

# Lean, green and sustainable offices

Membership of the Furniture Industry Sustainability Programme (FISP) is growing apace. But are manufacturers doing themselves any favours focusing so much time and energy on expensive awareness campaigns?

**T**he first UK office furniture manufacturer to use the BCFA (British Contract Furnishing & Design Association) Carbon Footprint Calculator and, now, an accredited full member of FISP (the Furniture Industry Sustainability Programme), Bisley wanted to know how important carbon footprint and green issues are to the interior design and office furniture industry. So they carried out a survey among architects, specifiers and dealers.

Asked to prioritise by product selection criteria, only 19% of people questioned rated 'green' as a top priority, with function and price equal favourites at 31% each. An encouraging 54% said Yes when asked "Are green issues raised by your customers?"; and an even more encouraging 62% said Yes when asked "Do green issues affect their product selection?"

The answers add to a growing body of evidence that all things green, lean and sustainable, including carbon footprinting, are now influencing purchasing decisions.

For Bisley, that would naturally equate to its manufacture of steel furniture because it is 100% recyclable. But taking a broader view, marketing manager Gary Carr says: "The whole environmental message is a powerful one in today's corporate environment. Many large corporates are putting into place an environmental policy to drastically reduce the size of their carbon footprint. The effect of this on tendering processes has to be considered". [[www.bisley.com](http://www.bisley.com)]

## Distinctive differentiation

Other full members who may use the distinctive FISP logo to differentiate their products from their non-sustainable competitors include Ahrend UK, Allermuir Ltd, Boss Design, Broadstock Office Furniture, Camira Fabrics, Carleton Furniture Group, Claremont Centre Ltd, Claremont Office Interiors, EFG Office Furniture, Eurotek Office Furniture, FFC Ltd, Flexiform Business Furniture, Gresham Office Furniture, Herman Miller, Komac Ltd, Komfort Workspace, Lee and Plumpton, Logic Office Group, Morgan Contract Furniture, Morris Furniture Group, Orangebox Office, Pledge Office Chairs, Rackline, Samuel Bruce, Senator International, Steelcase, Systems Seating, Techno a.s., Triumph (TBS), Vector Seating, Wagstaff Interiors Group.

For Steelcase, membership has led to a FISP award which acknowledges its 'Life Cycle Thinking' approach and sustainable manufacturing ethos and which complements its PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes) and ISO14001 certifications. Speaking of corporate pride in the achievements, UK MD Mark Spragg said: "It is a massive boost to everyone at Steelcase that these efforts are recognised by the UK's furniture industry association. Sustainability is a key issue in our industry and one that we at Steelcase take very seriously".



Left: Pledge focuses on its 'chain of custody' green credentials  
Right: WWF report on illegal woods imports

Evidence that environmental awareness campaigns are taking centre stage across the industry comes with the recent launch of a number of 'green' corporate brochures and product catalogues. An example that combines the two themes is the 'Environmental Seating Solutions' brochure which FISP and BCFA member Pledge introduced at Design Prima in June, when it celebrated the attainment of FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) – Chain of Custody certification. This provides the evidence that products originate from certified, well managed forests; and verifies they are not mixed with products from uncertified forests at any point in the supply chain, except under strict controls when percentage (%) labelling is being used.

"Pledge has been known for many years as a strong brand within the dealer community", says sales & marketing director Stephen Russell, "but we now have to take further steps to broaden our horizons to adapt to an ever-changing market place. Our policy is to meet and, where practical, exceed all relevant regulatory requirements and to manage the company's activities in ways which reduce the environmental impact to a practical minimum". [[www.pledgechairs.co.uk](http://www.pledgechairs.co.uk)]

Another Design Prima launch example is the Hands 'Stunning and Sustainable' Corporate Principles brochure which highlights the firm's FISP membership and ISO 14001:2004 certification as well as Club Green membership. It also highlights the company's ClimateCare

certification showing that, over the two years ending December 2007, Hands 'offset 302.58 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions in ClimateCare's CO<sub>2</sub> reduction projects in order to reduce the rate of global climate change'. [www.hands.co.uk]

