based on the local economy and how saturated the market is within the region. This is one of the reasons for initially effecting a trial.

Another factor to be considered is the fact that people do not generally like change. If a company has been using Billy the Brush or Willie the Wipe for the last 15 years and it is happy with his performance, a discounted service will not normally sway the decision maker – it's a loyalty thing!

All in all, for prospective clients unsure if the service is right for them we feel that they should talk to people who have used a similar service to promote their cleaning business.

**Kate Baker**

[www.canvassers4cleaners.co.uk](http://www.canvassers4cleaners.co.uk)







## Calling all Commercial Window Cleaners

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**[www.canvassers4cleaners.co.uk](http://www.canvassers4cleaners.co.uk)**

## The Cleaning Forums

### How WCM chose Cleaningforums.co.uk as a partner

When WCM tried out the idea of an online magazine in the forums in order to gauge the level of interest for such a publication, we received a very good response. However, it did throw up one or two initial negative points. One of these being, 'what could the online magazine do that the forums are not doing already?'

When you look at a forum there are so many topics and posts that sometimes it can be more like noise than information.

The superhighway of tips, hints and advice is sometimes difficult to pick out. Ok, you can still search your desired subject, but once the search is complete all you have done is narrowed the noise.

The Window Cleaning Magazine is another media that filters the 'noise' and hopefully picks the topics that are trending currently.

One of the things WCM wanted to do was create articles and reviews whereby once you had read them, you could click a button at the end of the article and continue the discussion with other real window cleaners without signing in or subscribing to a forum. Polls could be easily created in this same way on the back of hot topics, thus giving window cleaners a real voice as to what they really want.

So we needed a forum for the magazine to work alongside. We needed a forum that stood by the same values as the magazine. A forum that was trustworthy and friendly, and one that was not bound to it's advertisers.

We started using Cleaningforums.co.uk for research initially. Its openness and the fact that it's filters do not censor was refreshing. Obviously, if you're going to be aggressive and abusive then that would not be tolerated on any forum.

Matt is the founder of Cleaningforums.co.uk and WCM is proud to be partnered with Matt and his forum. Here we talk more with Matt on how he started his site and why?

**WCM: Matt, could you tell us how your forum came about?**

Matt: The Cleaning Forums started life about 18 months ago with many experienced members who were tired with the 'goings on' at another forum.

Right from the outset we have been a friendly bunch, always happy to help each other and new rookies alike. We were never too serious with the odd joke and bit of banter thrown in.

**WCM: How much time did you spend in the forum?**

Matt: I had spent almost 8 years and had made almost 10,000 posts helping a lot of people. I was not getting as much out of the forum as I had hoped.

**WCM: So you decided to set up your own forum. Was that a daunting prospect?**

Matt: I have been around forums for 15 years and have run a few successful forums (I run a DIY WFP site as well), so I thought "why not?"

I also thought that a forum is nothing without its members, so right from the outset; I said that members run the forum. Since then we have always had members' votes on decisions. The rest is history.

**WCM: Did you have an idea as to what the member should experience by using the forum?**

Matt: The aim was always to create a helpful forum with that 'pub' feel. We have no outside ties to suppliers and so you can always be sure of an unbiased answer to your question. I am very proud of this and believe it is the way forums should be run.

**WCM: What would you like to say about when the founder of WCM, Lee Burbidge came on the scene at Cleaningforums.co.uk?**

Matt: When Lee arrived on the forum he asked a few questions that were very in-depth. I received a number of messages asking who he was. As it happened he was just a normal window cleaning guy asking questions that interested him.

I hope he appreciated the replies and our honesty. He must have thought we were ok as he asked us to be part of this magazine which we were only too pleased to be a part of, as I feel he has the same ideas as I have with regards to having an unbiased medium.



## Getting the plumbing right *by Wagga*

When I first went Water Fed Pole, everything seemed awkward and tedious. Not only this, the whole system leaked like a sieve.

Then someone gave me a tip which at first, I did not take too seriously. On one of the forums, a lad suggested using fishing line and super glue to secure most if not all the pipe connections. If you are not sure about which connections to use this on, just give it a try and see how it goes.

Remember, the higher the PSI (pounds per square inch) your system runs on, the greater stress on the connections.

If you have a tap on your pole, then all the joints *after* this is a good place to test this tip out with. All the connections on my system however, have been done this way but it is a 65psi trolley system.



Since I had been having a lot of problems in this department, I thought I would give it a go. I removed all the jubilee clips with all their sharp edges and extra weight, and one by one did all my connections in this way. Be careful with the super glue though. It would look hilarious turning up in casualty with a water fed system glued on.

The type of fishing line to use won't really matter too much as long as it is not too thick a grade. If it's too light a breaking strain on the other hand, it will snap too easily when you are winding it on.

Instead of super glue however, I found that if you use insulation tape over the fishing line to stop it unravelling, it's easier and safer to apply and does just as good a job.

Start with some hot water, dip in the ends to be connected and push them on snugly. Take your fishing line and lash the connection fairly tightly. You will notice how it pushes the pipe into the barbs on the connection perfectly, unlike a jubilee clip which just sits on top. After doing this, take your tape and wrap it round a few times as tightly as you can without snapping it.

