frogsdesign help sheet 4
environmental issues

Printing is a mass-production process and will have an impact on the environment. We try to minimise this as far as possible by considering each stage from design to delivery. The first stage - design - is the most important in keeping the environmental impact low.

① Design

- Using electronic proofs (pdf files) sent to the client by email improves the efficiency of the design process and cuts out wasteful print and postage costs.
- Using standard European sheet sizes (A sizes) is generally less wasteful than using odd sizes, but the sheet can be used imaginatively (eg by cutting A4 into thirds).
- The larger the sheet-size of a publication, the more wastage there is likely to be. It is always a good idea to have an open mind about the format of a publication at the design stage (eg - 'Do we need an A4 leaflet or two A6 postcards?').
- The biggest wastage often occurs at the consumer-end of a publication (they throw it in the bin). Good design should keep this to a minimum.

② Paper

There are many different grades of recycled paper ranging from 100% post-consumer to a small percentage of recycled fibre included with virgin pulp. The post-consumer process involves washing off the ink using solvents. Other unpleasant chemicals (like bleaches) are often used in paper-manufacture. All paper-making involves a large quantity of water.

In general, the cost of printing on recycled paper is greater than 'standard' paper. This is because most printers will work from a large stock of standard papers. If using recycled paper incurs a substantial surcharge on a particular job, it may be worth considering alternative strategies like donating some of the difference to an environmental charity.

③ Ink

Standard offset-litho inks are petrochemical-based and contain volatile solvents. A few printers use water-based inks which are more environmentally friendly but much more expensive. The offset process also uses a fairly large quantity of water.

④ Transport

It is best to use a local printer where possible, and deliver directly to the address where the publications are to be stored.

Printing your publication will always incur the production of CO_2. You can help to offset this by planting trees.