

Case Study: M for Mutual

# Building society magazine successfully converts to 100% recycled paper



**M for Mutual is a full-colour thrice yearly magazine available free to members of Britannia Building Society. Published for Britannia by major contract publisher Redwood, it focuses on a range of lifestyle topics, including financial, home-buying and other products/services available from Britannia. Each edition is 32 pages long, plus a four-page cover, and has a circulation of around 120,000.**

When first introduced, Britannia's magazine was printed on paper made from 100% virgin pulp. It is now produced on paper made from 100% recovered fibre (90gsm for the inside pages and 150gsm for the cover), using a heat-set web offset (HSWO) process.

*'The 100% recycled paper behaves almost exactly like a virgin paper'*

## Key Facts

- Britannia Building Society's magazine M for Mutual is printed on paper with 100% recycled content.
- Using recycled paper has not affected the look or feel of the magazine, with no negative feedback received from its readership.
- The switch from virgin to recycled paper has been completely cost-neutral.
- Making the change has helped Britannia to progress its environmental agenda and broader CSR strategy.

M for Mutual maintains high production standards. The magazine carries adverts for Britannia products/services which demand excellent print quality. Overall, the magazine aims to grab the reader's attention by incorporating strong, vibrant colours as well as images that 'leap off the page'. This makes it essential that the paper provides both a good surface to carry the ink weight and a bright base to ensure good contrast.

## Motivation to 'go recycled'

Improving environmental performance is a key driver for Britannia. Its Group Environment Policy forms an important component of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy. Switching M for Mutual to recycled paper was therefore an excellent way of making a significant contribution to Britannia's ethical goals.

*“Moving to recycled paper hasn’t meant compromising our design or production values”*

**Colette Mahon,  
Redwood**

Redwood produces a number of publications on recycled paper for a variety of organisations. Based on this experience, the company was well aware that selecting a suitable paper for M for Mutual would mean ensuring that the stock met a range of quality and production criteria.

The paper had to have at least 75% recycled content in order to comply with Britannia’s environmental requirements and to carry the NAPM (National Association of Paper Merchants) logo, but its whiteness had to compare favourably with coated wood-free paper made from virgin fibre. While colour, look and feel were of paramount importance, so were considerations such as availability of supply and the need to ensure just-in-time delivery.

Another overriding aim was to identify a product that cost the same or less than an equivalent virgin paper. Britannia and Redwood also took the view that the product should have secured formal, authoritative certification of its environmental credentials.

#### **The process involved**

Redwood is responsible both for buying the paper used in M for Mutual and for delivering it to the printer, St Ives Plymouth Ltd. When preparing a shortlist of recycled-content papers potentially suitable for the magazine, Redwood included a number of products that it knew the printer had previously worked with. St Ives Plymouth then conducted a series of trials using the shortlisted papers, carried out as a run-on to the magazine’s regular print run and funded by the printer and the paper supplier.

Based on these trials, Redwood selected Eural SuperSilk as the best option. This is a 100% recycled-fibre paper manufactured in France from de-inked pulp. While there is a slight difference in shade compared with coated wood-free paper, Redwood judged that Eural SuperSilk would meet Britannia’s quality requirements and that the readers of M for Mutual would be happy with the magazine’s look and feel when printed on this environmentally friendly paper.

Both the European Paper Merchants’ Association (EUGROPA) and France’s Association des Producteurs et Utilisateurs de Papiers Recyclés (APUR) have certified the paper to carry their recycled-paper logos. The Eural SuperSilk product chosen for M for Mutual has also secured a Recycled Paper Logo from the UK’s National Association of Paper Merchants (NAPM). Because the dimensions of the publication (26cm x 23cm) are not a standard A4 size, the turn-round time for ordering the paper is 4-6 weeks.

The first issue of M for Mutual produced on the paper was published in 2005. Following the switch, Redwood carefully assessed the printed results issue by issue until the paper had ‘bedded down’. This is standard company procedure whenever a change to a completely new paper takes place. Each edition of the magazine is also subjected to a comprehensive post-issue review looking at every aspect of quality, including reprographics and inks as well as paper performance.

*“The recycled paper runs well and doesn’t pose any finishing problems”*

**Jerry Westall, St Ives  
Plymouth Ltd**



*“The paper could be suitable for a number of our weekly publications”*

Jeremy Bull, EMap Ltd

### Results and perceptions

In terms of production, the 100% recycled paper behaves almost exactly like a virgin paper. With only a possible hint of increased ink consumption, it does not present any ‘runnability’ problems and finishing performance is equally good. On one occasion, however, a technical problem at the paper mill meant that 150gsm stock for the magazine’s cover could not be supplied and, at short notice, virgin paper had to be used instead.

In terms of quality, introducing recycled paper has not been detrimental to the look or feel of the magazine. The art director responsible for M for Mutual has noticed a slight reduction in print quality, but this has not had any significant impact on the magazine’s design values or overall character. Indeed, no negative feedback has been received from readers since the switch was made two years ago.

In terms of cost, printing an issue of M for Mutual on 100% recycled Eural SuperSilk does not involve any additional expense compared with using virgin paper.

### Conclusions

Going recycled has been a great success. Without compromising on quality, M for Mutual now sends out a strong environmental message to Britannia’s members. For Redwood, too, the change has aided the ongoing development of ‘green’ credentials. Around half of all publications produced by Redwood are now printed on paper containing recycled fibre.

### Summary

Switching M for Mutual to 100% recycled paper has underlined the status of both Britannia and Redwood as forward-thinking, environmentally conscious organisations, while fully preserving the quality of the magazine.

### The printer’s experience of recycled papers

In total, St Ives Plymouth Ltd processes about 58,000 tonnes of paper a year, using three 32-page HSWO presses, a MAN Rotoman press and two M600 machines. Although only around 3% of the company’s printed output is produced on recycled-content paper (for example, the Wildlife Trusts’ magazine Natural World), this proportion is now increasing noticeably.

In the company’s experience, decisions to use recycled paper are rarely driven solely by economics and print trials can be a useful way of enabling decisions to be taken with confidence.

Overall, St Ives Plymouth has found that, although most 100% recycled papers do not run quite as well as lightweight coated (LWC) virgin papers due to a slightly lower consistency, this does not normally result in any production difficulties.

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