It's a neat solution to a common problem and since I've been using this method I have had much more reliability and virtually no leaks at all. The only leaks I get now is from the mechanical snap connectors when they wear out.

All in all, it was a great tip that I can recommend to anyone especially now that winter is approaching! Job done!

If you want to see it on video then just click here:  
<http://youtu.be/3aKjPdoXT9g>

WFP Alternative connections

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## Why Save Water?

Technology has quite literally changed the world, and window cleaning - not considered to be high tech in the past - has been revolutionised.

A Window Cleaner with his ladders over his shoulder is becoming a rare site. These days you're more likely to see a smart sign-written vehicle carrying purified water and a Cleaner with a pole system finishing domestic and commercial properties in a fraction of the time taken before, and often to a higher standard.

However, there is at least one thing that 'Traditional' Window Cleaners rarely, if ever, have to worry about... running out of water.

Water Fed Pole systems can use a lot of water every day, so WFP users have always looked for ways to eliminate water wastage because conserving water can reduce their costs and increase profitability, but how?

Apart from being environmentally friendly, saving water allows you to do more jobs in a day without running out, and so earn more money. It also reduces metering and water treatment costs and journeys to fill up with water can be minimized, or less water can be carried, saving fuel.

There are existing methods to control the flow of water, but these all have problems.

1. Folding the hose - the cheapest and possibly the most popular method, but it means keeping one hand on the hose, or leaving the water running while extending/collapsing the pole.
2. Triggers - excellent for saving water, but you have to keep pressure on the switch and have one hand in the same place while cleaning. There's also the loop of hose which can snag and twist, making it difficult to extend a telescopic pole.
3. Remote controls - need batteries and have limited range. Flow control isn't always instant.
4. Taps - attaching to the pole means a loop of hose. If not attached, you need to spend time finding the tap along the length of hose and then bend down every time to turn it, which soon becomes too much hassle.
5. Holsters on your waist - you are attached to the hose. As well as feeling rather restrictive, you can also get the problem of wet trousers and shoes!
6. Some people try to conserve water by turning down their flow rate, but this can also slow down the work rate.



**“...saving water allows you to do more jobs in a day without running out, and so earn more money...”**

The Aqua-dapter® was specifically designed to overcome these problems.

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### Is it easy to use?

Pull on the hose at the bottom of the pole to switch the flow on or off. When working on ground floor windows it can also be operated by hand at the brush end.

### Will it slow me down?

Controlling the flow is instant, and with no lag you can switch the water off between windows or while wiping sills. When water *wastage* is reduced, flow rate can be increased, and this can mean finishing the job quicker.



## Does Aqua-dapter® live up to the hype?

At the Cleaning Show, Aqua-dapter® won the Window Cleaning Product/Service award, and the overall Innovation Award, chosen by a panel of industry experts, from 97 entries in 12 categories.

Here are comments from Aqua-dapter customers:

*"Honestly I could not live without it. It takes a little time to get used to using etc., but I really would never go back, it saves me time and water"*  
- Cyberpedz (August 9, 2011)

*"I have a 350l tank and I've never drained it yet, even with a high flow rate and a long day"*  
- st1allstar (June 11, 2011)

*"It is easily one of the best bits of kit I have bought for my water fed pole system"*  
- Abacus Cleaning East Anglia Ltd –  
[www.abacuscleaning.com](http://www.abacuscleaning.com) (May 24, 2011)

*"It is amazing. The installation is simple enough and it is really simple to use ... Worth every penny... and more...!"*  
- Paul (May 19, 2011)  
<http://blog.aqua-dapter.co.uk/category/reviews/>



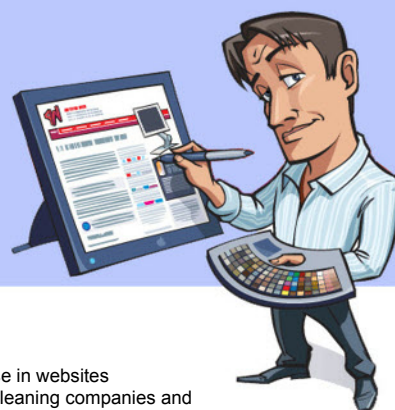
Aqua-dapter Ltd offer a 1 month money-back guarantee, so you can try it and send it back if for any reason you don't like it.

For more information about the Aqua-dapter®, visit [www.aqua-dapter.co.uk](http://www.aqua-dapter.co.uk)

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[www.studioarts-dtv.co.uk](http://www.studioarts-dtv.co.uk)

## ErgoTec Ninja reviewed by Richard Lingford

So here we have the all singing, the all dancing, new Unger 'ErgoTec Ninja' squeegee. The piece of kit that designers call the most advanced squeegee ever designed, perfectly balanced for weight distribution on the glass and virtually un-bendable.

So how does it perform on a day to day basis? Is it all it's cracked up to be? Does it warrant the higher price tag than its competitors? And is it's larger 'chunkier' design a problem?

Well these are all questions that I am hoping to answer here having been using this squeegee for the past month on a daily basis.

**Design** – We all know how tempting it can be to 'impulse' buy the latest cleaning innovation that promises to make life better and easier than it has ever been before.

