



Green photography

With environmental issues taking centre stage across the world, we look at how photographers can do their bit to become more eco-friendly while also boosting their business

WORDS John Hobson

Whatever you believe, it appears that climate change is happening - we live in an age where the finite nature of the earth's resources is ever more apparent. As photographers, we record much of the world's beauty in our pictures and now we need to do more to protect that beauty for future generations.

The good news is that there's a lot we can do to lessen the impact that we have on the earth and its resources. In time government legislation and tax policies will dictate that businesses are run in a sustainable fashion. By giving yourself a green makeover today you can pre-empt the legislation and, crucially, add that extra selling point to your business - you care about the environment, and that will be very appealing to a lot of people.

There's an increasing market for green businesses - just thumb through the adverts

in any national daily and you will see that a large number of businesses are marketing themselves on their green credentials. The general public is becoming increasingly environmentally aware and this is being reflected in its purchasing choices. Organic and ethical foodstuffs have never been so popular, and this trend is extending into non-food areas as well. By being eco-friendly this market opens up to you. You do need to be careful, however: there is an increased awareness of the concept known as 'green wash' - businesses using the green angle purely for profit while lacking genuine concern for the environment.

In the Office

The easiest places to start thinking about green issues are your home and office, and the key words here are: reduce, reuse, recycle.

- Look for stationery that is made from

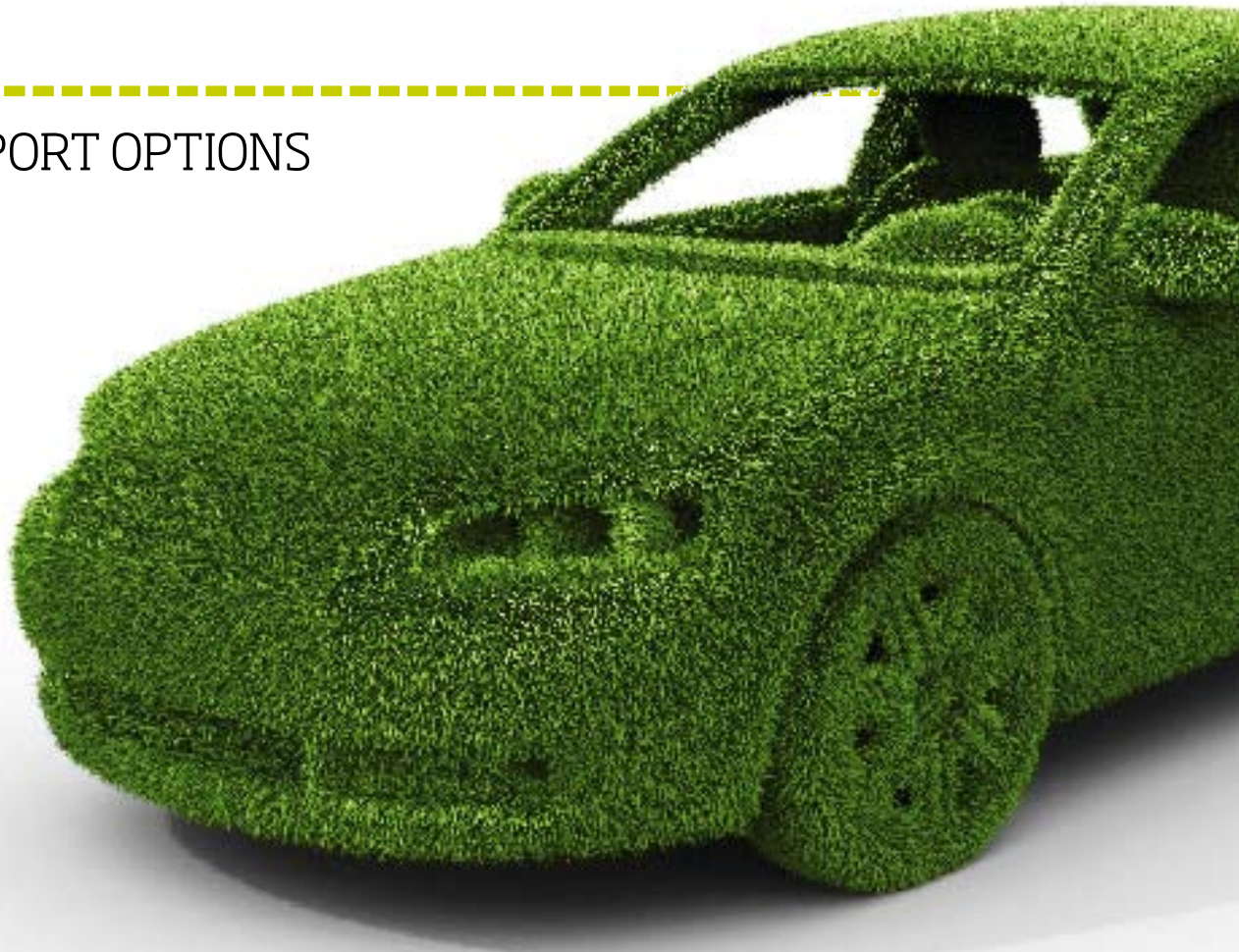
either recycled or FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) managed sources. If paper has been printed on only one side, keep it for scrap paper and put it back into your printer to use again for non-critical jobs.

