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Mary Immaculate College: Enhancing Campus Safety Through Green Cleaning

Mary Immaculate College (MIC) in Limerick is one of Ireland's leading teacher education institutions, with a campus combining historic buildings and modern facilities. Over time, moss and grime built up, especially on older stone surfaces exposed to the weather. This not only affected the campus's appearance but also raised safety concerns. Keen to maintain a clean, welcoming environment without harsh chemicals, the college sought a sustainable cleaning solution.

Industry: Higher Education (University Campus)

Location: St. Patricks' Campus, Thurles, Co. Tipperary

Client Profile: Mary Immaculate College serves thousands of students and staff. Its campus includes academic buildings, walkways and car parks that must remain safe and presentable. The college prioritises student welfare and environmental impact, aiming for maintenance practices that support safety and sustainability. Key concerns include preserving historic stonework and ensuring a hazard-free, welcoming learning environment.

Problem/Challenge

On the rear side of one of MIC's main academic buildings (and around an adjacent car park), several issues had emerged:

- **Mossy, Dirty Walls:** he building façades had accumulated moss and dirt due to years of rain exposure and limited maintenance. The discolouration looked unsightly and, if left, moss could retain moisture and damage the masonry.
- **Slippery Walkways and Car Park:** In shaded areas, algae and moss had created slick footpaths and car park surfaces. Staff and students had reported them as slip hazards, especially during wet weather.
- **Avoiding Chemical Treatments:** The college aimed to avoid chemical moss killers or detergents, which could harm health, produce strong odours near classrooms or affect green areas. High-pressure washing risked damaging old stonework. They needed a gentle, people-safe method to remove organic growth.

Goals and Objectives

The objectives defined by Mary Immaculate College were:

- **Improve Safety:** Eliminate the slippery moss and algae on outdoor walking surfaces to prevent accidents.
- **Protect Structures:** Clean the building's stone façade and other surfaces without causing any damage to masonry or pavement. The solution needed to be gentle enough for historic stone.
- **Chemical-Free Cleaning:** Use no hazardous chemicals in the process, to maintain healthy air quality on campus and protect landscaping. The college aimed for an environmentally responsible approach.

- **Enhance Aesthetics:** Restore the appearance of the affected walls and grounds, making the campus look well-maintained and cared for.

- **Minimal Disruption:** Carry out the cleaning with minimal interruption to campus activities, ideally during a quiet period, ensuring normal college operations and student life were not disturbed.

Solution Provided

Foamstream delivered a soft-wash solution using low-pressure, high-temperature water to remove organic growth without damaging surfaces:

- **Facade Soft Washing:** Heated water was applied to the moss-covered stonework using low pressure, killing moss and loosening grime. The team used brushes and gentle rinsing to lift dirt without harming the masonry. This approach was safe for historic stone and caused no structural stress.

- **Walkway and Car Park Cleaning:** Walkways and the car park were swept, then treated with the same soft-wash method. The high-temperature water effectively neutralised algae and moss. After a brief soak, surfaces were gently scrubbed and rinsed, leaving them clean and slip-resistant. The process used no chemicals and produced no harmful runoff.

- **Scheduling and Safety:** The work was carried out over a quiet weekend. The method was safe to use during daylight hours with no need for barriers or warning signs. College teams were kept informed, but oversight was minimal due to the system's public-safe operation.

Results and Impact

Stone façades appeared clean and well-preserved, restoring the buildings' character. Slippery paths and car park areas were made safe for everyday use. Students noted the improved look and feel of the space, with a more welcoming atmosphere overall.

Maintenance staff observed lasting results. Because the hot water treatment reached the spores, moss regrowth was delayed. No harm came to nearby lawns or planted areas, and there were no chemical odours or residues.

In summary, MIC successfully eliminated safety risks and improved campus appearance using a non-invasive, eco-friendly method—without disrupting daily operations.

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Testimonial

Since Noel Egan and Noel Furlong started working in Mary Immaculate College, St. Patricks Campus, Thurles with their company Foamstream we have been incredibly happy with the professional and efficient service they have provided for us. Our main building here was built in 1837 and as such has a lot of conservation requirements and the guys have been fantastic in directing us in the proper way to manage the building, especially with regard to removing lichen and algae off the external walls. We have also a lot of perimeter walls, roads and footpaths that have to be maintained and between hot washing and the use of the excellent “Algo Clear Pro” we have noticed a major improvement in how clean the campus looks. It is constantly being commented on by visitors and staff members and is a real source of pride for myself and the Building & Estates Team.

I would have no hesitation in recommending Foamstream to come onto any property to carry out their specialist work, we continue to use them in Thurles and the Mary I Campus in Limerick are starting to see the huge benefits of having Noel & Nicky on campus at least once a month. Our Limerick campus is very big and having the guys calling once a month has transformed a very busy campus.

I look forward to working with Noel and Foamstream long into the future here in Thurles.

Jamie Barrett
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Before

After

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Before

After

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