I am sure also, like me, a lot of these inventions have been used for a few hours and then sat in the back of the van for the foreseeable future.

So how much design appeal does the Ninja have? Well..... quite simply put, a lot!

The black sleek design with the contours of its moulded handle cut a sharp contrast to its ErgoTec predecessors, the end clips give a sturdy look to the blade and the greys, greens and whites used in the graphics and grips give an overall aesthetically pleasing look to the product.



One small criticism would be the size of the handle. It seems a lot longer than the others on the market and may take some getting used to. Also I have heard that it doesn't fit into some hip buckets, however, I did not have this problem with my blue Pulux one.

**Set up** – The first thing that I did on receiving this tool, was to change the rubber to one of my choice. This can



Unger ErgoTec Ninja Squeegee



be done on the Ninja without taking the channel away from the handle; you simply unclip the end clips and slide the rubber out. This can be done far easier if the rubbers are wet as they tend to catch, however this is a very good way of changing rubbers. To release the channel you simply unhook the clip on the undercarriage of the handle.

One very helpful addition worth mentioning is the printing of two logos on the back of the channel; these are to help you align the channel and works really well.

And there you have it, you are ready to work.

Working – The first thing you will notice is the size of the squeegee, however, it does not feel ‘cumbersome or lumbering’ at all. It gives a reassuring sturdy feel. You get the impression you will not be constantly tightening screws, in fact that’s a good thing since there are none to tighten.

This product has been designed with comfort in mind and you will not be disappointed. The handle feels comfortable after hours of use, the grip is good, not becoming slippery and the thumb rest suits its purpose well, “yes, it has a thumb rest”

When you have the hang of it you are able to clean windows with very little detailing and it does feel a lot more balanced than other squeegees I have used.

Despite being dropped and manhandled a lot over the past month it has not bent or fallen out of shape at all. It is virtually indestructible and more than up to working for even the heaviest handed of us.

You are able to use its swivel function on a pole to great effect as well.

Unger also produce massive channels for use on larger windows which were previously hard to come by.



Overall, here is a piece of kit that in my opinion will have you working for years to come, in great comfort.

I highly recommend you put one in your bucket!

*\* If you would like to review new products on the market please feel free to contact us at:*  
[info@windowcleaningmagazine.co.uk](mailto:info@windowcleaningmagazine.co.uk)



## GLEAMING INSURANCE

### The choice of the professional cleaning contractor

When it comes to arranging your Public/Employers Liability insurance you need to be sure that whoever is acting for you is a specialist in the field of cleaning insurance.

At GLEAMING INSURANCE ([www.gleaminginsurance.co.uk](http://www.gleaminginsurance.co.uk)) we work exclusively for cleaning contractors and our staff have over 10 years experience arranging specialist covers that protect individuals, companies and more importantly customers against all the risks a cleaning contractor may face.

It is a little known fact amongst cleaners that 99% of policies do not automatically provide the covers that you may think they do – for example one cover that most policies do not provide is “Damage to Property Worked On”

#### Damage to Property Worked On - Case Study

ABC Cleaning Contractors were asked to clean the inside and outside of 32 new houses on a new build estate, and having completed their work they issued their invoice to the main contractor. Having not been paid within 28 days they rang the main contractor only to be told they weren't being paid and furthermore they were suing ABC Cleaning Contractors for scratching the windows on 10 of the houses they had cleaned, a claim that ABC Cleaning Contractors strongly denied.

ABC Cleaning Contractors rang their insurance broker to explain the situation and advise that they would need to submit a claim for around £30,000 for the damage that they were being accused of causing. Having looked through the policy that ABC Cleaning Contractors had bought the broker had to break the bad news, they didn't have cover for **Damage to Property Being Worked On** and therefore couldn't make a claim.

#### It gets worse

Having bought a standard liability policy, ABC Cleaning Contractors were uninsured for such damage and their insurer would therefore not pay any legal costs to defend them in their battle to clear their name. They were adamant they hadn't damaged the windows but to prove it they had to spend a further £5,000 on solicitors bills and a report from an expert glazier who was required to examine the windows.

The whole process took 6 months and in that time they didn't receive any payment for the work they had done and didn't receive any more work from the main contractor.

Had they bought a policy that included Damage to Property Worked On they could have just passed everything to their insurer and let them deal with it.

Do you have this cover?

Don't automatically just look at the premium when it comes to making your choice of which insurance cover to go with. Just selecting the cheapest option could seriously cost you thousands in the longer term.

Likewise make sure you speak with the broker to see if they understand what you do and what covers you should have in place. Get all quotes from them in writing and make sure that the quotes clearly state what covers you have in place and what the limits and restrictions are.

GLEAMING INSURANCE are the choice of the professional cleaning contractor and we would be happy to help you in any way to get the best insurance cover for your business.

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## Snappy window cleaning

It started off as a bit of a joke for an April Fool's day.

A zoo in North East Lincolnshire put out an appeal for a fearless window cleaner to clamber inside it's alligator and snake pits to shine the glass of the enclosures. But after thinking it over, bosses at the Jungle Zoo in Cleethorpes decided a window cleaner would be ideal to speed up the cleaning process. And after a public appeal, they said that they were inundated with offers from people brave enough to tackle the task.

