

Our Response to the 'Tree to Me' Questionnaire from the Society of Authors

In April 2023, the Society of Authors launched Tree to Me – a campaign to help authors speak to their publishers about their sustainability practices. It provides ten questions for authors to ask their publishers, covering topics including emissions targets, biodiversity protection efforts, and sustainable book materials.

We are pleased to provide our answers below. They reflect our commitment to putting sustainability at the heart of our business strategy and the decisions we make every day.

1. Have you signed up to Publishing Declares, the Publishers Association's pledge on climate action, or do you have an alternative reduction strategy?

Yes, Penguin Random House is a founding member of Publishing Declares. We also produce an annual [carbon impact report](#) detailing our reduction efforts.

2. Have you set emissions targets with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), the global standard? Have you set a net zero goal?

Yes, we joined the SBTi initiative alongside our parent company Bertelsmann in 2020. We aim to be net zero by 2030 by reducing 50% of our total emissions and offsetting any remaining emissions into positive projects for the planet. SBTi's audit confirmed that the target is ambitious and in line with the Paris Climate Agreement.

3. Do you disclose your carbon emissions annually to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), and/or are you reporting in other ways?

Yes, Bertelsmann discloses carbon emissions to the CDP for all Penguin Random House companies globally. We also disclose Penguin Random House UK information to our customers upon request.

4. Do you use 100% renewable electricity across your operations?

Yes, all our UK sites use renewable energy. We have also installed over 1,000 solar panels on our UK warehouse and have plans to add more.

5. Do you plan to use 100% recycled paper, or otherwise sustainably source the paper used for packaging, books (where possible) and across your operations? Have you stopped using plastic packaging?

We use recycled paper when its carbon emissions are less than those of the alternative virgin paper. We also use 100% FSC certified paper and collect data on our papers' carbon emissions. In the past year, we have phased out papers with a high carbon footprint and are working, through our printers, to engage paper mills to ensure low carbon and low nature impact.

In our packaging, we use a mixture of cartons and plastic. We have asked all suppliers to use at least 30% recycled plastic packaging or to switch to thinner / more stretchy plastic to reduce the amount used. We also use reusable tote lids with our main supplier in the UK, which removes the need for cartons and plastic shrink-wrapping.

6. Have you taken specific action to protect biodiversity, limit deforestation and reduce water usage?

Yes, we are members of the Book Chain Project, so we gather data on the tree species used for our papers to protect against deforestation and excessive water use. 100% of our paper is FSC certified, which protects livelihoods and creates transparency from forest to product. We also fibre test our products annually to ensure we can track the tree species back to its root. Our warehouse extension was BREEAM certified (BREEAM is used to specify and measure the sustainability performance of buildings, ensuring that projects meet sustainability goals).

We understand that biodiversity protection is an important issue and have plans to build a more extensive biodiversity and nature programme going forward.

7. Do you use foils and finishes or lamination? What proportion of these can be recycled? Do you offer more sustainable formats such as trimmed sizes?

Yes. In 2022 we launched the Sustainable Production Toolkit, which helps production, design, and editorial teams create books with sustainability in mind. The toolkit goes into specific details on sustainable finishes, from using less than 30% foil on a book cover to support the book's recyclability, to using sealer instead of lamination as protection for the book. The toolkit also covers product carbon reduction, life-cycle assessments of specific materials, and debunks myths around sustainability.

8. Does your organisation have a corporate governance system to hold it accountable for sustainability? Do you provide staff sustainability training?

Yes, we have a sustainability working group which includes members of our senior leadership team. We have also trained 500 colleagues to use our Sustainable Production Toolkit. We recognise that we need to train all staff on sustainability — this is a key area we're working on going forward.

9. Do you disclose any of your organisation's investments (including employees' pensions) in the fossil fuel industry?

We plan to disclose our climate-related risks through our TCFD report in 2024.

10. How can you help me communicate this prominently to my readers?

We have a [sustainability hub](#) and a dedicated [sustainability section](#) on our website. We can also talk about our sustainability commitments on the covers of our books.