



Sustainability Report 2023

Summary

Covers Timber & Builders' Merchants is committed to minimising our impact on the environment. In order to achieve this we are constantly re-evaluating all aspects of the business, from sourcing products through to working to increase the efficiency of site and delivery management.

Procurement

- We work diligently to ensure that the maximum number of certified products are available at Covers, and all comply comfortably with British and European harmonised standards.
- The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) estimate that 34% of waste leaving construction sites is packaging. Working with Biffpack, Covers undertakes significant measures to reduce, re-use and recycle packaging in accordance with Government guidelines. Covers also recycles internally used materials as much as possible.



Timber

At Covers we continue to increase our stocks of Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC® C006044), and PEFC™ certified BMT-PEFC-0086, timber based products sourced from independently audited forests.

Covers is externally audited annually by BM TRADA to ensure compliance with the above certifications. Our staff are trained to understand the importance of securing the chain of custody, and the reasons behind the need for certified timber. In addition, Covers performs internal audits throughout the year.

All of our Global timber and timber based material suppliers are required to only provide us with legal material in accordance with United Kingdom Timber Regulations (UKTR) 2021.

As a company we endeavour to educate our customers about the benefits of utilising timber in construction wherever possible.

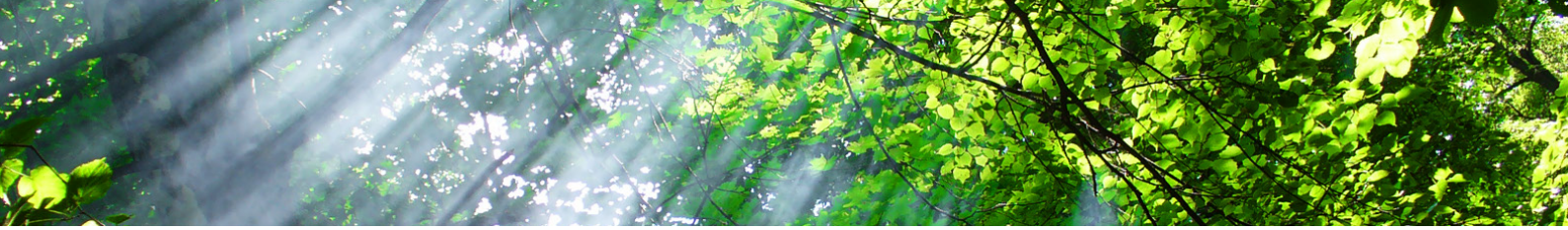
Timber is renewable, sustainable, recyclable, non-toxic, waste-efficient and biodegradable, meaning there is no other building material that matches its environmental credentials. Timber is also an excellent sequester of carbon and carbon dioxide.

All our softwood is sold as a MINIMUM of 70% FSC® or PEFC certified.

We continue to increase the proportion of our certified hardwood, devoting staff to check every inward delivery for quality.

We apply the same exacting standards on the purchase of all our sheet materials. We stock certified plywoods from sources around the globe.





Operations

Depots ~ Electricity

- Since the end of 2011, Covers has fitted solar panels to the roofs of most of our depots. These produced 1.315MWh in 2020, saving around 717 tonnes of CO₂.
- We replace lighting throughout all depots with new energy efficient solutions. We estimate that this represents in excess of 1/3 saving of electricity consumption in each area of replacement.
- All new depots are fitted with lumen time switches and movement controlled sensors and we are committed to retrofitting these systems to our existing buildings and yards. As such part of warehouses that are not used, do not get illuminated, representing a significant saving on energy consumption.
- We continue to install Ultra Low Consumption LED lighting across our depots, following successful trials in 2018.
- Surveys undertaken to identify further efficiencies to minimise our electrical consumption

Management

- All new depots are fitted with high specification insulation to achieve a greater level of thermal performance.
- Our Chichester kitchen showroom is heated using air-source heat pumps, an extremely efficient heating method.
- We actively encourage our staff to identify areas where energy is being used inefficiently and to work together to identify the most beneficial solution.
- We are committed to working towards a Net Zero Carbon future

Transport

- We are constantly searching for new ways to improve the efficiency of our depots. We completed a review of our central distribution hub and subsequently have made significant line management adjustments in order to reduce the number of on-site vehicle movements and maximise efficiency. Similar consultations are to be carried out across the group.
- A reconfiguration of our inter branch distribution system has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of miles travelled by our vehicles in order to keep our depots stocked.
- We are committed to constant renewal of our fleet of vehicles to take advantage of the improvements in fuel efficiency available from modern engines. Increasing the number of multi-purpose vehicles will also help to reduce the total miles travelled by our fleet.
- Our new transport management system facilitates more efficient route planning for our delivery network, reducing the number of miles travelled per delivery. Our tracking system enables us to monitor accurately our fuel consumption and efficiency, enabling effective targeting in years to come.
- Additionally there is a constant renewal of our Plant & machinery equipment again taking full advantage of the latest improvements in engine technology. In recent years we have invested heavily in electric propelled machines cutting emissions and the overall impact on the environment.
- We are committed to investment in alternative fuelled vehicles including Hybrid and full electric to help reduce our overall carbon footprint
- Interest free loans for bicycle purchase are available to all staff members.



Waste Management

- Covers have implemented a new waste management and recycling system. The results have been dramatic, effectively doubling the proportion of our waste that is recycled. Over 80% of the waste produced by the group is now reused or recycled. This represents a direct carbon saving in excess of 300 tonnes per annum. Half of our depots now put less than 5% of their waste into landfill.
- Wood waste is our single largest waste component. We endeavour to minimise this through re-using as much as possible, however not everything can be reused on-site. We produce around 8 tonnes of wood shavings per day, all of which is reused in the equine industry. Covers now recycles over 90% of our wood waste.
- We use organic wood treatments for the treatment of our timber.

Covers Eco Energy Centre

The South-East's first such centre, the Covers Eco Energy Centre is an exemplary demonstration of the latest environmentally friendly technology for the home and garden. The centre is used as an education facility as well as a showroom, informing the public and the trade alike about the ways in which homes can become more energy efficient, reduce carbon emissions and water use and obtain a higher home energy rating. We supply hundreds of eco-products from all the industry leading providers as well as innovative niche sectors.

We are committed to continuing the growth seen in this sector. Through increased advertising and education, we hope to have a significant impact on the energy efficiency of the housing stock in our region.

Education

- Our new management training scheme incorporates instruction on environmental impact assessment and how to identify energy efficiency improvement potential. This demonstrates our commitment to future sustainability improvements through ensuring that our managers are aware of the benefits available from improved energy efficiency and minimising our ecological impact.
- The specially trained staff in our innovative Eco Energy Centre run regular free workshops for employees, customers and anyone else interested in the innovations in the market. These cover a wide range of topics, but focus upon educating the community about the ways in which they can reduce their environmental impact and save money.

Summary of Targets

- From 2017, to sell all softwood to a minimum of 70% FSC® or PEFC certified
- Continue to offer an increasing proportion of hardwood as certified
- Dramatically increase the level certification of our sheet materials
- Improve our monitoring of our transport network in order to increase efficiency
- Continue to identify energy saving opportunities and further invest in alternative fuelled equipment and Eco technologies



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