Bernard Bale, spokesman for the Jungle Zoo, said the first window cleaner to get in touch was Jim Allen 42, of Cleethorpes.

They decided to offer the work to Mr Allen.

He will be working inside enclosures which contain, among other things, Caiman Alligators, a 15ft Burmese Python and a Yellow Anaconda.

### 'Inquisitive Alligators'

Mr Bale said, "Jim didn't think he would be frightened although he did say 'I don't have to go in on my own, do I?'"

There will be a member of staff with him at all times when he is inside". he joked, "We have kept a note of the other people who came forward in case he loses a leg"

Al Verlaine, owner of the Jungle Zoo, said "Staff have been cleaning the windows themselves but had decided they wanted a professional to speed the process up"

He said, "The outside is easy – the inside is a problem."

"The main trouble when you come to clean the glass in the inside of an alligator pit is that they are naturally inquisitive, therefore they all come forward to have a look at what you're doing. And of course if your hand goes too close or your foot goes too close, they will take a bite and that is really to see what you're made of".



### How not to clean windows



"Boss! We gotta call it a day, it's chucking it down!"

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# 30

## What you said about wfp systems and your choices

*Can a person really be defined by his WFP system?*

Sometimes a choice is governed by the lack of start up funds or the wheel barrows of money from a redundancy payout. But for whichever pile of cash you begin with or morals you aspire too, your WFP system choice is as varied as the planets of the solar system.

Some say that to pay the high end costs of the pre built sector is complete madness and these people refuse to sink one red cent into that area of that supply. Others want no problems such as time off work to build a system and are happy to pay a higher price knowing they have a tried and tested system.

As always it comes down to personal choice.

Take me for example: I am completely useless at DIY. I even call out the AA to change a flat tyre. I cannot be doing with any complications, I am not necessarily interested in how something works, I'm more interested in the fact something does work.

When I changed over to WFP and mainly for reasons of my commercial work, let's be honest. I chose the Ionics Pro 5 system. And to this day, with having that system for 4 years and only having an automatic switch problem and a few burst plastic joints from dead cold minus temperatures, the system has been reliable and predictable.

Martyn, a window cleaner who has sub-contracted work from me for years, (great bloke), chose to have a DIY system built.

Martyn is happy with doing his work with no employees. He sets off early in the morning and is done by dinner time most days. He's happy at that and still goes on holiday to Tenerife several times a year. Martyn had his early teething problems, but his system too is now reliable and predictable.

Then there is the guy I met at the last Windex show (NEC), whom I was told had some 7 or so pre-built systems kitted out in vans and was on target to far exceed his million pound turnover.

So are we defined by our WFP systems? Are there companies out there that have multiple vans fitted with DIY systems and making a million pounds, for example?

Does it all rest on how far you want to go and that it is this that dictates your choice of WFP system?

Some say they are happy making 30k to 50k and not having the extra complications of employing staff.

Is there a connection between how big you want to grow as a company to which system you purchase? It's your business; so you decide where you want to be. Interestingly enough, we ran a poll at the [cleaningforums.co.uk](http://cleaningforums.co.uk) website. The results are still ongoing (you can still go online and vote leaving comments), but here is the gist:

We asked how many window cleaners bought a pre built system. Our survey said 21%



We then asked how many window cleaners bought a DIY system. Our survey said 69%!

We then asked how many window cleaners had chosen both, picking a DIY system first. Our Survey said 3%

When asked how many window cleaners had chosen both but picking a pre-built system first. Our survey said 7%.

Now that we have got over the Family Fortunes bit, let's take a look at what you would have won! Sorry – let's take a look at what you said;

*"I tried both. It was DIY first. I was using DIY poles and brushes too. I then went to Pure Freedom for the tank installation on the new van. Never DIY brushes and poles these days"*

*"I bought a Streamline Box with pump and battery and put it on a trolley with Carp and Harris Poles and used Gardiner brushes, probably buy a CL-X soon"*



*"I built my own system and use CL-X poles and extreme brushes now"*

*"I had a system fitted by the Cleaning Warehouse. It was obviously more expensive than a DIY system but I didn't have the time to do it myself. After having lost days wages for doing a DIY system, it didn't work out that much more"*

*"Bought my tank, cage, reel, pump and controller from the Cleaning Warehouse and they fitted the tank and cage. I rigged the rest up"*

*"I bought my RO from RO Man, water storage from eBay, transfer hose from somewhere I cannot remember and transfer pump from Wickes"*

Interestingly, I have not seen much for pre-built systems, maybe this will change after this article is read.

This topic is still live and ongoing at [cleaningforums.co.uk](http://cleaningforums.co.uk)



## The D.I.Y. pump box

Here we have the DIY pump box, the aim is to keep it as cheap as possible. I use it as my main pump fixed to a trolley, but why do you want one I hear you ask?

You can use it as a spare pump (in case your main pump breaks down, just swap it over and continue to work), you can take it in the house in the cold weather (no more frozen pumps first thing in the morning).

