

Introduction

Sustainable procurement makes economic sense as ultimately unsustainable resource use is, well, not sustainable. It is possible that some areas covered below may have a price premium but they will not cost the earth, which is what ends up paying the cost of our industrialized resource use and climate change. Equally some 'sustainable' items should be cheaper as they will be made from recycled goods which have less embodied energy and raw materials.

Why Go Down this Route?

It is a recurring theme in this series, but organizations will have to become more 'green' as government introduces legislation. Those 'early-adopters' will be in a stronger position as this happens. It gives you competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace as it provides differentiation. The move to greening organisations is also being driven at consumer level. Shoppers and important corporate customers are making buying choices based upon your green credentials. Commercial in Cheltenham have seen order books increase as they have made strong environmental commitments. So there are marketing and PR reasons both of which are expensive overheads.

Environmental Policy

Basically sustainable procurement can form an integral part of a company's environmental audit and be integrated into an environmental policy which can be published on your website. This provides attendant advantages (some of which may appear peripheral and difficult to quantify but are nonetheless there) described above. Seek to source from suppliers who have an environmental policy (especially if it is similar to yours) – in this way a virtuous circle is completed that ripples outward.

Practical Measures

Carbon audit - This sustainable procurement could be a bargain as it can be free and will provide ongoing energy savings. Please see Vision 21 info sheet - *Carbon Footprint*.

Switch to a green electricity supplier - So that your electricity use comes from a truly renewable resource and emits no carbon. In this way you will be investing in this vital UK industry. Please see Vision 21 business information sheet – *Energy Supplies*.

Space heating and hot water - There isn't really a sustainable alternative to gas or oil. Some utility companies offer an offsetting service which we would not recommend (Please see: Vision 21 info sheet - *Carbon Offsetting*). The best way to be sustainable is to use less energy - insulate pipe work, walls and roofs. Insulation is available made from recycled newspaper, glass, hemp and lambs wool; reduce working temperature to 18°C, install boiler controls and service boiler and consider replacing with energy-efficient model if between 5-10 years old.

Sustainable construction - If you are extending premises employ sustainable building practices including local materials and contractors. Please see: www.aecb.co.uk/.

Green areas - Source organic alternatives to chemical products for lawns and borders and do not buy compost made from peat as it is associated with rainforest destruction. Purchase local plants and raw materials for pathways which should be permeable.

Bank - Consider switching to a Co-operative or Triodos account as they have the highest sustainability criteria for your investments: www.co-operativebank.co.uk, www.triodos.co.uk. Phone and internet: can also be purchased from The Co-operative.

Pension funds - UK pension funds have a massive influence over how markets behave. Ethical investment of your pension funds can have a very positive effect on the environment. FairPensions helps people who want their pension funds to be more ethical: <http://www.fairpensions.org.uk/>.

Green office - Includes recycled paper & printing: www.severnprint.co.uk, CFL and LED lighting, environmental paints: <http://www.greenshop.co.uk>, floor covering, stationery and cleaning equipment: <http://www.ecotopia.co.uk>, recycled office furniture and equipment. For more suppliers directories see: <http://www.greenconsumerguide.com>.

Canteen - Purchase local, seasonal, organic produce and compost if premises are suitable. Consider offering less meat as this has a greater affect on water use and greenhouse gas emissions.

Kitchen area - Buy local produce where available and Fair Trade when not. Use non-toxic cleaning products.

Toilet area - Use non-toxic cleaning products and water-efficient products. Please see Vision 21 business information sheet – *Water Efficiency in Businesses*.

Vehicle fuel - There is presently no sustainable alternative to petrol and diesel. Diesel has less CO2 emission than petrol but has greater particulate associated with local air pollution. Large-scale biofuel production is not sustainable and there are no sustainable biofuels on the market, other than waste vegetable oil. If you produce waste vegetable oil, take a leaf out of McDonalds' book and manufacture your own biodiesel.

Vehicles - Should be maintained to increase efficiency. New cars and vans should be lowest CO2 fuel consumption rating possible or a hybrid if you need a combustion engine. For local use, electric vans, cars, scooters and delivery bikes are available. Consider purchasing bicycles for use in town deliveries. Pool bikes and cars. Allow employees to use public transport for commuting. Please see Vision 21 business information sheet - *Transport*.

Transport - Try and source materials as close as possible to your location. This will not always be possible, but research if any suppliers use rail and even canals for freight (for non-perishables that are not required 'just-in-time') as M&S now do, as this produces far fewer carbon emissions than road freight.

Guidelines for Purchasing Department

- Source goods that can be manufactured, used and disposed of in an environmentally-responsible way. Specify items that can be recycled or reused.
- Give preference to products that are manufactured with a high recycled content.
- Consider the energy usage/cost of operating equipment prior to purchase.
- Consider "whole life" costs and impacts when assessing equipment for purchase.
- Buy less – don't refurbish for the sake of it.
- Initially invest more so it lasts longer and saves money and resources in the long run.

Public Sector

For environment-friendly procurement which accounts for over 1,000 billion euros every year across the European Union, see:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/index_en.htm.