

# Sustainable Paper Use in your Organisation

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## Did you know...?

- On average each person in the UK consumes about 200Kg of paper each year
- The UK is the 5th largest consumer of paper in the world
- More than half of the total 14 million tones of paper used by the UK every year is imported
- About 18% of the waste from UK homes is made up of paper and paper products

## Key Sustainability issues of Paper

Article 13, one of the leading sustainability consultancies, is increasingly aware that most businesses and organisations that want to operate in a more sustainable way sometimes struggle to identify what is best practice amid all the conflicting information provided about sustainable qualities of different products and services.

In an attempt to help businesses make sense of the information and sustainability issues relating to different products this report can be used by businesses and organisations to identify the Best Practicable Sustainability Option.

The factors examined in the report will include the environmental issues, the Human rights, labour concerns and the economic issues involved. At the end we will provide a summary guide to selecting the most practicably sustainable type of product together

with some key questions to ask suppliers in order to identify the most suitable product.

This report is focused on paper and will examine the sustainability issues relevant to paper and paper products.

We have selected paper as the subject of this report because, despite all the pre-



dictions, the 'paperless office' seems as far away as ever and in all the training programmes and consultancy which Article

13 undertake paper continues to be a major concern of organisations.

There is also a second rationale for selecting paper for this first report in that for any organisation trying to implement a more sustainable strategy reducing paper use and recycling paper is a very visible step and something in which all staff can participate.

**PAPER** Not only is recycling paper an important and 'visibly green' step within your organisation, it also has tremendous environmental, economic and social consequences.

The steps explored overleaf require large inputs of energy, chemicals and water and consequently produce significant quantities of waste. Therefore the production of paper is hardly a sustainable process because of all these resource inputs.

## RECYCLING PAPER

For both your business and your home the recycling of paper, paper products and cardboard items will have a range of environmental benefits.

These will only be fully realised if you also make attempts to purchase recycled paper and recycled paper products thus completing the cycle of renewal.

The recycling rate in Europe reached 64.5% in 2007, which confirms that the industry is on the path to meeting its voluntary target of 66% by 2010.

[European Declaration on Paper Recycling 2006 - 2010. Monitoring Report 2007".](#)

*European Recovered Paper Council.*

# 1. FROM TREE TO...

## Environmental issues

There are negative impacts on the environment in terms of the energy use, the range of chemicals used and the extent of transport which is involved. Obviously if the paper you use comes from UK forests it will use less transport than if it is imported from Scandinavia or North America.

Felling these forests for the timber is a very large scale process, has tremendous impact on the soils, the waterways nearby where soil and fertiliser can wash into, and on the ecology of the area.

In a listing on the website

'paperonweb' from Hari Goyal Associates, there are 40 chemicals listed as being involved at some stage in the paper making process.

## Social issues

It should be remembered that these forestry operations are often the only significant employer in very remote areas.

Where the forest work is within an EU country then the labour laws and conditions should be strictly controlled to EU standards but any softwoods imported from developing countries may come from areas where social conditions and labour laws are weak.

## ACTIVITY

- \* Clearing of old trees
- \* Planting young nursery grown trees
- \* Use of large planting machines
- \* Fertilising
- \* Removal of thinnings
- \* Mechanical felling,
- \* Loss of nutrients to rivers and lakes

## IMPACTS

- \* Soil disturbance, run off and soil compaction
- \* Replacing mature trees with young trees
- \* Use of oil based fertilisers
- \* Energy use and pollution from Transport

*"Paper is made from cellulose fibre, the source of which can be pulped wood, or a variety of other materials such as rags, cotton, grasses, sugar cane, straw, waste paper, or even elephant dung! In this country, wood pulp is the most common source material for the manufacture of virgin paper, i.e. paper which has no recycled content."*

# 2. DESK...

## Environmental issues

For your organisation the decision about which type of paper to buy comes down to considerations of which organisation you are purchasing it from and how far the paper has to travel in order to reach you, we might term this the 'paper miles'.

The organisation you purchase paper from might have strong, or weak environmental and CSR policies and you should assess before making a purchase.

It is highly likely that the lowest cost paper will be provided from an organisation with weaker CSR policies, and vice versa. In assessing the 'paper miles' you should try to find the supplier whose main bulk storage facility is as near to your organisation as possible.

Invariably the issues that you are trying to balance in this part of the paper life cycle are less to do with different environmental or social impacts and more to do with the costs and economics.

## Paper Use

Most organisations will use paper in two different ways.

- As paper in the office for printing, copying and note taking.
- As pre printed documents, publicity material etc.

See page 4 accompanying poster "So you need to buy some paper..."

### 3. FROM DESK TO...

#### Environmental issues

It is at this stage of the paper cycle where your organisation has the greatest environmental influence over the type and fate of the paper you use.