The pump I have used was cheap and seems to be lasting fairly well, it is now over 1 year old (check out [www.cleaningforums.co.uk](http://www.cleaningforums.co.uk) for the current choice of pump, they do change)

Right, let's start.

### THINGS YOU NEED

- Electrical box
- 12 V pump
- Switch
- Hose
- Cable (I just use a short piece of house old extension lead)
- Croc clips
- Jubilee clips
- Hose Fittings
- Spade connections
- Some basic tools, Stanley knife, screwdriver, a drill (with 12mm bit)



OK, here we go...

Take the box and decide on where you want to have the INLET and OUTLET and switch. I have the IN and OUT on either side of the box with the switch on the top edge.

Now you will have a box with holes drilled either edge and the top for the switch (you will need another hole to run the cable)

fit the switch to the box and run the live (red) cable from the pump to one terminal of the switch (using a spade connection) then bring the cable in through the cable hole (tie a loose knot in the cable to stop it pulling out, and connect one of the cables wires from the battery to the switch)



Now connect up the black from the pump to the other wire in the cable to the battery. (see fig.1)

The hose will not just push onto the pump barbs, I use jubilee clips on the OUT side, as this is under pressure and does need the extra clip.

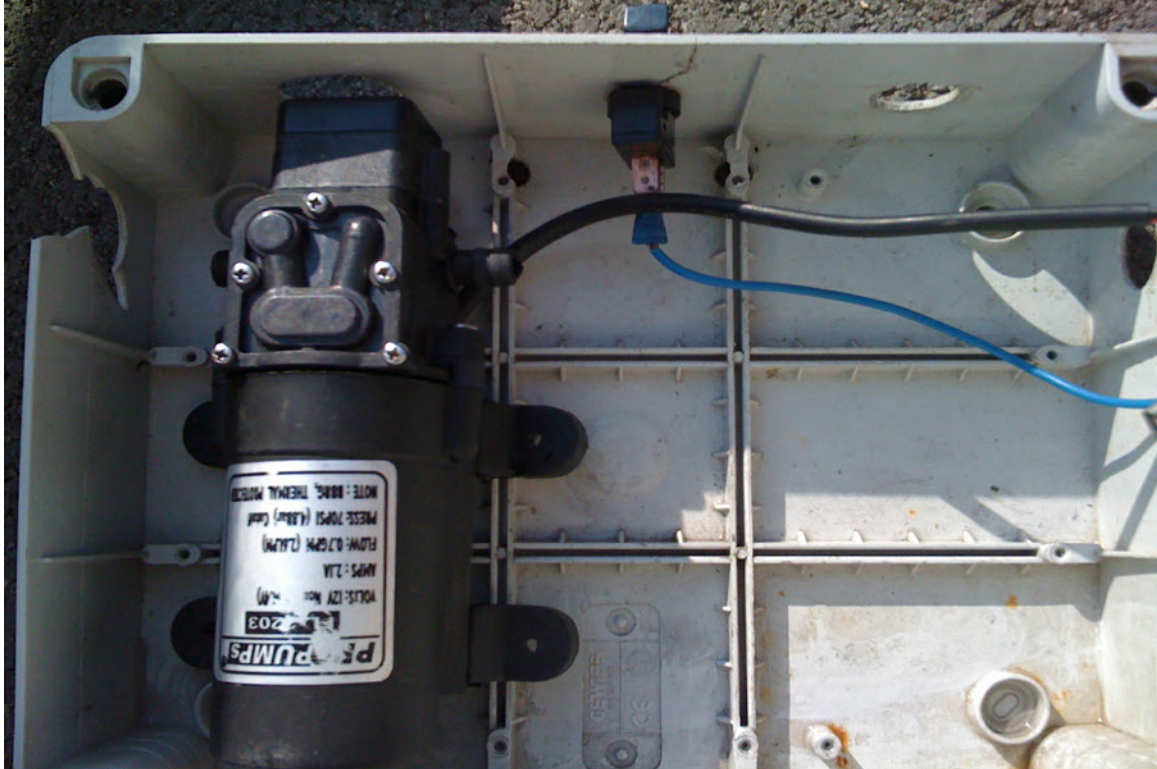


Fig.1

Fit which pole hose fitting you have decided on (I use EZ snap) to the out side of the box, I leave the hose about 1/2 M long, my IN hose is fairly long as I can leave the pump box in the van and run the hose into the tank if needed. (fig.2)

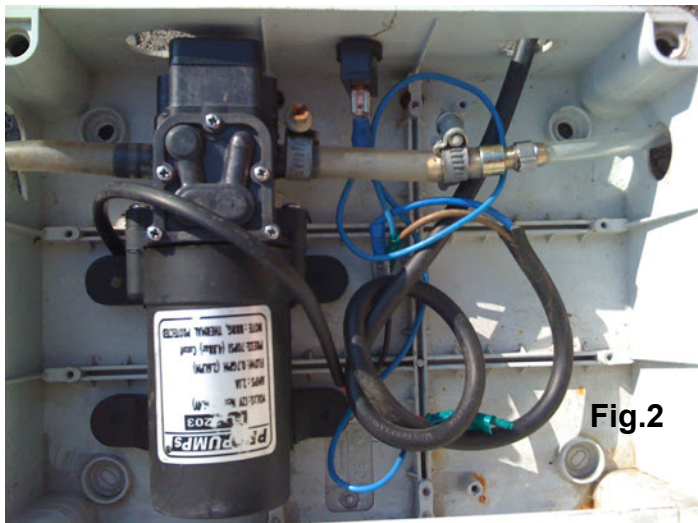


Fig.2

To connect your cable to the battery, I use some croc clips, you need them fairly large, they are always on ebay.



