

Managing the Issues

PRINT

Our Suppliers

We have been working with our suppliers for over a decade on improving the environmental integrity of our supply chains. Our own environmental management programme called QUEST was established to address the impacts of our suppliers, setting standards for environmental performance.

QUEST for Suppliers

Since 1990 we have insisted that our suppliers be aware of the environmental and social issues associated with their products and that they have a written environmental policy and action plan to address them.

Our supplier assessment programme started with the 'Supplier Environmental Audit' (SEA). In 1991 less than 10% of our suppliers had produced meaningful environmental policies and action plans. The SEA resulted in good progress being made but we wanted to develop the process further.

In 1995 we replaced the SEA with QUEST. QUEST is an acronym that stands for QUality, Ethics and SafeTy and is B&Q's internal environmental management system. Through QUEST we assess the quality, environmental and social performance of our supply base via 10 principles, five of these are based on environmental and social performance and five are based on quality performance.

For each QUEST principle suppliers are awarded a grade from A–E. An 'A' grade is reserved for leadership, commitment and innovation and a grade E for a major problem which contravenes our environmental policies. The grades in between reflect good or average performance accordingly.

To meet our Millennium targets we assessed and advised over 500 suppliers on their environmental performance which resulted in 84% of our suppliers meeting or exceeding our performance targets.

During 2001 we assessed over 100 additional new suppliers through QUEST, which has resulted in the total percentage of compliant suppliers decreasing to 77%. However, new suppliers are required to reach the relevant grade within a year of supplying B&Q.



Results for each principle at the end of 2001

QUEST Principle 6	Environmental policy and awareness (Grade B or above)	77%
QUEST Principle 7	Environmental action and achievements (Grade B or above)	77%
QUEST Principle 8	Working conditions for factories in developing countries (Grade B or above)	71% (those applicable)
QUEST Principle 9	Packaging and environmental claims (Grade B or above)	87%
QUEST Principle 10	Timber and other wooden products (Grade A or above)	75% (those applicable)

Managing the Issues

PRINT

Maintaining and building on our achievements will be key in preparing our business for an increasingly sustainable future and QUEST will continue to be central to our Social Responsibility programme. To incorporate changing trends and sustainable development issues we recently reviewed and updated the QUEST principles that suppliers are assessed against.

New standards include:

For those suppliers that operate or wish to operate under the external environmental management system ISO 14001, we now recognise this standard within the QUEST assessment process. However, suppliers must comply with QUEST standards in addition to the ISO standards.

Building on the progress of the ethical standards that QUEST has helped us to achieve, B&Q created a new 'Operational Standards for supply chains'. It sets inspirational standards for us and our suppliers to assess and monitor factories all over the world, not just in developing countries and now forms the basis of the QUEST eight principle. Suppliers will be able to use the code of conduct as a guide to factory assessment and inspiration for factory improvements.

We have expanded the QUEST Ten principle from only addressing the timber issue to include all B&Q product policies such as timber, paint, peat and toxics and is now called Product Integrity. Suppliers will report progress and be assessed against their contribution to relevant B&Q policies covered by this principle.

Sustainable development is now incorporated within QUEST, which will reflect those suppliers who are preparing for the challenges of an increasingly sustainable future. They will need to provide evidence of this through their policies, action and the way they run their business across a broad spectrum of economic, social and environmental issues.

The environmental principles have been changed to reflect these revisions and our new approach. Below are the new B&Q environmental and social priorities:

QUEST Principle 6	Environmental policy and awareness
QUEST Principle 7	Environmental track record and targets
QUEST Principle 8	Supply chain transparency
QUEST Principle 9	Packaging and labelling
QUEST Principle 10	Product integrity

The other five QUEST principles continue to address quality related matters and B&Q's Quality department has a dedicated team working on supplier evaluation.

QUEST will continue to maintain standards and inspire improvements that will ensure we continue to reduce our impact on the environment and improve the quality of life for the people making and buying our products around the world.



Managing the Issues

[PRINT](#)

Our stores reducing their impacts

We have over 320 stores operating nationwide. Their day-to-day trading have impacts on both the environment and the local communities in which they operate. We are dedicated to reducing the impacts our stores have and our teams in store work hard to support this aim.

QUEST for Stores

Initially set-up to address the environmental impacts of our suppliers, the development of the QUEST environmental management programme saw it expand to include our stores. Launched in 1997, QUEST for Stores was introduced to address the environmental impacts of store operations. Emulating QUEST for Suppliers, it has been based on key principles addressing environmental and community issues, such as waste minimisation, staff awareness, energy efficiency and community interaction.

Stores are assessed against these principles and graded in accordance with their performance and achievements. As part of the programme, a series of performance targets was set for stores to reach over a three year period. Based on continuous improvement levels stores were required to achieve the three Star standard in 1997, Four Star in 1998 and Five Star in 1999. We saw 97% of stores achieve the challenging Five Star standard in 1999. Stores are now expected to maintain this standard as a minimum.

The assessment has now been strengthened to reflect sustainable development indicators and the requirements of the standard are also included within other quality assessments/audits within B&Q. Up to the end of 2000, 93% of stores maintained their performance. The remaining 7% have action plans in place to bring them up to and sustain the Five Star standard. In 2001 we saw no change to the previous years' achievements. However, we re-evaluated the assessment process to enable us to drive more operational ownership and facilitate closer and more consistent verification. To this end performance will now monitored by regional management teams.

