8 ways for Chambers to become more environmentally sustainable

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1. Double-sided printing every time

    Most printers can be set to print on both sides of the page automatically (i.e., unless you say otherwise). Even if you cannot see yourself going paperless at this stage, you can still cut down on paper use, and carry less weight around. You could also experiment with smaller A5 paper.

    → Next step: ask your IT professional to set this up on your own computer, and (if you like it) encourage your colleagues to do the same.

2. Paper recycling, before and after

    You may not even notice a switch to recycled paper, the quality is now so good. And when your case is finished, you can make sure your confidential waste is shredded and recycled.

    →Next step: Who is in charge of buying the stationery in Chambers? Try to convince him or her to buy a box of recycled paper, and if it is just as good, to make the change going forward. And at the same time, check what happens to the documents which go into confidential waste.

3. Other recycling

    Your Chambers' local authority will probably be able to help you recycle (non-confidential) paper, cardboard, metal, plastic, and printer cartridges. If you would end up with a confusing proliferation of bins, start with just one type of recycled waste (eg, cardboard only), and work from there.

    → Next step: find your local authority here and then visit its website to see how business waste can be recycled in your area.

4. Give computers a second life

    You can't just throw away a computer – you will need to get the data securely wiped, and then comply with various regulations when disposing of it. So why not donate it instead? You can keep the hard drive (and the confidential data on it), and donate the remainder to a charity.

    → Next step: ask your IT professional for advice about this, and see whether he/she can help action it for the next person who upgrades their computer.

5. Avoid using disposables.

Use refillable glass bottles for water in your conference rooms. You can buy or hire specialist kit to make sparkling and still water in re-usable bottles. They look great, don't cost very much, and save a great deal of plastic or glass from being wasted.

→Next step: search the web for branded glass bottles, and plumbed carbonated water coolers, and ask your office manager how much is spent each year on disposable bottled water.

6. Driving less.

How many of your members and staff drive as part of their commute? You could encourage cycling instead with a government funded "cycle to work" scheme (giving your staff cheaper bikes and gear). If you have shower facilities, make sure that they are made available and pleasant to use. Ditto ironing facilities!

→ Next step: you could try to get an email sent round your members and staff, to gauge interest in cheaper bikes and/or better facilities. If the demand is there, visit https://www.cyclescheme.co.uk/employers to see the options for your Chambers.

7. Think about your heating.

If you have a radiator with an adjustable valve, consider keeping it a notch or two lower, and wearing a jumper. If you have an electric heater, can you adjust the timer to make sure you are not heating an empty room?

→ Next step: adjust your radiator – or, if there is no timer/adjustable valve, speak to the person in charge of maintenance to try to get one fitted. A small cost now may save significant amounts of energy (and money) in the future. If you have old sash windows, think about whether draft excluders could be installed to cut down on chilly drafts.

8. Are you ready to go paperless?

Or, "paper light"? More and more of us are using tablet computers, even at hearings. With the right software, it is surprisingly easy to convert multiple documents into a single PDF "bundle", with bookmarks, virtual sticky notes, and colourful annotations and highlighting. If you have a visual memory, you may find that bold, colourful annotations can give you those visual placeholders.

→ Next step: ask around to see if anyone can recommend hardware and software. You might start by looking at the iPad Pro and an app called PDF Expert. Watch this space for more tips, including how to manage your paperless documents as they increase in number.