Thats it, you are ready to go. A nice simple small pump setup, its cheap and it works well.

Cheers  
Matt



# Has Perry Window Cleaning of Ohio discovered a secret?

*WCM investigates*

Those of us that window clean with wfp's know first hand the nightmare of hydrophobic glass.

There are two types of glass. Glass that is hydrophilic is good for window cleaners because the water sheets down the surface. This in turn makes for an excellent clean since the rinsing is better.

But when you get hydrophobic glass, water fingers down the surface and beads. This leaves cleaning and rinsing hard work.

Some window cleaners have reported spotting issues because of difficulty in cleaning hydrophobic glass. No matter how long they clean the glass for it does not improve the finish. Whereas some report that they can clean hydrophobic glass but it takes longer and in some instances they may have to go over the glass once again when dry (glass only not the frame, for the second clean).

But has Matt Perry of Perry Window Cleaning in Springfield, Ohio found the secret that would change it all?

**WCM: Hello Matt, tell us what you have discovered?**

*Matt:* This was an accidental discovery and I do not claim that it works all the time. We had a lot of insect debris and shotgun fungi on these door windows we clean. It was a soft glass so using a scraper over it would make light scratches.

**WCM: Tell me how the water took to the glass at first?**

*Matt:* This glass did not like the water at all. It was worse at the bottom. This glass was hydrophobic. So we then decided to use our bronze wool cloth, wet, on the glass after an initial rinse in order to take off the debris.

**WCM: Why bronze wool?**

*Matt:* We went to the bronze wool as we knew it would not scratch nor rust when it gets wet. This is when we noticed the sheeting action improved greatly over the glass. We decided to document this as it would appear that using the bronze wool changed the glass behaviour from that of hydrophobic to hydrophilic.



**WCM:** So now the glass sheets beautifully?

**Matt:** That's right! We were asked to clean the glass again just over 4 months later.

**WCM:** You did a follow up on the glass? That's great what happened?

**Matt:** We did the follow up mostly out of curiosity, but also we had others who wanted to know if the glass stayed hydrophilic or not.

We noticed that before we even scrubbed off the debris that the door was still mostly hydrophilic.

**WCM:** I have seen the video you took that documented this. Did you go over the glass again with the bronze wool?

**Matt:** It was nearly 100% the same when we just used a wet soap mitt (no soap on it) to loosen the debris.

**WCM:** Is it possible that the glass was hydrophilic to begin with as I know that weather carrying pollen and daily grime of oils and grease etc can be causes of hydrophobic glass?

**Matt:** Before we decided to do this video my son and I had done 3 or 4 windows of glass and it worked on all and they did not like the water at all high or low.

On this door I started the bronze wool at the top then stopped (thinking we should document this) and had Dewey, my son in law, to get the camera. The whole door did not like the water before I touched it.

I am just a window cleaner, not an expert on this topic. I was just looking for the best way to clean the glass minus the use of my scraper.

**WCM:** I saw a post today from a window cleaner in the UK, he wrote:

*"Just tried this today, thought I would use a fine grade steel wool as that is all I could get hold of. It worked very well. I just soaked the glass with water, and then kept rubbing an area of glass until the water 'stuck' to the window. I repeated the process until the entire window was covered. Afterwards the entire piece of glass was 100% hydrophilic".*

*Great discovery! This will help my brother in law who uses the wfp. I just wonder how long the glass will remain hydrophilic.*

When we watched the video that Matt had documented, it did indeed change the behaviour of the glass he was cleaning.



The follow up 4 months later was equally surprising.

We spoke to Daniel Capon of British Glass and asked him what he thinks is happening here?

**DC:** It appears that the bronze wool is covering the glass with a residual surface of bronze. This will be like coating the glass.

**WCM:** I know that self cleaning glass is coated at manufacturing stage. Self cleaning glass can be either hydrophobic or hydrophilic. But it is hydrophilic that window cleaners would like their glass to be for sheeting water. Do you think the bronze is creating this behaviour?

**DC:** It looks like it. I will check on some facts and get back to you.

**WCM:** Whilst we are talking about this, some domestic window cleaners complain that they can window clean every window perfectly yet there may be one that just beads off the water. Why do you think this is?

**DC:** At manufacturing stage glass will always sheet water. It sits in the middle of hydrophilic and hydrophobic. Glass is moved around the factory floating on a bed of tin. This tin can sway this balance. If the unit for the double glazed window is made up with the side that floated on the bed of tin, then it may be this that would be creating the hard work for window cleaners.

**WCM:** Well then, some metals work and some do not by the looks of it.

Hopefully, Daniel will get back to us with a more detailed explanation to what he feels is going on here. In the meantime watch Matt Perry's video here on [YouTube](#). And try it for yourself.