It is your organisations ability to decide, by asking your supplier or printer, what type of paper you wish to use, you can decide where you purchase it from or where you get it printed, and therefore how many miles of transport are involved, what policies your organisation has that control how the paper is used and disposed of / recycled.

*"In theory over 80% of paper could be recycled. It is not possible to recycle 100% of paper because each time it is recycled the paper loses some strength due to shortening of its fibres and although you can buy 100% recycled paper this has suffered some losses in the recycling process and at the next stage of recycling will need to be supplemented with some virgin paper pulp."*

#### Economic Issues

This is also the stage in the life cycle of paper where your organisation can have the greatest economic benefit.

Many printers will always try to persuade you to purchase more leaflets than you really want 'because it is 'cheaper than having to re-order'. But if you have estimated the numbers of leaflets you want then stick to this, otherwise you will pay for disposing of the excess.

**Tip:** Use scrap one sided paper for staff notes, reception messages and printing drafts.

#### ACTIVITY

- \* How available / accessible is paper for staff use?
- \* What happens to empty boxes
- \* Use double sided / scrap
- \* Copiers, printers, etc.
- \* Documents / materials
- \* Storage / filing
- \* Waste / disposal / recycling

#### IMPACTS

- \* Space to store paper
- \* Energy / Ink use
- \* Packaging
- \* Print chemicals
- \* Waste paper / packaging
- \* Surplus documents / flyers etc.

### 4. RECYCLING OR...

#### Environmental issues

of recycled paper are generally less than those for virgin paper, the paper collected for recycling, recovered paper, is already largely white therefore there is less emphasis on bleaching and more on the process to remove ink and other unwanted items.

A small amount of bleaching does take place as a final stage. However this does depend on where the paper recycling takes place and you need to check the final destination with the organisation that collects

your paper for recycling.

Whilst we have several large and efficient paper recycling plants within the UK much of our paper is usually shipped China.

#### Social issues

It is therefore much more difficult to ensure that the paper recycling process conforms to good environmental standards and also that the people working in the paper recycling plant are employed to good social standards.

#### ACTIVITY

- \* Collection by recycling organisation
- \* Transport
- \* Paper recycling plant
- \* Pulp into paper

#### IMPACTS

- \* Storage area
- \* Litter potential
- \* Metal and plastic waste
- \* chemicals / energy
- \* Pollution / disposal
- \* Energy Use

# So you want to buy some paper...



When faced with seemingly simple products, such as leaflets, pre-printed paper etc. you can use the decision tree (table) below to identify some of the key issues you might be faced with.

Follow the flow diagram below to get some ideas about what to look for when you ask questions of your paper suppliers.

KEY QUESTIONS	ANSWERS TO LOOK FOR	ANSWERS TO BEWARE OF	REASON FOR CONCERN
How much paper do I need?	A realistic estimate of how much paper or how many leaflets etc. are really justified and needed	"You might as well buy extra because it is cheaper In the long run"	If you have really accurately estimated the quantity of paper you need why buy more?
What type of paper do you have?	We have a full range of paper	We mainly sell virgin paper because that is the best quality and lowest price	If the supplier focuses on virgin papers then it is a foregone conclusion that these will be his best selling product
What types of recycled paper do you sell?	We sell paper from post consumer waste, from non-wood waste (maze, straw etc.)	We sell recycled paper	Because this probably includes pre-consumer waste and my only include a small proportion of recycled paper
Does your virgin paper come from sustainably managed forests?	Yes and has FSC/PEFC / Certification	Yes	the answer lacks any detailed information
Where is the recycled paper from?	All our recycled paper is from UK mills.	Not sure	Likely to be from overseas.
I want these leaflets printed on recycled paper.	That's fine – we can offer you x, y, or z.	That will cost a lot more because the printer does not like the quality.	The printer seems to think they know what you want and they look for a quality you do

## What are the symbols and labels to look for?



This is the symbol of The National Association of Paper Merchants and shows the % recycled Content of that paper.



The symbol of the Forest Stewardship Council and indicates that paper has come from a sustainably managed forest. But remember this means that it is virgin paper – NOT RECYCLED



Nordic Environmental Label is applied to products, (not just Paper) which have the least environmental damage compared to others in the market.



Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification. Means the paper has come from sustainably managed forests.



The Blue Angel is a German scheme to distinguish products which have low environmental impact.



This is an EU inspired Europe-wide label for non-food products including copy paper. It covers a variety of environmental impacts such as production energy use, waste generation and recyclability, across the product's whole life cycle.



Elemental Chlorine Free, - means that Chlorine as a toxic gas has not been used to bleach the paper, instead chemicals such as chlorine dioxide.



This is awarded by the Carbon Neutral Company to a product, service or activity that has completed a process laid out in [the CarbonNeutral Protocol](#), and using the parameters of the specific