

# Books & The Environment

The Booksellers Association encourages all members to reduce their carbon emissions, operate more sustainably and reduce the impact of book publishing and bookselling has on the environment.

There are many ways in which the industry can do this – from using paper from sustainable sources and reducing plastic bag usage, to examining the supply chain.

There is much which can be done by individual booksellers to help reduce carbon emissions. The following sections provide information and suggestions which can be used to devise and implement more ecologically friendly business practices. In addition to helping the environment, many of these suggestions may also help you reduce costs and save money.

The broad areas for action are:

- reducing carbon emissions
- reducing energy consumption and transport costs
- recycling more
- reducing the use of packaging and plastic bags
- sourcing environmentally friendly paper and other products

## More Information...

[Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](#)

[UK Environment Agency](#)

[Ireland Enfo](#)

[BBC Science & Environment](#)

[Environment Guardian](#)

[Real Climate](#)

[Pollution Issues](#)

## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Every company and organisation should have a written Environmental Policy, clearly stating the aims and objectives with respect to its impact on the environment.

The policy should also enable communication to employees, shareholders, suppliers and, above all, customers. Larger companies should consider forming an Environmental Committee with representatives from all levels of the workforce; smaller companies should consider appointing an Environmental Champion.

## REDUCING YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

*'You can only manage what you measure'*

By measuring your impacts it is possible to identify both financial and environmental savings. First carry out an audit to measure your baseline environmental impacts. If just starting the process focus upon areas of direct control, such as energy, water and waste as well as your own transport emissions. Once you have identified these you should then move towards areas where you have an influence such as business travel, supply chain and end users.

### **More information...**

[Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](#)

[British Safety Council](#)

[Climate Care](#)

[Carbon Trust](#)

[Carbon Footprint](#)

[Resurgence & Ecologist](#)

Once you know your environmental footprint, take steps to reduce it. Environmental Management Systems such as [BS 8555](#) can help to focus your approach and achieve easy wins. Whatever you do, don't make grand claims.

### **ENERGY SAVING**

- Compile an energy checklist.
- Walk round the building at different times of day (including after hours) and identify where savings could be made.
- Capture gas and electrical usage patterns and work out key areas of focus.
- Switch it off if not in use - a PC running 24 hours a day costs around £65 a year and the monitor uses two thirds of this energy.
- Run a 'switch off' campaign – place stickers by light switches and electrical appliances and have a dedicated page on your intranet.
- Turn it down - reducing heating by 1 degree can reduce heating costs by as much as 8%
- Install double glazing.
- Allow as much natural light into the building as possible.
- Install energy saving lighting - use low energy light bulbs and PIRs, intelligent switches and zonal lighting.
- Assess your energy costs over the last 12 months to provide a base figure for comparison.
- Look at sourcing from green energy suppliers.
- Investigate in-situ electricity generation with projects such as solar panels and micro wind turbines.
- Air conditioning - how cool does the office/bookshop need to be?
- Do you have an open door policy for the bookshop? Is this cost effective?
- Use building management software (BMS) to automate lights, central heating and air conditioning.
- Monitor water usage and use flow-metered WC systems

### **Involve Staff**

- Explain why you want to save energy.
- Canvas staff for ideas.
- Appoint an energy champion to coordinate all energy reduction initiatives.
- Keep staff informed of progress.

### **Prioritise Actions**

- Draw up an action plan detailing a schedule of improvements.
- Allocate resources.
- Identify the individuals responsible for carrying out the improvements.
- Identify the responsibilities for ensuring that policies are adhered to on a daily basis (who turns out the lights?).
- Set energy reduction targets and deadlines.
- Although there may be enthusiasm for energy saving, it is important that momentum is maintained.
- Reinforce the message with stickers/posters leaflets - these can be easily be produced in house.

### **More information...**

[Department of Energy & Climate Change](#)

[UK Energy Watch](#)

[Ofgem](#)

[Centre for Sustainable Energy](#)

[Energy Information Centre](#)

[Energy Saving Trust](#)

[switchandgive](#)

### **TRANSPORT & TRAVEL**

- Fly less - consider travelling overland where practical - use trains rather than cars.
- If you must fly, travel in economy and extend your trip.
- Use video conferencing/conference calls rather than face-to-face meetings.
- Offset the CO2 emissions that your travel causes.
- Wherever possible, don't organise conferences or other events that involve flights.
- Larger companies might usefully review fleet vehicles - move to hybrid vehicles, reduce fleet size.
- Encourage the use of public transport/car sharing/cycling for staff (e.g. season ticket loans, cycle purchase or to cycle to work schemes, include safe storage for bicycles and install showers).
- Use public transport rather than taxis.
- Have a written policy clearly understood by all your staff.