Let us know if it works for you.



Quality Tools for Smart Cleaning

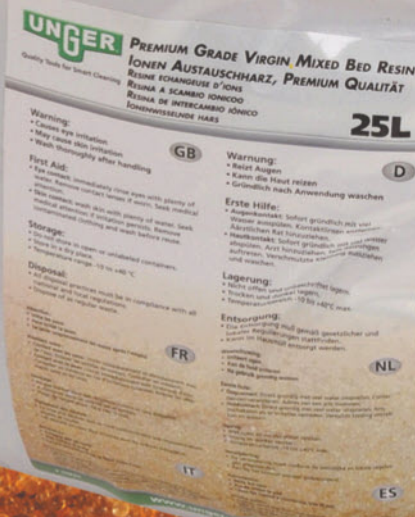
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## New HiFlo™ Indoor Window Cleaning System from Unger

The team behind the number one Window Cleaning brand utilised its world class expertise to produce an easy-to-use, one step System for indoor window cleaning.

The System is perfect for any user without window cleaning experience and does not require extensive training – just a few practice runs. It also offers safe and quick access for cleaning high level windows, skylights and glass balustrades, with Unger's best selling telescopic pole.



So, how does it work?

The essential component of the Indoor System is a 20cm wide Pad holder with a swivel head, featuring Velcro backing.

Depending on the level of soiling a user can choose between 2 microfiber pads, attachable to the Pad holder with Velcro. The pad with ultrafine, short fibre is ideal for every day cleaning, as well as polishing of glass and mirrors.

For periodic washing or heavy soil, Unger provides a more absorbent 15mm microfiber pad. Fit the Pad holder with the right pad onto a pole, spray the pad with deionised water and you are ready to go!

Why deionised water?

Purified of minerals, deionised water provides a streak free finish, without the need to squeegee or dry the windows, resulting in sparkly clean finish and improved time and labour efficiency. All you need to do is simply wipe the glass or mirror surface until clean and leave to dry on its own.

There are 2 System kits available within the new HiFlo™ Indoor Window Cleaning System. The Starter Kit (RRP £48.70 excl. VAT) is designed for those already in possession of the basic cleaning equipment and consists of the Padholder, 5 Polish Pads and a thread Adapter - which means that the Pad holder fits onto any existing Unger pole.

A complete Master Kit (RRP £98.42 excl. VAT) also includes the Unger 2.5m TelePlus™ pole, a Sprayer on the Belt as well as the practical ErgoTec® Belt and Pouch for storing clean Pads.



The System, covered by Unger's 100% Customer Satisfaction Guarantee, simplifies the cleaning process for indoor windows and other fixtures, saving time and money with improved safety.



**Unger UK Ltd.**  
9 Planetary Industrial Estate  
Willenhall  
West Midlands

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## Which water fed pole is right for me?

It's clear the introduction of water fed poles and pure water cleaning revolutionised the window cleaning industry. There were early adopters, some people who took their time before committing to a change in practice and there are some who for their own reasons have continued to use the traditional method.

Brodex Machine Services have been designing, experimenting with and manufacturing water fed poles for over 11 years. We have arrived at a range of tools that are proven and effective for all kinds of cleaning operations. When considering a long reach pole design there are 3 criteria we are governed by...

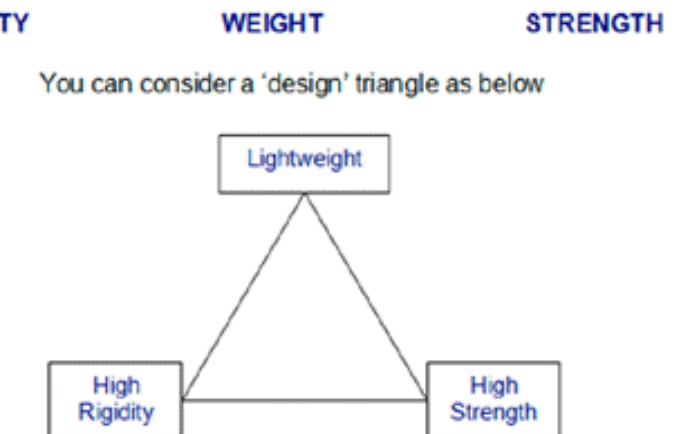
RIGIDITY, WEIGHT and STRENGTH

As you move to any single characteristic you are moving away from the other i.e. the lighter the pole it firstly becomes weaker and prone to breakage, then the rigidity suffers and it becomes too flexible. You will see below that the pole characteristics will be different for every pole, depending on several things from material of construction to number of sections, to size of tubes. We have provided a guide on our website to help you choose the best pole for your needs.

There are two types of pole available

### TELESCOPIC POLES

This pole consists of numerous tubes that are of different sizes so they fit closely inside each other. A compression clamp is attached to each section and used to hold the pole extended. We use 2 types of material to produce these, Carbon Fibre Composite and aircraft grade aluminium. These are two very different materials producing very different poles.



