

SEEDA Sustainable Business Awards aim to encourage and promote a sustainable approach to business in the South East region through celebrating excellence, significant achievement and through the dissemination of best practice.

CASE STUDY

SONY UNITED KINGDOM NATIONAL OPERATIONS CENTRE

Company Background

Sony's National Operations Centre in Thatcham employs 350 staff on a 17-acre Industrial Estate, established in the 1980s. Some 90% of the site is used for warehousing, while the remaining 10% is office space.

ACTION HISTORY

Sony's operation at Thatcham achieved ISO14001 in 1998. Since beginning to work towards this standard, Sony has worked hard to reduce the amount of waste it sends to landfill. Benchmarking against national standards was instrumental in achieving this. The Company has a policy to include environmental considerations in all purchasing and it has produced a list of '100 ways to improve environmental performance' to help its contractors, especially caterers and cleaners, to operate more efficiently and to reduce their overall environmental impact.

Energy/Fuel Savings

As a key step towards improving energy performance, Sony assessed the relative efficiency of its buildings against national averages; this showed that a typical office would have an annual energy use of £14/square metre, while its site at Thatcham was using £8/m², which corresponded to the 'Good practice' figure.

The following measures helped to achieve this result:

- the monitoring of energy use
- a switch-off procedure that works on a 'coloured dot' system. Out of hours, the on-site security staff patrol the premises and switch off anything that shows a green dot
- All photocopiers and printers are fitted with power-saving time switches
- The installation of a new energy efficient boiler, with power factor correction systems which balance the load over the 3-phase power system, increasing the efficiency of the equipment from the previous 87% to 98%
- Bulk lamp replacements with energy-efficient bulbs

Waste

The use and disposal of goods is tightly monitored and performance data are fed back to staff through noticeboards, email and newsletters. Regular training also ensures that everyone understands both the importance and methods of recycling and energy saving.

Key Achievements

- ❖ Energy use per square metre is approximately 40% less than the national average benchmark figure
- ❖ Reduction of general waste to landfill - the Company achieved a 25% reduction in 2000
- ❖ 205 tonnes of cardboard baled and recycled so far, achieving overall savings of on average £784 per month
- ❖ Water use reduced by almost a third since 1996
- ❖ Staff visits to a local waste disposal site to raise awareness and encourage active participation in waste reduction schemes

Since the installation of a rubbish baler at Thatcham in July 1999, significant cost savings have been made in disposal of cardboard waste. 205 tonnes of cardboard have been baled and recycled so far, achieving overall savings, on average, of £784 per month.



Environmental Improvements and Related Benefits include

- General waste reduction to landfill – achieved 14% reduction in 1999 and 25% reduction in 2000
- Hazardous and special waste – achieved 100% re-processing and reduction to landfill
- 'Written-off' product – 80% recycling expected in 2001
- Wooden pallets – achieved 75% reduction to landfill in 2000
- Packaging, including stretch-wrap – expected to achieve 60% reduction to landfill in 2001
- Computer equipment – achieved 50% reduction to landfill in 2000
- TV stands/cabinets – achieved 20% reduction to landfill by returning to manufacturer in 2000
- Plastic cups are collected by the Save a Cup recycling company, and turned into items such as pens, rulers, cassette cases etc
- Scrap metal is collected by a scrap metal dealer

- Toner cartridges are collected for refurbishment and reuse
- Damaged pallets are repaired on site and reused; pallets which cannot be repaired are sent for recycling
- Fluorescent tubes are recycled using a nationwide recycling scheme, which ensures the hazardous mercury is disposed of safely. Staff are educated to realise that many kinds of lamps (eg fluorescent, high-pressure sodium) contain mercury, cadmium and many other highly toxic substances, and made aware of the benefits of disposing of them properly
- 10 tonnes of end-of-life Sony products are collected in containers at Thatcham each month. The containers are transported to a recycling facility in Singapore, where all the plastics and metal (including precious metals) are recycled
- 300 broken cathode ray tubes from all over the UK are collected at Thatcham each month for recycling
- Cardboard packaging in which goods arrive on site is shredded and used for packaging – a classic closed loop initiative
- Waste solder from a deflection yoke process is classified as special waste and is returned to the supplier, where it is recycled

Water

Water use at Thatcham has been reducing on an annual basis since 1996. Compared to the Water Company benchmark figure of 25 litres per day/per person, Sony has reduced its usage from 28 litres to 20 litres per person per day. This has been achieved through measures such as installing water saving devices in all toilet cisterns, and educating staff on the importance of water efficiency.

Community/Other

Company staff are encouraged to take part in community and voluntary work as well as contributing to local schemes to raise money for charities:

- Students from a local school for the deaf were helped with their A level studies by spending a week at Sony studying the Environmental Management system
- Twenty staff have taken part in the 'time to read' scheme where they listen to school children read
- Staff took part in Global Volunteer Day, working on countryside projects, and raise money through sponsored events, one of which was to row, bike and walk the distance from London to Paris

- Sony sponsored a Local Agenda 21 'Festival for the Future', where staff put on an environmental display for the general public showing their commitment to environmental issues
- made roost sites for bats by placing bat boxes in the trees around the Thatcham site

Staff

Sony communicates its environmental policy to staff via induction training, notice boards, on-going training, manuals, displays and environmentally themed days. The Company has organised staff visits to a local waste disposal site, to raise awareness of waste issues and encourage active participation in waste reduction schemes.

Transport

Video conferencing has been installed at Sony sites to avoid unnecessary use of vehicles for meetings.

The Distribution Centre at Thatcham is responsible for 32 heavy goods vehicles, which transport products around the country. The Company has outsourced much of its fleet of vehicles, on the grounds that it leads to greater efficiency.

Packaging

On a global level Sony's research and development departments are aiming to constantly improve their products environmentally. Since 1991 Sony has packaged many of its products in pulp-molds made of 100% recycled paper instead of polystyrene foam. In 1996 Sony joined forces with a paper products manufacturer in developing Cell Mold, a new packaging material made from recycled paper and featuring shock-absorption properties equivalent to those of polystyrene foam. Since 1999 Sony has used this buffer material employing pulp-molds instead of polystyrene foam in all its packaging. Sony has also partnered with a paper products manufacturer in developing a 'one piece box' made by folding a single sheet of cardboard and requiring no polystyrene foam.



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