

Boots UK Developments in Sustainable Packaging

When it comes to integrating sustainable development aspects into the products that Boots UK make and sell we take a holistic view of the entire product life cycle. This all embracing approach, known as the “Product Journey” considers issues affecting the product from product design through sourcing of raw materials, production and retailing. How consumers use the products and what happens to them at “end of life” are also important stages in the product journey.

Ensuring a responsible approach to packaging is part of this process. We design all our packaging to ensure that the optimum amount is used: not too much and not too little either, as this could lead to product damage and waste.

We also need to consider the impact of materials used in the packaging and what happens to it after use. Therefore we were the first UK health and beauty retailer to use post consumer recycled plastic in the bottles used for our Botanics and Ingredients shampoos and conditioners. This project started in 2006 involved rigorous testing at Boots UK to ensure that there was no detrimental effect on product quality. Indeed the recycled bottles are indistinguishable in appearance from the previous packaging. Since launching the new packaging over 5 million bottles of shampoo have been produced with recycled material and two new product ranges will be introduced in 2008.

Recently we have worked with the Carbon Trust to measure and reduce the carbon footprint of some of our products. As a result we were the first retailer to participate in the Carbon Trust’s carbon labelling scheme, launching products in our Botanics range with greatly reduced carbon footprints.

The packaging used to deliver products to our stores must not be forgotten either. Our “Singles to Store” system replaces the traditional cardboard transit packaging with reusable containers thereby reducing “back of store waste”.

We have also been working on a number of new projects aimed at creating innovative new product and packaging ideas that will be more sustainable. This includes a joint DEFRA funded project with Loughborough University to create innovative refillable new packaging styles.