Telescopic



Modular

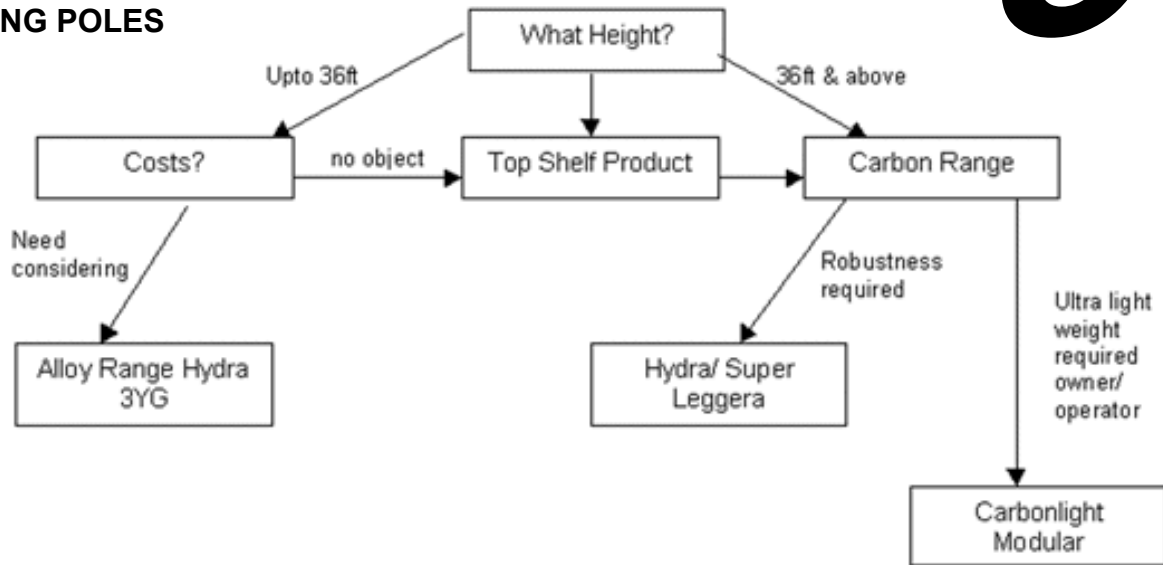


### MODULAR POLES

As the name suggests these poles are built from multiple separate sections that connect together to produce the desired lengths. You can use one section (6ft) for low work or join 10 sections to produce a 60ft pole. Because of this the material used is a carbon composite. This type of pole allows each section to maintain a large diameter therefore increasing stiffness. This is a premium product and needs to be handled differently than a more robust telescopic model. It does have a noticeable advantage of packing down to 6ft length



## SELECTING POLES

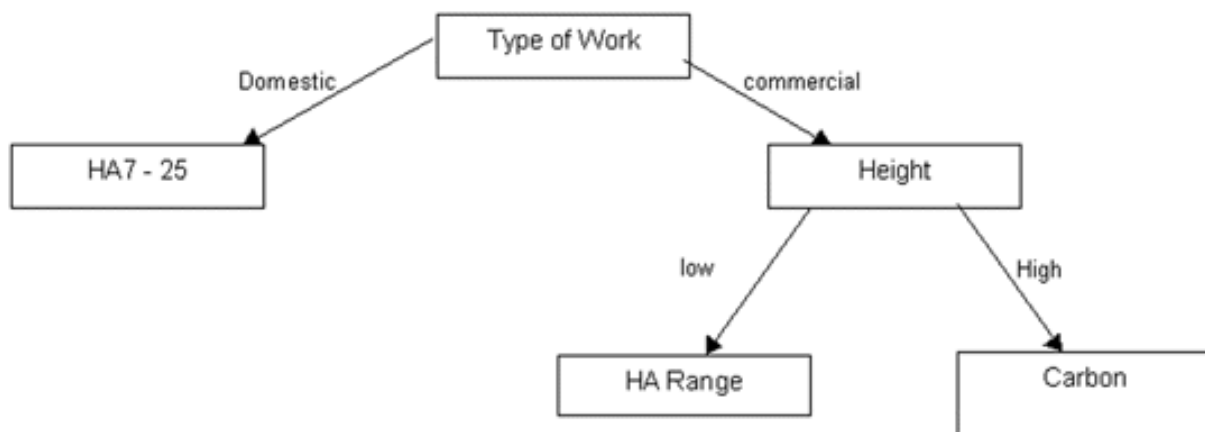


## Carbon Composites

This is the most expensive type of pole but it performs the best overall. Whilst it is susceptible to breakage due to the brittle nature of carbon fibre it is the lightest option and most importantly the stiffest. This is the material of choice for the largest poles used i.e. normally 45ft – 60ft. The smaller poles are fantastic in carbon but generally cost prohibitive compared to the massively cheaper fibreglass or alloy poles.

## Aluminium Poles

This is the cheaper option but by no means should you dismiss because of this. The alloy is heavier and more flexible than the carbon and so is not usually used for the larger poles over 36ft. But it is very strong and the most durable by far amongst any other material. Ideal for the rough handled operative but not suitable for the very large reach poles. Probably the best 'value for money' poles available.



We love to talk about poles.....so please contact us for further information!  
Look out for our new range of Stiffer, Lighter Carbon Poles being introduced this month...  
and our new Aluminium Clamp levers will be out soon!

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