### **More information...**

[Department for Transport](#)

[Ethical Transport Association](#)

## RECYCLING

- Measure your current recycling levels and target yourself to increase the % recycled and tell staff what you're doing.
- Encourage the use of recycled, environmentally friendly stationery products (not just paper) from your stationery supplier.
- Use recycled or FSC approved paper in copiers and printers and for printed business stationery & envelopes.
- Set all copiers and printers to default to double-sided printing.
- Use electronic templates rather than print.
- Encourage the use of email attachments/shared drives rather than printing documents - share printed copies in meetings or use a laptop and project onto a screen instead
- Use recycled card for your business cards.
- Provide facilities to recycle toner cartridges, CDs, batteries, PCs, office furniture
- If you are recycling electrical goods, you need to ensure that you do so in a way that supports the WEEE Directive.
- Re-use boxes, stationery, envelopes, jiffy bags etc.
- Install recycling bins and remove under-desk bins to encourage staff to recycle.
- Replace catering and other products with biodegradable and recycled alternatives
- Put pressure on your local council to provide better recycling facilities for businesses.

### More information...

[Freecycle](#)  
[Recycle Now](#)  
[Home Recycling](#)  
[London Remade](#)  
[Paper Round](#)  
[Recycle More](#)  
[wastewatch](#)  
[Waste Online](#)  
[Your Green Office](#)

## PACKAGING & PLASTIC BAGS

Booksellers are committed to supporting their customers in reducing the use of packaging and carrier bags as part of their wider policies on reducing packaging and waste.

Booksellers are also committed to improving the environmental performance of the bags they do hand out.

### Did You Know?

More than 13 billion carrier bags are distributed in the UK every year. These account for less than 1% of the total waste in the UK.

Source: HM Treasury - Plastic Bags Tax Assessment 2002 [183220]  
[Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](#)

Plastic carrier bags account for 0.064% of litter pollution. Whilst experience in other countries shows that introducing a ban or levy will reduce the number of plastic bags in circulation, it does not make a significant difference to the amount of street related litter.

Source: ENCAMS survey in Scottish Executive Proposed Plastic Bag Levy – Extended Impact Assessment Report 2005  
[The Scottish Government](#)

Research indicates that the term 'single use bags' is something of a misnomer. Only one or two respondents claim that they discard these bags after only one use. The overwhelming majority claim to re-use these bags for a variety of other purposes.

Source: Carrier Bag Usage & Attitudes - Benchmark and Target Market Study 2005  
[wrap](#)

The contribution [of plastic bags] to climate change is miniscule. The average Brit uses 134 plastic bags a year, resulting in just two kilos of the typical 11 tonnes of carbon dioxide he or she will emit in a year. That is one five thousandth of their overall climate impact.

Source: George Marshall: 'Can this really save the planet?' - The Guardian, 13 September 2007  
[The Guardian](#)

### **Packaging & Plastic Bag Strategies**

- Review your current packaging materials.
- Use material that can be re-used - ensure material is recycled, recyclable or fully biodegradable.
- Don't use plastic wrapping or polystyrene chips - look for recycled or biodegradable alternatives.
- Minimise the amount of packing used - whilst maintaining safety and keeping product damage to a minimum.
- Challenge your suppliers about their packaging materials and make sure you recycle where possible.
- Avoid plastic bags for promotional use - use biodegradable bags (eg made from cornstarch), or recycled degradable polypropylene bags or calico bags.
- Display the BA produced sign asking '*Do You Need A Bag?*' at the till point and get into the habit of asking the customer the same question.
- Source the bags you provide very carefully - the BA supplies a range of high quality cotton or recycled plastic bags in a variety of designs.
- Degradable polythene breaks down quickly under the influence of light and heat which means that this type of plastic can be disposed of safely with household rubbish.
- Offer your customers a Bag For Life - free if they spend over a certain amount.
- Charge for bags and advertise that you will donate a percentage to an

- appropriate green/local charity.
- Offer extra loyalty card points to customers who re-use your bookshop bags, whether plastic or cotton.
- Question whether you really need your bookshop logo printed on your bags - it looks good but how much difference does it actually make to the customer or on a bigger scale?
- Offer incentives for customers bringing paper bags back for recycling.
- Install a recycling point in your shop and extra loyalty points or a voucher of some kind for customers using this facility.
- Recycled paper bags could be shredded and used as packaging.

