



# SEEN TO BE GREEN

Sustainable resources are the new 'sexy'

BY JANE SMITH

## How much of our 'greenness' is still lip service?

It seems, less and less.

Evidence is now conclusive that we all have to do something and the government is helping raise the profile of this important subject thanks to a consumer campaign promoting the necessity and benefits of recycling which is ramping up in the autumn called 'The Big Recycle'. In considering how this is affecting the business supplies sector, we looked at a few extreme examples.

### LANDFILL OR REFILL?

Take printer supplies as an example. During the year 2000 over 48 million inkjet cartridges and 7 million laser toner cartridges were consumed in the UK.

It takes 1 litre of oil to manufacture every 15 inkjet cartridges and 3.3 litres of oil for every laser toner cartridge made. That's a staggering 26 million litres of oil just to provide the UK with its printer cartridges for one year. We are also told that our appetite for personal printing is doubling every year so using estimates for 2004 means we will consume 80 million cartridges this year in the UK. In the same period, annual usage across Western Europe will reach a whopping 450 million cartridges.

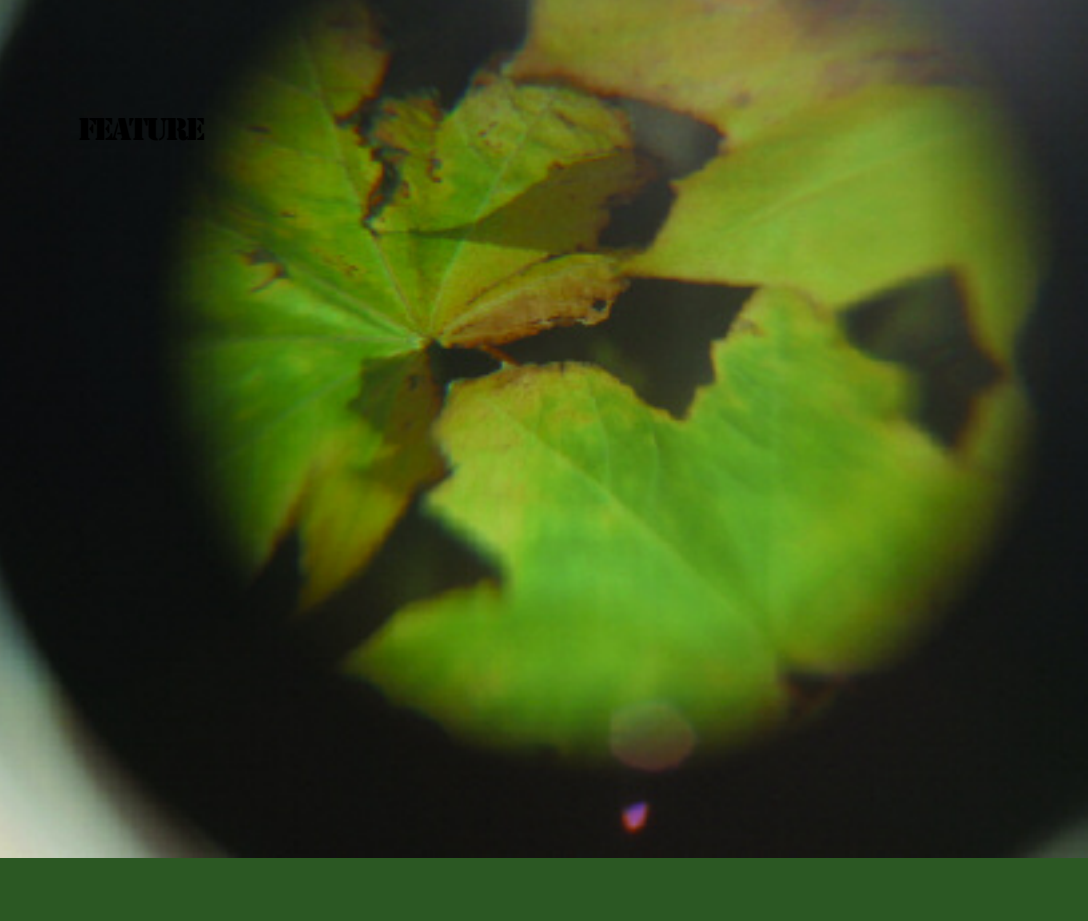
It has been calculated that 85% of those same cartridges, when empty, were disposed of as part of normal office waste, to end up in landfill sites contributing millions of tonnes of plastic and metal waste,

which will stay in the ground forever.

