



Environment Matters

Steps on the carbon ladder

LAUREL BRUNNER checks out the green credentials of two newspapers printers, one very large (Newsprinters) and one quite small (La Presse de la Manche)

ECO-WARRIORS just love the printing industry – all those dead trees, all those stinking solvents – and because of the high volumes and the fleeting value of their content, newspapers are an especially popular target. After all, newspapers are printed on polluting paper by massive high-speed, energy-hungry presses. Their distribution relies on extensive heavy duty road and air transport and, because time is of the essence, everyone involved must rely on a maelstrom of electronics.

It should all add up to an environmental nightmare. So, with that in mind, we recently visited two newspapers and discovered that it's not that simple. There's a good deal more to understanding the carbon footprint of a newspaper than just measuring its individual footprint.

A carbon footprint is the sum of all greenhouse gas emissions an entity generates. The calculation includes electricity used to produce and support the entity, plus direct and indirect emissions.

If we want to work out how to measure a newspaper's carbon footprint, we need to know much more. We need to start gathering lots of objective data.

Newsprinters, the newspaper printing division of News International, in Broxbourne and La Presse de la Manche, a subsidiary of Ouest-France, a privately owned French regional newspaper in Cherbourg, operate at the very opposite extremes of newspaper production, yet both are striving to reduce their carbon footprint. Newsprinters Broxbourne site produces 22 million newspapers a week, while La Presse de la Manche has a daily circulation of 36,000 copies.

The development of the 40 acre site at Broxbourne has been well publicised and is the largest of Newsprinters' three new facilities in the UK. All three sites are carbon neutral using energy from renewable sources and offsetting the rest, currently some 46,567 tonnes, through

a direct investment in a wind power project in India.

At Broxbourne, carbon trading is a dedicated function and all three sites have regular auditing of staff transport. They also provide free staff shuttle buses from local stations according to traffic needs. In addition, newsprint trailers have direct access to the plants for paper delivery and waste paper removal, minimising the number of empty trucks leaving the plant and maximising all loads.

Apart from basics such as sensor-driven lighting in all areas and insulation, the company has sound-proofed its press halls and has built an acoustic tunnel to reduce noise pollution. Lorries use this tunnel late at night when they collect the newspapers for transport to 100 distribution depots which serve 55,000 sales outlets throughout Britain, the furthest depot being Bodmin and Redruth in Cornwall.

Broxbourne uses 3,500 reels of paper every week (300,000 tonnes a year). It consists of a mix of virgin and recycled papers sourced primarily from Aylesford Newsprint, Norske Skog and Stora Enso: the Newsprinters site in Knowsley uses 100 per cent recycled paper and the Eurocentral site near Glasgow prints 50 per cent recycled.

Newsprinters has outsourced plate imaging to Agfa Graphics, paying the company to produce, for example, around 38,500 imaged plates a week in Broxbourne. Given the number of plates involved and Newsprinters' commitment to minimising its carbon footprint, chemistry-free plates would seem a logical step.

Sadly, the current generation of Agfa's N-92VCF chemistry-free plate cannot yet be imaged fast enough for the required 200 plates an hour output, nor are these plates robust enough for the number of page impressions required. However, Newsprinters says that it would be happy to use chemistry-free plates if they can do the job, and is relying on Agfa to make this transition when its plate technology can meet Newsprinters' production demands. The two companies have a 15 year contract which includes five yearly reviews, so at some point a transition to chemistry-free is likely.

We asked Allan Wain if this massive investment in print has managed to halt the decline in the company's printed newspaper circulation. It isn't yet clear that it has but it has yielded other benefits as he explains.

"It gives the editorial and commercial people the opportunity to maintain circulation. These presses give us the opportunity to use colour on every page and to give readers more colour and better layouts".

Au Contraire

La Presse de la Manche has not invested one billion dollars to improve its competitiveness and carbon footprint. However, this far smaller newspaper in Normandy is perhaps more typical of the wider industry and, without the Murdoch fortune, it is perhaps taking even bolder steps.

La Presse de la Manche is a tabloid newspaper published in a single edition with an average

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● Press hall at Le Presse de la Manche

pagination of 32, requiring approximately 70 broadsheet plates a night. The newspaper employs 127 people and it is the first newspaper in France to go to chemistry-free platemaking.

According to Herve Pannier, technical director, La Presse de la Manche chose Agfa's technology 'because it offered the possibility to install the same chemistry-free and processed plate lines'. This meant that initially the newspaper could also in parallel two manual plate lines using Agfa's Advantage XS platesetters. The newspaper has now switched over entirely to chemistry-free platemaking.

Apart from the green benefits, the primary driver was cost savings says Pannier.

"We chose the plates for ecological reasons, and to lose a processing stage and for reduced waste. With the old processing system, we cleaned it weekly and so had extra cost and less simplicity".

Agfa also supplies the newspaper with software for colour management, plus Sublima screening and Arkitex output management.

For printing, La Presse de la Manche has nine aged Solna units, a monochrome and the rest two and three colours. However, there are plans to replace these with three new towers within the next six months. It is considering presses from Goss, Solna, Tensor or DGM Manugraph. Price, energy, ink and consumables usage will be the deciding factors as La Presse de la Manche wants to continue to improve its carbon footprint.

Recycling is obviously a key part of the newspaper's philosophy. Pannier says: "We try to say to people in manufacturing to be green for lights and office waste. This gets recycled but it's harder for lights because the newspaper is open all the time".

They do recover all waste ink, solvents and cleaners which are all sent off for recycling. Rather than selling waste paper to paper recycling businesses, the newspaper passes it for free to Emmaus, a world-wide secular social organisation dedicated to countering social exclusion and providing services to the homeless. It sells on the waste to raise revenue for its organisation.

The newspaper is looking into ways of improving its internal energy usage. However, this will not be straightforward since it is located in the centre of Cherbourg and is therefore subject to planning restrictions on solar and wind power installations. It could also result in neighbour hostility due to the damage such installations might do to Cherbourg's very pretty skyline.

However, France has committed to renewable energy with an approach based on feed-in tariffs and a tendering procedure for large energy intensive projects. It should therefore be possible for the newspaper to buy green energy from suppliers such as EDF but it would be at a premium.



● Newsprinters Broxbourne