### **More information...**

[wrap](#)

[incpen](#)

[Bags from the BA](#)

[BioBags](#)

[Crafts & Creations](#)

[Davpack](#)

[Jutexpo](#)

## **PAPER, STATIONERY & OTHER CONSUMABLES**

Restrictions in the availability of recycled paper and the costs associated with using it have meant that historically publishers have really had to weigh the advantages of producing titles on recycled paper. Sustainable paper procurement is a complex problem. Over the last few years larger publishers have sought to improve their environmental performance by sustainable paper procurement. This may mean sourcing Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) paper or using recycled paper.

### **Did You Know?**

Construction uses nearly two thirds (63.5%) of all domestic and imported timber in the UK, pallets and packaging (including cases, boxes, crates & barrels) nearly a quarter (23.9%) and fencing & outdoor just over 10%. Other markets (including furniture, transport, hoardings, domestic items and paper & pulp) account for only 2.5%.

Source: Estimated Softwood Utilisation by Main Market by Volume - Improved Timber Utilisation Statistics 2005

[Forestry Commission](#)

Most UK paper production uses recovered waste or imported pulp. Graphic papers (including newsprint) accounted for 42.6% of the total UK paper production, packaging materials for 35.4% and sanitary & household papers for 16%.

Source: UK Wood Production and Trade 2008

[Forestry Commission](#)

Book papers account for less than 1% of timber harvests. The U.S. Forest Service estimates that 35% of timber is used for paper and “composite products”. After factoring out the “composite products” component, the paper portion is something less than 35%.

The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) estimates that printing & writing papers account for 32% of the total paper market and book papers account for about 5.7% of that market. Multiplying the above values through, book papers would account for 5.7% of 32% of 35% of timber harvests, or 0.64%.

Source: Bill Upton: Forest Growth (Malloy Incorporated)  
[Edwards Brothers Malloy](#)

A US study found there is a net emission of 8.85 pounds per average book sold. But the study also noted that books store a portion of the carbon from biomass in the products themselves and incinerating waste (although it has some of its own environmental risks) also recovers some energy, thus reducing overall emissions for the industry by 16.8%.

Source: Environmental Trends and Climate Impacts: Findings from the US Book Industry  
[Book Industry Study Group](#)

## **Printed Books & E-Books**

There is a considerable amount of conflicting information in circulation. Initially, some people jumped to the conclusion that e-books were more environmentally friendly than printed books but research shows it is far from that simple.

There are many issues involved, not least of which is what should be included or excluded from any life cycle assessment. For instance, apart from the obvious use of energy, materials and transport in producing and distributing both types of publication, should the renewable resource of trees be compared to the non-renewable use of minerals in the production of e-readers? Printed books are also less likely to be discarded as quickly as e-readers (as new versions come onto the market), so does this also have an impact in the longer term?

The studies published so far have all used different criteria and there is still no conclusive outcome.

## **The Ethical Consumer**

Ethical consumerism is just as much about supporting the 'good' companies and products as it is withdrawing our support from the 'bad' ones. This means favouring particular ethical products, such as energy saving light bulbs or avoiding products that you may disapprove of, such as battery eggs or gas-guzzling cars. Sometimes choices have to be made and this means looking both at companies and at products and evaluating which product is the most ethical overall.

- When buying cards and stationery products make sure that wherever possible the paper is recycled.
- Buy stationery from local suppliers and work with them to source green products, looking at all aspects of production including where the paper comes from and what kind of ink is used.
- Check that your printer is using ink that is vegetable-based and/or recycled.
- Buy Fairtrade/Traidcraft products where possible - eg tea, coffee, sugar, biscuits, loo roll, tissues.
- Use eco-friendly cleaning products.

- Create your own ethical trading scheme by joining up with other local businesses to buy in bulk and cut costs and carbon emissions on deliveries.
- Talk to your buyers about sourcing from ethical supplier.
- Source local produce from farmers markets.
- Sponsor endangered forest and woodland.
- Consider ethical banking.

### **More information...**

[Fairtrade Foundation](#)

[Traidcraft](#)

[Ethical Trading Initiative](#)

[Green Stationery Company](#)

[Recycled Products Guide](#)

[Futures Centre](#)

[Ethical Consumer](#)

[Big Barn](#)

[Local Foods](#)

[Coolearth](#)

[World Land Trust](#)

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