- Don't forget that energy can be saved by turning off equipment (such as battery & phone chargers and computers) at the wall socket or unplugging when not in use rather than leaving them on standby.
- For your office's energy requirements you could think about switching to a green electricity tariff where the power is generated from renewable sources such as wind, hydro and solar. Most energy suppliers have some sort of green tariff - contact yours for more information.
- It also goes without saying that energy-saving lightbulbs are a good choice, and there's not even the hit of a high initial purchase cost that there used to be. >

GREEN TRANSPORT OPTIONS

For most professional photography work where time is of the essence, having your own car is essential, but it is worth considering other forms of transport where possible: even public transport can be a feasible option if you are travelling light. For travel around the UK trains are a good environmentally friendly alternative to flying, since they emit half the carbon compared to a plane and can often be more relaxing to boot - stations are in more convenient locations and it's frequently cheaper when booking in advance.

Where a car is required there are many ways of reducing emissions, and you should look at using a model which has good environmental credentials. Choosing a more efficient vehicle will also mean lower road tax and less money poured away at the pump - a major consideration, considering the



Printing

□ While the move to digital has done away with the nasty chemicals associated with film developing it's also raised a whole new set of environmental issues. Inkjet printers have a voracious appetite for cartridges which are ordinarily thrown away, ending up in land-fill sites. Using recycled cartridges can help here: whilst this wouldn't be recommended for jobs, such as fine art prints, where precise colour and longevity is important, recycled cartridges work just fine for everyday printing. Take them to a cartridge recycler and exchange them for freshly-filled recycled cartridges.

□ Continuous ink systems hold vastly more ink than a normal inkjet cartridge, so they don't need replacing as often and can be refilled when they do finally run out. They are ideal for use with photo printing where large quantities of ink will be used. Cost savings for volume work can be substantial. Better still is to avoid unnecessary printing and to use soft-proofing on your computer. By investing in a decent monitor colour calibrator - check out our feature later in this issue - you can avoid the need for printing just to check colour accuracy.

□ When choosing photo paper, truly eco-friendly choices are limited. Hahnemuhle recently launched a fine art inkjet paper which has a base comprising 90% bamboo and 10% cotton. Bamboo is a very fast-growing plant that is far more sustainable than trees. There are currently no mainstream suppliers of recycled or FSC-managed photo paper, but if you are



Websites such as PhotoVoice organise photo-journalism projects and training with marginalised and disadvantaged groups

getting a lab to print your work you could go to one which uses media such as Fujifilm's Crystal Archive paper which, Fuji claims, is chlorine-free. Recycled photo paper should be available in the UK soon.

Equipment

The move to digital has seen a much faster take-up of new technology.

A lot of toxic chemicals and a large amount of energy are used in the production of electronics. Also, many electronics are manufactured in Asian countries whose environmental, human rights and child labour laws are somewhat dubious. It's worth asking yourself whether you really need a new piece of equipment - or is what you have serving you perfectly well? Another option is to find a good alternative from the thriving second-hand market.

Once your current equipment has reached the end of its useful life you could consider donating it to charities such as Photo

Voice (www.photovoice.org) who organise photojournalism projects and training with marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

Batteries are a major source of pollutants so their use and disposal requires careful management. If you are using disposable batteries such as alkalines, stop now! Not only are these batteries harmful when dumped in land-fill sites and left to corrode and leak heavy metals, but they are a more expensive option than the latest generation of rechargeables. If you use disposables, ensure they are disposed of correctly.

