

# Frequently Asked Questions

## ■ Does recycling 'save' trees?

The simple answer is no. This often asked question implies that trees are under threat from the papermaker. In fact, because the papermaker generally uses the parts of the tree which other commercial users (such as builders and furniture makers) can't, it is not really appropriate to talk in terms of whole trees. The trees would still be harvested for these other uses.

## ■ Can we recycle forever?

Paper can only be recycled approximately 4-6 times. Recycling prolongs the life of the woodpulp fibres used to make the paper, but the fibres themselves have a finite life, after which time their strength and quality degenerate. Recycling will never totally eradicate the need for virgin fibre.

## ■ Are we depleting the world's forests to meet our demand for paper?

The industry is very aware of the need to maintain the balance of natural resources. Great steps have been taken to ensure that forest levels are maintained and, as a consequence, more trees are now being planted than are being harvested.

## ■ What about wildlife in particular in these commercial forests?

Every human activity is likely to affect wildlife. A conifer forest will support a different range of wild creatures from an oak or a beech wood. The forests now being felled were planted in a hurry in the 1940s after the war had revealed the weakness of UK being almost totally reliant on wood imports – but even they were far from devoid of life. The red squirrel, for example, entirely displaced by the grey squirrel over much of the country, thrives amongst conifers.

These forests are being replaced today by woodlands shaped into the contours of landscape, allowing generous fringes of different species (particularly native broadleaves) and designed to provide habitats to encourage and expand the variety of wildlife. Birds such as the crossbill, the redpoll, the siskin and the sparrowhawk have come back to Britain just because conifer forests are here.

The Forestry Commission actively promotes and protects wildlife. For example by introducing ponds and lakes, providing nesting sites and boxes and, in two imaginative projects, creating a visitor access where the activities of a family of otters can be observed, and building artificial floating islands as safe nesting places for the rare black throated diver.

- **Does recycling save vast amounts of energy?**

Recycling and papermaking are both industrial processes that require energy. In papermaking, the amount of energy needed depends on the process used. Mechanical pulping gives high pulp yield but energy consumption is high. The chemical pulping process, which is used by most papermakers worldwide, gives a lower yield but, by burning wood residues, bark and pulping liquors, it provides steam and power which are often in excess of the amounts needed for the pulping and papermaking processes. In the recycling process waste paper often has to be de-inked which is energy consuming. Therefore, rather than making a blanket statement that recycling saves energy, the levels of energy used or produced by each of the processes should be compared.

- **Do we use too much paper?**

Paper has many natural attributes which make it a very attractive material to use: it comes from a naturally renewable source; it is recyclable and it is biodegradable. The amount of paper used has certainly increased, and this is partly due to developments in technology which have made paper suitable for many more purposes than originally imagined. Paper plays a very important role in everyday life. However, it can be easy to take it for granted but, like all the world's resources, paper should never be used thoughtlessly or wastefully. Common sense should prevail.

**Don't use more paper than you need for the purpose. Whenever possible, recycle your paper once you have finished using it.**