

Body Shop gets greener with refillable shower gel and activism zone

New concept store in central London is attempt to return to roots of founder Anita Roddick

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/sep/17/the-body-shop-goes-green-again-with-refill-stations-and-activist-zones>

Rebecca Smithers, *Consumer affairs correspondent*
17 September 2019



The Body Shop's trial refill station will initially just be for shower gel. Photograph: Rowan Butler/The Body Shop

The Body Shop is going back to the future with a UK concept store that aims to return to the activist roots of its late founder, the environmental and human rights campaigner Anita Roddick.

As well as a zone to encourage shoppers to become part of a collective of local campaigners, the central London outlet is trialling a refill station – initially just for shower gels – which the ethical chain scrapped in the late 1990s after customers failed to understand how it worked.

The revamped store is opposite Bond Street tube station – the busiest of its 242-strong UK portfolio with strong footfall driven by office workers as well as tourists.



Anita Roddick in 1986. The Body Shop started 10 years earlier with an emphasis on ethical sourcing and testing. Photograph: Keystone/Getty Images

The Body Shop’s managing director, Linda Campbell, said the brand was hoping to revive the spirit of its founder, who died in 2007, with environmental and community-minded initiatives designed to put it back at the forefront of ethical business.

“We are reviving the idea of empowerment of girls and women, which is core to our business,” she said. “We will be encouraging shoppers to come up with ideas for how they can help their local communities.”

Tapping into growing consumer concern about the impact of single-use plastics on the environment, the Bond Street store will include a water station for customers to refill their bottles.

Most of the materials in the shop are upcycled, including till points rescued from landfill and stools made using reclaimed steel and recycled wood. The chain has also pledged to phase out wet wipes from all its stores by October.

Shoppers can also use a packaging return scheme to bring back empty bottles and containers from any brand, with the incentive of a £5 voucher for every five returned.



The concept store in central London uses mainly upcycled materials. Photograph: Rowan Butler/Body Shop

“Overall, the idea is for shoppers to have a bit of fun and to have some memorable experiences,” Campbell said. Some aspects of the pilot, if successful, are likely to be rolled out to other stores in Europe and North America.

Founded in 1976, the Body Shop started in Brighton selling 25 products. Customers were encouraged to recycle packaging – partly because Roddick did not have enough bottles at first – and there was an emphasis on natural ingredients that were ethically sourced and cruelty free.

There are about 800 products in the current range and the Body Shop has 3,000 stores in more than 60 countries. In the UK, it has just under 2,000 employees working in store, as well as an online operation and “At Home” service.

Roddick shocked observers in 2006 by selling up to L’Oréal, the world’s biggest cosmetics maker, but the chain was sold on in June 2017 to the Brazilian cosmetics company Natura in a deal thought to be worth £880m.

The company was defying the high street “gloom and doom”, Campbell said, with UK sales up by 4% year on year. Next year, the Body Shop is planning to open its first cash-free store in the refurbished Broadgate shopping centre in Liverpool Street station, London.

The chain’s highest-selling products are hemp hand cream and tea tree oil, with a tube and bottle of each being sold every nine and 17 seconds respectively.