

# Promoting the Green Office

## Introduction

Voluntary Organisations were amongst the first to research and publicise the damage we are inflicting upon the environment. The sector now has a key role to play in developing environmental policies and procedures, for several reasons:

- The sector has become a significant employer of both paid staff and volunteers in its own right and as such is a major consumer of resources
- Taking the lead in promoting good practice is an inherent responsibility of voluntary organisations
- Developing environmental policies makes economic sense. In the short term there may well be additional costs to groups, notably through staff time, in developing policies. However, savings can soon be made through more efficient use of resources, and in the longer term, if and when 'green fiscal measures' are introduced there will be tax savings
- Where voluntary groups choose to seek quality standard accreditation ( or where they are required to do so by funders ) they may find that environmental policy and practice are demanded

This section guides voluntary bodies on applying sustainability principles to their offices and administration.

Sustainability contributes to:

- The safeguarding of global natural resources
- Improving the welfare and human rights of disadvantaged peoples globally
- Reducing global pollution

The overall aim is to make sure that everyone has a long term future in a just world.

## Why this is important for your organisations

There are several reasons why your voluntary organisation should develop and introduce practices that are friendly to the environment and society:

- Supporters, volunteers, staff and users of your services will expect responsible voluntary organisations to take the lead in promoting good practice
- Being more sustainable saves money by using resources more efficiently
- Public funding bodies are required increasingly to demand sustainability policies and performance from those they grant aid
- Being known as a voluntary organisation can raise your profile and open the doors to new opportunities
- As your organisation gets bigger it consumes more and puts more demand on the earth's resources - so it becomes more important to try and minimise your demands

## Getting started

Sustainability is no different to any other major issue for your organisation. It needs management attention and adequate funding to implement it effectively. Here are some key points:

- Get the commitment of senior management and your governing body
- Assign responsibility to an individual and establish an action group
- Set challenging but achievable targets - and report on progress
- Work with funders, supporters, suppliers, users of your services, other voluntary organisations to develop good practice
- Realise that it is a long term activity - look for some quick wins but be there for the long term
- Start with a focus on a few key areas
- Provide relevant training for key staff, volunteers and suppliers

## Practical actions

Most voluntary organisations should be able to make progress towards being more sustainable.

The underlying principles are:

- Use less
- Check on the social impacts of purchases
- Acquire goods that are made from recycled materials, come from sustainable sources or use less energy in use,
- Throwaway less and send waste for recycling or reuse

The principle activities to achieve this include:

1. Reducing, re-using and recycling waste
2. Using energy and water efficiently
3. Reducing paper use
4. Reducing social and environmental impacts when procuring office supplies, energy, accommodation, venues, food etc
5. Minimising transport impacts

## GREEN OFFICE CHECKLIST

### REDUCE PAPER USE

- Use electronic rather than paper faxes and circulate documents by e-mail
- Clip waste paper into pads to use for note taking and passing on messages
- Print and photocopy onto the backs of used paper for drafts and internal notes
- Re-use envelopes
- Stop incoming junk mail by contacting the free Mailing Preference Service on 0345 034599
- Buy printers and photocopiers that have a double sided function - and ensure that people know how to use it
- Put documents on a central notice board instead of distributing multiple copies
- Edit documents on-screen rather than printing unnecessary draft copies
- Review mailing lists to ensure they are accurate and appropriate
- Use the smallest font size practicable and designs that use less paper

### CONSERVE ENERGY & WATER

[Significant savings can also be made by buying resource efficient goods - see Procuring Sustainable Products]

- Ensure you have enough meters installed and read them regularly to check on where most electricity and water is used; then make others aware and take action.
- Switch off lights when rooms are not in use and where security is not compromised (it is more efficient to switch off all lights (including fluorescent tubes) even when rooms are being vacated for a minute)
- Switch off computers and other powered equipment when they will be out of use for any length of time
- Locate desks where they will get most benefit from natural light
- Install thermostats, and ensure that they work, and are used. If people feel the need to open windows when the heating is on, find out why and see if there are more energy efficient ways of making people more comfortable.
- Use water saving devices such as automatic taps, low flush toilets and urinals and low volume showers- and if fitted make sure that they work
- Reduce water and energy use by filling kettles only with the minimum water needed, by mending dripping taps, and by ensuring that water saving devices work.
- Install signs reminding people not to leave lights on or taps running

## RECYCLE AND WASTE REDUCTION

- Join a waste paper recycling scheme
- Recycle printer cartridges and other office consumables
- Recycle office waste such as drinks cans, plastic cups and fluorescent tubes
- Send used computers, printers, and other electronic office equipment for refurbishment and recycling
- Recycle furniture - send for refurbishment or to another charity

## TRANSPORT

- Cut down on travelling to meetings- by holding telephone or video conferences instead - for the price of driving 10 miles to a meeting you can have five hours on the phone!
- Locate meetings readily accessible to public transport
- Where possible use surface public transport before using cars; and if you have to use a car, share it with someone else
- Use train or bus in preference to flying
- Track the use of private cars on business, publicise the people's mileage and reward those who use public transport the most
- Encourage people to walk or cycle to work by providing showers, safe bike storage etc
- Encourage public transport use by visitors - provide timetables and bus/train routes
- Use LPG in your organisation's vehicles- if you often make short journeys get a company bike.

## PROCURING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

The underlying principles of sustainable procurement are: Don't buy, buy less, use recycled or refurbished, acquire from sources managed sustainably that don't damage people or the environment. These principles are expressed in the following check list.

- Buy re-manufactured or re-filled cartridges for printers and copiers
- Buy re-furbished computer and other office equipment,
- Buy electrical equipment and light bulbs with the highest energy efficient ratings
- Switch electricity supplies to renewable
- If designing new buildings - use architects committed to sustainable designs
- Buy recycled paper or paper made from pulp coming from forests that are certified to be managed sustainably
- Buy re-cycled or re-manufactured furniture or furniture sourced from sustainably managed forests. Avoid furniture with plastics, MDF etc
- Use fair trade products, or food that is produced in ways that minimise damage to the environment. Use food with low food miles.
- Ensure that external venues for meetings and conference are managed sustainably