Sustainability and climate change were also topics across the pond in June, with several companies at Neocon 2008 making it a key marketing focus. Haworth, for instance, released its third annual sustainability report, expanded this year to 44 pages to include a more comprehensive representation of its worldwide operations. It also highlights the company's successes and challenges in meeting its global commitment to sustainable business practices in product design, manufacturing and delivery, as well as the design and construction of its showrooms, corporate offices and manufacturing plants. [www.haworth.com]

One of the largest single-source online resources of pertinent information that Interior Channels came across was Knoll, another Neocon 2008 exhibitor. Well worth a visit to learn more about the various environmental programmes, the website includes a document for suppliers that identifies the species of wood, veneer, and solid lumber that are suitable for use on Knoll product that require FSC certification. [www.knoll.com]

### UK shamed in WWF report

A report published by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature shows that almost 20% of wood imported into the EU in 2006 came from illegal sources. Finland tops the list of importers, with the UK second, taking in 3.5 million of a total 31m cubic metres of illegal wood, most of which comes from Russia and China. But more shaming for the UK is that we import the biggest quantities of illegal timber furniture, finished wood products, sawnwood and plywood.

Clearly, the voluntary scheme is not working. Julia Young, Manager of the Forest and Trade Network at WWF-UK says the report is evidence of the need for the force of law: "Illegal logging reduces the protective function of forests, which frequently increases the risk of natural disasters such as floods and landslides and leads to deforestation, one of the main causes for climate change. As the UK clearly plays a major role in fuelling this illegal trade, the government needs to ensure the EU urgently introduces legislation to prevent illegal timber entering the EU - and thereby help protect the world's last remaining forests."

If the US Senate can pass a law to combat illegal wood imports, surely it is not beyond the wit of the European Commission led by the UK government to put words into legislative action. Not to do is simply paying lip service to the threat of climate change. ■

## Sustainable business wins

Proving the value of sustainable design, office design and refurbishment company Morgan Lovell has announced a project win to design and refurbish sustainable office space in north London for television production company Hat Trick Productions. Jimmy Mulville, MD of Hat Trick Productions Ltd, said, "We were very keen to give this job to a company that matched our ambitions and were mindful of our values and reputation. Morgan Lovell's credentials and desire to introduce sustainable design into the project pushed them ahead of the pack."

A visit to Morgan Lovell's revamped Soho office is proof of the many creative 'sustainable' opportunities available today. London office MD Andrew Bradley said: "Many people believe that it's impossible to combine sophisticated technology and sustainability. But often that's not the case. In our new office we wanted to show that advanced technology can sit comfortably beside eco-friendly design".

The new Soho office proves he's right. As well as LCD TVs and glass partitioning that goes opaque at the flick of a switch, the space includes kitchen worktops manufactured from yoghurt pots, carpets made from 80% recycled yarn, a 'smart' lighting system, eco-friendly paint and wallpaper and a 'heat recovery' system to redistribute heat only where it's needed. Thanks to the new design, the office has not only become a showcase for Morgan Lovell's work, it has also seen a 30% reduction in energy consumption". [www.morganlovell.co.uk]

A project recently completed by KI and Work Interiors was fitting out the new HBOS Harbourside building in Bristol, which was built from sustainable materials and has since been awarded a Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) mark of excellence.

The provision of efficient and sustainable office furniture solutions for 1500 staff plus many energy saving features make Harbourside HBOS's most sustainable building.



A sustainable environment for HBOS

A totally 'green' project, it even involved the old office furniture being donated to Green Works, an environmental charity that recycles and sells on old office furniture.

KI storage was specified as standard for the whole building to cut down future churn, while providing storage for all applications. It also has a high recycled content and comes with a lifetime guarantee, making it a durable and sustainable product. For the restaurant, KI supplied the Daylight chair. It has frames made from 100% recycled car battery plastic; has a 15-year guarantee; has been awarded the Japanese Environmental Association Eco Mark; and is Greenguard and LGA certified. [www.ki.com]