Addressing these areas provides opportunities for B&Q to:

- reduce disposal costs by increasing the amount of waste each store donates or recycles.
- raise staff awareness of the environmental issues associated with the business.
- build partnerships with community groups in local area.

Community interaction, Crime, Communication, Wildlife, Climate Change, Resources and Waste, Transport, Water Quality, Management and Staff Awareness are the principles that reflect sustainable development indicators. Performance standards have been set for each principle and stores will focus on these standards going forward.



Managing the Issues

[PRINT](#)

Environmental Champions

Although the Store Manager is responsible for the store's overall performance, the Environmental Champion plays a supportive role in the store's environmental programme. The Champion's position is open to any member of staff interested in environmental and community issues. As the duties performed are incorporated in their day to day role, the investment from each Champion will vary, however, typical activities include helping the Store Manager to maintain the QUEST for Stores standards, communicating issues through regular activity weeks and co-ordinating environmental and community projects

Some of our Champions do get more involved with the role which can broaden their activities, for example, developing and maintaining links with many different local organisations, such as charities and schools, creating government partnerships to support local initiatives and through inspiration engage others to get involved in the programme. But whatever the level of commitment a great deal of the success of the programme goes to their hard work and commitment.

In 2000, all our Environmental Champions were invited to attend an organised update seminar to ensure they were informed on relevant issues. In 2002, we have organised regional workshops, to which we have also invited Store Managers, where we will update them on key developments in our Social Responsibility programme.



Managing the Issues

PRINT

Store Waste

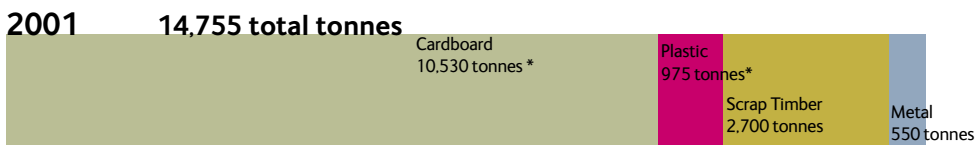
Waste minimisation is an important part of the QUEST for Stores programme. Reductions in the thousands of tonnes of waste our stores produce and the costs associated with disposal can be made through simple waste procedures. The first route of waste reduction is donation to local groups such as schools and charities, this not only reduces disposal costs but helps the local community at the same time. If donation is not possible, stores follow the recycling route which involves separating materials into specific storage containers ready to be collected and backhauled to our recycling centres.

Cardboard and plastic transit packaging is backhauled from stores to seven regional consolidation centres across the country for recycling. Timber and broken pallet waste is also returned via backhaul to recyclers where it is chipped and re-made into MDF (medium density fibreboard). Returnable wooden pallets are now used to transport stock and reduce pallet waste. Metal strapping and unsaleable metal products, aluminium cans, plastic vending cups and office paper are also recycled.

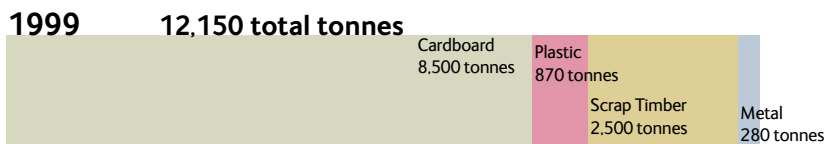
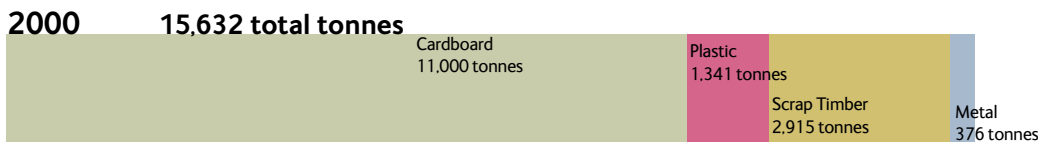
Customer recycling facilities are also available in most stores and by supporting the government's 'Rethink Rubbish' Campaign, we are working to provide clear guidance on why and how customers can recycle and demonstrating how B&Q can help them to achieve this.



B&Q store waste recycling 1999 – 2001



* 2001 figures show a reduction due to faulty machinery



With the exception of metal, the 2001 figures are slightly lower than they were in 2000. This was largely a consequence of moving our recycling operations from a single location and expanding them to our seven distribution centres across the country. Now that this equipment is fully commissioned, recycling volumes have been increasing during 2002.

In addition to sustaining the Five Star standard, stores will have the opportunity to apply for a Better Neighbour Award standard. This involves stores working towards broader standards that move closer towards sustainable development such as initiatives with local housing quality, alternative transport opportunities for staff and customers and achieving negligible waste. This standard is the maximum we believe that a store can achieve within a five year continual development programme. We already have several stores working towards this award.

Managing the Issues

[PRINT](#)

Staff training and awareness raising

In 2001, we developed a new e-learning programme, specifically targeted at social responsibility issues. This two module programme is designed to be interactive, informative and enjoyable, and aims to enable our staff to understand the issues, to communicate those issues to our customers and understand how they can contribute to our social responsibility programme. We are able to monitor which staff have undertaken the modules, and how well they have scored on the regular self-assessment pages.