For every 1% improvement in cartridge collections in the UK over 260,000 litres of non-renewable fossil fuel (oil) will be saved as well as the corresponding reduction in landfill.\*

If that's not a convincing argument for us as an industry to encourage customers to return cartridges then there's not much that will. And it's not difficult to organise. Simply speak to your existing cartridge supplier and they will be able to put you in touch with a collection service in your area.

Some original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), such as Hitachi Dataproducts and Xerox, have already introduced their own collection and recycling schemes as >>



well as the compatible manufacturer's such as Kores and IT Image who depend upon the supply of spent cartridges for their very existence. And as recycler's themselves they also have well defined CSR policies. Eva Mowbray of IT Image told us that their policy was to recycle everything possible including waste packaging, wooden pallets, paper, staff drinks containers and office waste. I think we will all soon be compelled to follow suit.

**WHITER THAN WHITE!**

In contrast, we can turn our attention to the paper industry where for many years good practice has been practiced. Recovery of paper fibres is now an integral part of the paper industry and recycled papers today are a mature, reliable and good quality product. Tim Barker, environmental manager for Robert Horne Group told us, "The perception of recycled papers as being of poor quality is fading. Many users will find the better quality recycled papers virtually indistinguishable from virgin fibre grades."

As well as recycled paper, there is also good practise within the industry when it comes to managing virgin fibres from sustainable sources. David Butler,

**“FSC ‘labelled’ paper is becoming more and more accepted as one way of ensuring that paper purchased is made using pulp from sustainable sources.”**

environmental manager of Premier Paper Group, explains: "All our papers are sourced from well managed, sustainable forests and we can trace the chain of custody for each brand - in some cases back to the exact forest stand where these were grown."

FSC 'labelled' paper is becoming more and more accepted as one way of ensuring that paper purchased is made using pulp from sustainable sources. FSC stands for Forestry Stewardship Council and is an independent body, supported by Green Peace and Friends of the Earth. The WWF95 group that includes companies such as WHSmith, Woolworth's and B&Q are adopting purchasing policies that include FSC principles. The principle is to promote sustainable forestry with felling and transportation methods that minimise damage to flora and fauna. Many paper companies including Premier Paper, Robert Horne and Neusiedler are FSC certified.

**SIMPLY REMARKABLE!**

Our last example in this feature is one of sheer innovation. Remarkable Pencils Ltd was originally set up

in 1996 to design and manufacture products from recycled and sustainable sources. Their first product was a pencil made from a recycled plastic vending cup! Today, they produce a whole range of products that are sold in our sector and in the high street including pencil cases made from recycled tyres and notepads made using FSC sustainable paper. Remarkable, isn't it?

We asked marketing manager Jo Moulds whether they had seen any increase in demand. She told us, "We only make recycled stationery and demand just grows for our products every time we bring out something new. We have clients suggesting new products to us almost every day and we always research every idea. We're definitely seeing a period of phenomenal growth and if that's reflected across the market, then it's got to be a good thing for environmental issues, awareness and changing the way people think about how they source products. The environmental knock-on benefits are huge."

As well as local and central government initiatives to get recycling underway CSR is another trend that is building in the private sector and one which the government thoroughly supports. It stands for Corporate Social Responsibility and addresses environmental and/or purchasing policies within it.

Increasingly, organisations are taking a long hard look at the social and environmental impacts of their activities and the positive arguments for purchasing and specifying materials and products manufactured from recovered materials. As a supplier to such organizations it is going to become increasingly important for you to be knowledgeable about the environmental aspects of the products you are selling and to be able to respond to customers' requests for information and 'green' products. ■

*\*source: Nikki Leach, product manager, Xerox Business Supplies in partnership with The Cartridge Recycling Company*