Promoting Eco-friendly Values

Whilst availability of environmentally friendly products and services is increasing, there are still areas where it can be difficult or impossible to find a genuinely eco-friendly option. Don't give up - ask suppliers about the possibilities of providing environmentally friendly products or services in the future. In doing so you'll be raising their awareness of this growing market.

Finally

There are many ways that you can make your photography business more eco-friendly. And going green really can give your business a boost and save you money - so what's not to like? Whilst the differences that you alone make may seem small, just think of the impact that could be made if every business in the country implemented these suggestions - the positive environmental benefits would be massive. Don't wait - make your business green today! ☒

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Green photography



direction in which fuel prices are currently heading. And don't forget that keeping tyres at the correct inflation pressure, driving smoothly and keeping your car regularly serviced can further help to reduce your fuel bill and improve fuel efficiency.

Car Clubs

An increasingly popular alternative to car ownership is becoming a member of a car club and, for occasional car users, they have huge cost advantages over car ownership. Just think - no road tax to pay, no maintenance and MOTs to worry about and no purchase repayments to make. Cars can be hired by the hour, day or week, and there is usually a range of

models to choose from so you can chop and change depending on your needs. Need to transport a large amount of kit around? No problem - book an estate. Maybe you just have your photo rucksack for a wedding? Then book a smaller, less polluting vehicle.

The largest car club in the UK is City Car Club (www.citycarclub.co.uk) which has car clubs in nine cities across the UK. Prices start from just over £3 an hour, and you can even offset membership and drive charges against tax for further savings for your business.

Carbon Offsetting

Carbon offsetting is a bit of a buzz-word at the moment - put simply, it's a system whereby you can neutralise your carbon emissions (such as those produced from travel) by buying 'off-sets' which are then spent on projects such as reforestation or renewable energy projects.

There's some scepticism around carbon offsetting and

whether it does actually deliver any real environmental benefits. In reality, many of these projects would have happened anyway and carbon offsetting just provides an alternative source of funding for them, so the net positive impact is minimal. Friends of the Earth recommend that donations be made to overseas aid charities who work on either providing electricity to those who don't have it or who are working to save and protect forests that are under threat from deforestation.

Suppliers

Another factor worth considering is the transportation of goods around the world. By choosing suppliers closer to home not only will you be supporting local businesses and the local economy, but you'll also be cutting down on carbon emissions relating to the shipping of goods. Make sure that your customers are aware that you are supporting local businesses.

Car clubs have huge cost advantages over car ownership.

Profile John Hobson

www.freerangephotographic.com

When I established Free Range Photographic it was really important to me that I had eco-friendly values at the heart of the company. Being green is important to me in my everyday life, and I wanted my business to reflect that. Thinking up new ways to be eco-friendly is an exciting challenge, and something that I'll develop as the business grows.



Extracted from Free Range's Environmental and Ethical Policy:

"To help protect the environment Free Range is currently doing the following:

- Using 100% recycled paper for all stationery
- Using email or phone as a communication medium in preference to paper-based alternatives
- When travelling we use the train in preference to flying, and public transport in preference to a car where possible.
- Re-using paper that has only been printed on one side for rough work
- Using energy-efficient lightbulbs
- Have energy efficiency as a primary factor when choosing new office equipment - computers, monitors etc
- Turning off computers and monitors when not in use
- Using recycled printer cartridges (not for photo printing!)

We also donate 2% of the cost of each booking to an overseas aid charity."

I've already seen the benefits of marketing Free Range Photographic as a green business - a large number of customers were attracted to my services because of the business's eco-friendly values. I've also found it to be a great talking point at networking events, which means that people are more likely to remember Free Range Photographic over others. It definitely sets my business apart from others in my area in what is an increasingly crowded marketplace.

Useful contacts

- Find a green electricity supplier in your area:
www.greenelectricity.org
- Buy recycled inkjet cartridges for office printing and exchange your old ones:
www.cartridgeworld.com
- Buy a Lyson continuous ink system for your inkjet printer:
www.lyson.com
- Buy recycled and FSC managed business cards, letterheads and other stationery:
www.alocalprinter.com
- Donate your old photographic equipment to Photo Voice:
www.photovoice.org
- Waste Online has detailed information on recycling almost anything:
www.wasteonline.org.uk
- Calculate your carbon footprint:
www.google.co.uk/carbonfootprint
- Discover more ways of reducing your carbon footprint including lots of useful green credential calculators:
www.mygreenfootprint.co.uk
- Find out more about car clubs and see if one is operating in your area:
www.carclubs.org.uk